

Convenience Poll

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1. If you were going to shop for (_____), what businesses would you shop?
2. If I asked you to describe (1st business named in question 1) in one sentence, what would you say?
3. If I asked you to describe (your business) in one sentence, what would you say?



Quantitative Primary Consumer Research

Among other requirements, a reliable *quantitative* consumer research project requires that: 1) every person in the universe of your marketplace has an equal opportunity to participate in the survey; and 2) a predetermined number of respondents, proportionally representative of each demographic in the marketplace, are actually included in the result. While the results of quantitative research can be projected to your total marketplace if properly conducted, it's expensive and takes considerable time to conduct. When a CNN newscaster tells you that the results of a poll they conducted with 1500 respondents has an accuracy of 95 percent plus or minus 3 percent, they're talking about quantitative research.

Qualitative Primary Consumer Research

Compared to quantitative research, *qualitative* consumer research is a far less scientific approach. For example, everyone that should be included in the research will not have an equal chance to participate. Qualitative research results, while extremely useful, should not be projected to represent the opinion of your entire marketplace.

A convenience poll is *qualitative* research. It's so-named because you will be surveying people that are *convenient* to you. Completing 25-50 'man-on-the-street' interviews will provide you with valuable data. You should be able to complete a convenience poll in a day or two with no out-of-pocket cost.

How to Conduct a Convenience Poll

Let's assume you're a plumber and your target market is homeowners. You're going to ask three questions. Skip the second question if your business-or no business-is the first business named. Modify the three questions to make sense for your business.

Ask the questions of at least 25 people that look as if they might be homeowners. You'll meet potential survey prospects as you stand in line at the bank or post office, while you're buying groceries, waiting for the movie to start or are having coffee at the local coffee shop.

If there is a group of people that look as if they qualify, ask only *one* person in the group the questions.

Do *not* survey people you know or that might recognize you. Do *not* identify yourself as being from the company for which the survey is being completed. Do *not* wear your company shirt or hat, with your logo in plain sight, as you conduct the interviews; you're testing *unaided recall*.

You must ask the questions in the order presented below. Once you ask a question do not give the respondent any help as they formulate their answer. Do not provide any hints, suggestions or assistance if they look as if they are having trouble answering the questions. Record every response to each question from every respondent as they give it, word for word.

Example Question #1

If you were in need of a plumber, which plumber would you call?

Write down the names of each plumber mentioned *in the exact order* in which they're given to you. If the person says "I can't think of any plumbers," write down "can't think of any plumbers" and skip to the third question; do *not* help by suggesting plumbers!

Once you have 25 or more answers to this question, you'll have an excellent idea as to how you and each of your competitors are *positioned* in your marketplace.

Example Question #2

If you were asked to describe (name the first plumber mentioned; if the respondent could not think of a plumber, or named you first, skip to question #3) in one sentence, what would you say?

Record the responses word for word. The answers to this question will inform you as to the *brand image* owned by each of your competitors. This information will help you determine which brand image opportunities remain unclaimed in your market place.

Example Question #3

If you were asked to describe (your company) in one sentence, what would you say?

Record the responses word for word. Resist the temptation to respond to any answer given even if the answer is wrong or if it upsets you. Just ask the question, record the answer and move on. You may hear some disturbing things about your business. Let it go. If that's not possible, have someone else conduct the poll. Once you've asked at least 25 people question #3 you will know what *brand image* you currently own with consumers.

Once you know how you're perceived by consumers, you have a real opportunity to develop your phrase that pays and marketing message in a way that will allow you to bridge from the collective mind of your marketplace back to your business.

If consumer perception of your business is positive, but does not reflect your desired brand image, revise your phrase that pays or marketing message.

If you discover that consumers' perception is negative, you will need to reposition your business. Changing minds is very difficult. It takes a great deal of time and money. This is why many marketing experts say your original positioning decision is one of the most important business decisions you will make when you start your business.

A Convenience Poll is Quick, Easy, and Inexpensive

A convenience poll is quick and easy to complete, is incredibly informative and costs nothing to conduct. But you are likely to hear things about your business that will be unpleasant. Some of the responses will anger you. Listen to what you're being told, take notes and address the issues at a later, more appropriate time. While you're conducting the research don't get defensive and attempt to correct the respondent. If you can't stay objective, have someone else conduct the convenience poll for you.

Convenience Poll for a Supermarket

I recently conducted a convenience poll for the owners of a supermarket. Since we had the manpower, we asked the questions of 150 respondents.

Not a single respondent named my client in response to question #1. When question #3 was asked, there were four consistent responses: 1) the store is dirty; 2) the store has a bad odor; 3) the store is not conveniently located; and 4) the store does not carry as many items as other supermarkets in the area.

The owner of this supermarket had so many resource problems, no amount of money spent on advertising in an attempt to reposition would help. The resource problems the respondents identified needed to be resolved before any additional marketing communication was attempted.