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READERSHIP SURVEYS FOR B2B

B2B MAGAZINES HAVE a focused reader demographic, but can face some unique challenges in reaching it. In addition to the basics of administering a good survey, there are also unique points to focus on in getting an ideal response.

REACH

Make sure you are reaching the intended recipients. Also, remember that many company executives have other staff handling their mail, emails, phone calls, etc. It is always a good idea to test a sample of your contacts to get a sense of whether you have the correct recipients before administering the full survey. If you already have your survey completed, try sending it out to a select sample of recipients. The number of mail returns/email bouncebacks will give you a good idea of how accurate your contact information is, and whether it needs updating. If you are faxing or telemarketing your survey, you will also quickly get a sense of accuracy.

LENGTH

Your B2B audience probably has a very demanding schedule (as we all do!). Definitely do not exceed ten questions; five to seven is even better. Run through the survey a few times to test the completion time. If it takes more than a few minutes, look at ways to cut back on content.

METHOD

Check out your circulation sales data for assistance—if the majority of subscriptions come in via fax for example, then there is your survey method. The same goes for web and insert card orders (subscription cards). From my experience, about half of our readers are web-savvy, and half are not (read: faxers!). Be patient, as you will have to make at least two or three efforts and attempt different survey methods to achieve your results. For example, your first effort may be a fax blast and your second effort an e-blast or insert in your magazine.

TIMING

Summer is not a good time to send out a survey, especially for B2B, as it is vacation season. However, this may be

the ideal survey development time for you to create a well thought-out product to send in the fall or winter. Also, if you send e-newsletters or e-renewals, time your online survey blasts accordingly so as not to bombard people with emails.

INCENTIVE

Use a cost-effective incentive that suits your readership. You may want to seek out an incentive from one of your advertisers. Charitable donations on behalf of the reader are also a good idea. If neither of these are suitable, a Visa gift card is always a good, universal option for B2B readers. Think about your survey incentive in terms of what type of results you seek: quality or quantity. Monetary or high-value items may get you a large quantity of responses, but they may not be as valuable as a lesser number of detailed survey responses.

OTHER KEY CONSIDERATIONS

B2B magazines are exceptional in that they have the most direct connection between buyers and sellers (readers and advertisers). When choosing your reader survey questions, try to make the best effort possible to measure this. Having information on how many readers have purchased products from your advertisers, as well as your RPC number (readers per copy), are essential for media kits, editorial and subscription efforts.

Thinking about telemarketing for your survey? Although effective, telemarketing is pricey—anywhere from \$0.80 to \$4.00 per name, depending on the company/names you are using. For instance, if you use a list of 400 names, and those names require a lot of time to reach, as well as to rectify their contact information, you could be looking at a cost of up to \$1,600! If your telemarketing is going to be done in-house, ask yourself (and maybe your publisher) if this is a valuable use of your time. Again, if you are going this route, test a sample of the survey recipients first.

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