

An example of how I would handle improving a survey: A layman's guide

A small American company is enthusiastic about being more inclusive towards those with disabilities. They understand that not everyone is comfortable with disclosing this and so first figured out a way to be able to distribute the surveys anonymously to avoid issues. They then stated to you that they are planning to use a form heavily based on the [SF-256 for 2016](#) from the US government as a way to collect data on disability. Name, Date of Birth, and Social Security Number were removed to allow for anonymity.

You look over the form. Your first concern is that they do not clearly explain that the code to enter is to the left of the stated disability. This might be confusing. The directions to fill out the form should be clearly stated. Second, since the small company does not need the categories "Targeted Disabilities or Serious Health Conditions" or "Other Disabilities or Serious Health Conditions:" since that is federal government only.

Your biggest concern is that individuals can only list 1 disability. That is a major concern as it is common for someone to have more than 1 disability. You are also concerned at a lack of a fill-in option. However, you realize that simply having individuals type out the various disabilities might also be problematic as they might forget to include a disability. Or that with certain disabilities that this would put undue strain. No survey is perfect, but you want to make it as accessible as possible.

With looking this over, you do a major redraft. First, you make sure to explain how to fill out the survey. Second, you remove the 2 major categories since that is not relevant. Third, you change the survey to a check list so that those with multiple disabilities can check off each relevant one. Additionally, you also look up the terminology used within each disability community to avoid alienation. Some terms, such as autism spectrum disorder, will be more likely to alienate than autism. You also rework some categories like 98 (History of alcoholism or history of drug addiction but not currently using illegal drugs) because that language can be stigmatizing and also implies that the worker is no longer having an issue with that. Some categories you ask for clarifications on like diabetes because there's multiple type of diabetes, while others you ask if the category is needed itself, such as morbid obesity. You also add an option to list other disabilities not described as some disability will inevitably not be listed. Lastly, you add a statement making sure to describe that the results are anonymous, how the data will be used, and attempt to be as transparent as possible.

Once you finish up this draft, you send the draft along with a brief explanation of changes. You have it looked over by the leaders of making sure everything is good to go before releasing. There is a bit of back and forth for a few emails, but after several minor revisions, the survey is sent out anonymously to everyone, including the leaders of the organization.