From Zero to Ninety: Increasing Effectiveness of Physician Surveys for CME Assessments - ACME Webinar - November 1, 2007

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Presentation Slides & Resources
http://www.tpmgphysicianed.org/chiefs_coord/forms.html

References
Tips for Increasing Effectiveness of Physician Surveys

Survey Applications in CME
- Assess learner needs & preferences
- Evaluate CME activities (self-reported intent to change behavior)
- Assess behavioral outcomes (self-reported actual change in behavior)
- Help meet updated ACCME criteria

Types of Surveys
- Web-based surveys
- Paper surveys (in person)
- Paper surveys (mailed)
- E-mail surveys
- Telephone surveys

Elements of an Effective Survey

| 1. Project design | Ask the right question.  
| Can you clearly state the specific goals of your survey? How might you and others use the results?  
| Do you really need a survey at all? |
| 2. Sampling design | Ask the right people.  
| Is your sample representative of your target audience? Will they know what you want to know? |
| 3. Questionnaire design | Ask questions the right way.  
| Did you pre-test the survey? Is it easy to use? Are your questions clear? Do they yield useful results? |
| 4. Data collection | Capture good quality responses in sufficient numbers.  
| Will respondents complete the entire survey? Will you get sufficient responses to be representative?  
| Should you offer multiple ways of completing it? |
| 5. Data analysis | Design an analysis plan based on the survey goals.  
| Do you want to compare groups or pre- and post-results? Or with previous surveys or programs? |
| 6. Reporting results | Communicate results effectively.  
| Have you considered the results carefully? Have you summarized them clearly so that you and others can use the results in planning or for organizational improvement? |
### Ten Steps to Better Survey Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Tasks</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Identify what you want to know</td>
<td>▪ What is your purpose? How will you use the results? Is a survey needed?</td>
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<td>2. Outline major topics to be covered</td>
<td>▪ What are the specific attributes to be measured? ▪ Use phone interviews, e-mail, focus groups, literature reviews, or results of previous programs to clarify topics, attributes, response categories</td>
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<td>3. Identify who to survey</td>
<td>▪ For a large group, use a random sample (Use Excel formula =rand() to randomize)</td>
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<td>4. Identify the best method</td>
<td>▪ Do you want qualitative or quantitative results? ▪ What’s the most practical way to reach your audience? ▪ Using multiple methods (e.g. web, mail, email, etc.) will yield higher response</td>
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<td>5. Write your draft questions</td>
<td>▪ Do you want quantitative, qualitative, or both ▪ Decide on the best order ▪ Do not start with sensitive questions</td>
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<td>6. Design a clean, spacious, easy-to-use questionnaire</td>
<td>▪ Do not cram too much into too little space ▪ Provide ample space for check boxes and open-ended responses ▪ Provide clear instructions when needed ▪ Do not print pages back-to-back</td>
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<td>7. Pre-test and revise</td>
<td>▪ Make sure it is clear and easy-to-use ▪ Get others to try it and give you feedback ▪ Pre-test it with physicians like those in your target group ▪ Revise, revise, revise!</td>
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<td>8. Package your survey professionally</td>
<td>▪ Include a personalized memo from a credible physician or recognized leader ▪ Explain the purpose and why their participation is important ▪ Say how long it will take to complete ▪ Thank them for participating; include a lumpy “thank you” incentive</td>
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<td>9. Track respondents</td>
<td>▪ Use a number or name ▪ Monitor your response rate ▪ Send reminder to non-respondents after 1-2 weeks ▪ Send duplicate survey after 2 weeks</td>
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<td>10. Compile, analyze, and communicate your results</td>
<td>▪ Think what the results reveal ▪ Think who will benefit from the findings ▪ Communicate findings to planners, stakeholders, and leadership ▪ Thank respondents! Share results with them</td>
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### Typical Survey Pitfalls

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Problem</th>
<th>Result</th>
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<td>Unclear purpose (not thought out)</td>
<td>May lead to useless results. Wastes time and resources of respondents.</td>
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<td>Too long, too wordy, or too complicated</td>
<td>May result in respondent fatigue, partial or poor-quality responses, and/or incomplete questionnaires.</td>
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<td>Badly worded or unclear question (unreliable question)</td>
<td>Not understood or misunderstood. Your question may be interpreted inconsistently by respondents and the results may be meaningless.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Didn’t ask the right question</td>
<td>Don’t get the answers you want to address your purpose. Don’t ask unnecessary questions.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wrong question type</td>
<td>Results cannot be quantified OR are too narrow or limited to be useful.</td>
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<td>Bad layout or instructions</td>
<td>Respondents do not understand questions, scales, or directions.</td>
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<td>Cramped or crowded layout</td>
<td>Difficult to read or mark accurately. Frustrating for the users. Difficult to code results.</td>
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<td>Survey not pre-tested</td>
<td>You know what you mean, but respondents don’t.</td>
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<td>Survey lacks credibility</td>
<td>Respondents do not perceive the value and are not sufficiently motivated to respond.</td>
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<td>Insufficient attention paid to data collection</td>
<td>Small, non-representative response makes results difficult to interpret or meaningless.</td>
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<td>Inadequate analysis or summary</td>
<td>The results cannot be put to use or applied to future planning.</td>
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### Good Questionnaire Design

- Be clear about the purpose of your survey.
- Outline major topics to be covered and specific attributes to be measured. Consider using phone interviews, e-mail, focus groups, literature review, or results of previous programs to clarify topics and attributes.
- Draft questions using appropriate formats. Decide on question order. Don’t start with sensitive questions, but get to the point quickly. Consider putting demographic questions at the end.
- Compare draft questionnaire to your survey purpose and then critique design.
- Try it out. Make sure it works and is easy to use. Obtain feedback from others. Are questions clear? Do they have the same meaning among different people?
- Conduct a pre-test with respondents similar to your target group.
- Revise, revise, revise!
Types of Questions

Open-Ended Questions (qualitative)
- Use to elicit creative or unique responses.
- Allow for options not covered by quantitative or discreet choices.
- Provide quotes to use in reports.
- Lets respondent “let off steam.”
- In a pre-test, generate options for closed questions.

Closed Questions (quantitative)
- Includes dichotomous, fill-in-the-blank, multiple choice, and scale questions.
- Easy and quick to complete.
- Capture specific, measurable information. Can be easily quantified and graphed.

Limitations:
- Difficult to summarize.
- Provide minimal or no quantifiable values.
- Require you to interpret the respondent’s response (which is sometimes difficult to read or understand!).

Limitations:
- Limit the response and do not capture unique responses. They may completely miss a respondent’s real view or behavior.
- Do not stimulate ideas or broader thinking.

Selecting a Random Sample

A random sample is useful when you need to assess a large target population or group. One of the easiest ways to randomize a group is to use an Excel spreadsheet.
- Enter the Excel formula =rand() into an Excel column.
- Pull the formula down in the column for as many rows as you have people in your group. Random values will now appear in the column.
- Copy the entire column and “paste special/values” over the same column.
- Paste your participant names or identifiers in an adjacent column.
- Finally, re-sort the entire table by the random values column.

Your group is now randomly sorted. You can extract the number you want to survey by starting at the top.

How many should you survey? This depends on the size of your group, your likely response rate, and your time and resources. For a large group, 500 or more, 10% is roughly a good number. For smaller groups you will need to survey a larger percentage. To be more precise, consult a statistician. In general, you want to survey enough of the group that your have a high level of confidence that their response will reflect the entire group.
Web-Based Survey Tools

There are many, many web-based survey tools available. Some are relatively inexpensive or free with limited functions. Others are more expensive but offer more sophisticated functions. Most CME providers can use basic survey tools.

To locate a survey tool that will work for you, try putting “web based survey tool” into a web search. Also, ask colleagues which tools they have found useful or reliable.

Some common survey tools are SurveyMonkey, Zoomerang, Zapsurvey, EZSurvey, mriInterview, SurveyCrafter, Remark, Ultimate Survey Professional, Apian SurveyPro, Advanced, Finalsite, Hosted, Perseus, Qstation, smartAsk, Vanguard Vista, Websurveyor, Collect Data Now, Formsite, InsitefulSurveys, Web Online, and many more. Many universities have their own web-based survey tools available.

Some Things We’ve Learned About Surveying Physicians

- **They have very limited time**
  Don’t waste it. Make sure you’re clear about your purpose and that you really need to do a survey in the first place. Sometimes, you will learn more from a few phone calls than a survey. If you use a survey, make it easy and quick to use and return. Don’t make it too long or too complicated because they won’t read it and won’t do it. Keep it short by paring out unnecessary questions.

- **If they’re not interested, they’re not interested**
  You will have a very difficult time getting a good response if you cannot demonstrate the value of your survey. They are more likely to be interested in a subject that relates to their practice, their daily work life, or a program in which they participated.

- **They like paper! But are shifting toward electronic**
  Unless they are very motivated, they often will not read your e-mail or do your on-line survey. Give them the option of using paper. But remember, their handwriting is truly awful. And if you’re mailing it, they get a lot of mail, so it needs to appear distinctive.

- **Tracking increases response**
  If you know who has responded, you can remind those who haven’t. It works. Even without tracking, reminders work. Whenever possible, thank participants, give them incentives, and share the results with them.