



## MONEY MATTERS

# THE VALUE OF ONLINE SURVEYS

By Larry Gulko

**O**NLINE SURVEYS ARE THE MOST COST-EFFECTIVE METHOD OF SURVEYING MEMBERS. “A BARGAIN PRICE FOR THE RESULTS YOU GET,” SAY INDUSTRY CONSULTANTS. ONE SURVEY COSTS A MERE FRACTION OF WHAT YOU’LL PAY FOR EITHER AN AGENCY TO GATHER THE INFORMATION OR FOR YOUR STAFF TO PUT IT TOGETHER. PLUS, YOU’LL SAVE VALUABLE TIME BY RECEIVING THE RESULTS IMMEDIATELY IN A REPORT FORMAT EASILY UNDERSTOOD BY EVERYONE.



The individuals providing leadership at your club are responsible for attracting, retaining, and building the most valuable member relationships while also delivering the “ultimate member experience.” In today’s busy over-communicated society and competitive climate, communications is key. How you and your team interact with members, learn what’s truly in their minds, communicate to keep them informed, excite them about “happenings” at the club, and encourage their participation, will directly impact the prestige and growth of your club. Plus, non-dues revenue opportunities exist.

Your club represents trust, a promise, and perceived value. You must not only achieve 100 percent member satisfaction, but also go beyond by doing things that are unexpected. Members initially join a specific club because they perceived a value – a value that they perceive cannot be duplicated elsewhere. So, deliver on the initial promise, keep integrity in your message and personal touch, and demonstrate that members can depend on this value over and over.

### Marketing is Perception

Marketing is the battle of perceptions. Not products. Not services. Not facilities. Perception is everything and the marketing battle is fought everyday on the front lines. You will win the battle by making your club’s brand relevant to your members’ lives. Ask yourself: How will you make their lives better? How will you enhance their quality of life, not just individually, but as a family? What are you doing to enhance the perception of quality programs, services, and personal attention? What are you doing to create memorable experiences and build a greater sense of community?

### Think Outside-In, Not Inside-Out

When is the last time you truly had a chat with each of your members? Do you really know what they are thinking or what their “sweet spot” is? Marketing your club to members starts with knowing intimately what’s in the “minds” of your members and becoming a part of their world.

Member feedback is vital to running your club. You cannot afford to be in a vacuum – you must know what’s in the minds of the members to proactively plan for the future and plan for success. You need to gather satisfaction scores, measure outcomes, and conduct market research, and evaluate the responses. In essence, top-of-mind awareness and opinions that make your business thrive.

Traditional methods for collecting this data can be costly, take too long to generate feedback, and simply get too few responses.

Web-based interactive surveys are one of our most powerful communications applications since it allows you to query your members quickly, easily, and cost-effectively. Online surveys are also the most affordable method for surveying large groups, enhancing statistical validity.

Some of the key benefits of surveying your members in an interactive mode are:

- Increasing survey response rates
- Receiving immediate feedback
- Easily creating your own surveys
- Running multiple surveys simultaneously – inbound and outbound
- Eliminating interviewer bias
- Showing your members you care and that their opinions really count

In marketing research, and in particular surveys, multiple tasks can be performed with minimum time, yet delivering maximum value – a value that can't be achieved through traditional, costly means of gathering data and waiting months for compilation of results. We live in a busy world today, the competitive landscape changes daily and in order to win the business battle, we need timely information to make strategic decisions to increase the perceived value of the services clubs offer.

Online surveys can be used for a variety of information gathering projects. Some of the more frequent needs include member surveys, marketing research, post-event top-of-mind reactions, frequently asked questions, new member experiences, the need of specific new ideas/programs that might be of interest to the entire membership and specific member segments.

## Get Immediate Results

Member feedback guides you in improving your club operations and raising satisfaction scores. The immediate feedback you get with online surveys lets you know where today's problems are today – not six to nine months from now. Now, you can immediately address urgent

issues so you can respond to your members' needs in a timely manner and continue to exceed their expectations.

## Increase Responses

Mail-in surveys typically elicit low response rates and are cumbersome at best. In-office surveys disrupt your office flow. Manual telephone surveys are costly and interviewer bias is hard to control. By automating surveys, you give members a consistent and easy way to give you feedback, a key factor in boosting response rates.

## Improve Member Satisfaction

Members will be pleased to know that you're striving to fulfill their needs. They appreciate knowing that their opinions matter to you. Data can be instantly tabulated so the information you need to improve your services is at your fingertips, available right away. Interactive dialog informs members of how you're handling their requests and you'll score even higher marks.

## Easy to Design & Execute

Online surveys are easy to design, set up, and execute. You can create the questions, answer options, and choose how the survey branches from question to question. Question styles such as quantitative questions, which have a ranking of 1-5, multiple choice, or open-ended questions where members write in their responses can be used.

You can also build a library of questions you can choose from for each purpose or create new questions every time.

## Deliver the "Ultimate Member Experience"

There's no better way to build long-term friendships with your members than to show you care. This effort pays huge dividends, short and long term. You must have a pulse on "what's happening" in the minds of your members to foster growth, plan future programs and services that members want, and to make changes to existing programs that aren't working out.

The goal is to enable you to have an ongoing dialog with your members and create a win-win for everyone. You can't work in a vacuum, or from the ivory towers. In order to develop strategies and plans that make sense, that are customer-centric, that exceed members expectations, you have to get into the minds of your members, and not just once a year.

## Make them say WOW!

What can you do that will get your members' attention and have them talking positively about their club? Think outside of the box. Exceeding member expectations should be your goal and instituted across every department. It's important to understand what members expect. And, it's a pure thrill when you exceed members' expectations.

## It's "One" Thing

Just like Jack Palance stated in the movie "City Slickers," it's one thing. In club marketing, that one thing is: the sum of member experiences creates your club's brand. Every little step, every touch-point, is a test you have to pass to make good on the promise of your club's brand.

It's one thing to get them – but another to keep them. Keep them spending, participating, renewing, happy, raving about your club and spreading the word as to all the wonderful things your club represents.

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