

Chapter 8

An Introduction to Questionnaire Design

Introduction

In this chapter you will learn about:

- The key principles of designing effective questionnaires.
- How to formulate meaningful questions.
- The use of structured, semi-structured and unstructured questionnaires in different types of research design.
- The three most important types of questions for asking about behaviour, attitudes or classifying respondents
- Key terms used in questionnaire design
- The link between the interviewer, the respondent and the questionnaire.

The key principles of effective questionnaire design

There are seven steps in the design of a questionnaire:

Step 1 – Decide what information is required

The starting point is for the researcher to refer to the proposal and brief and make a listing of all the objectives and what information is required in order that they are achieved.

Seven steps

*Researcher
step to evaluate
proposal and
make listings*

→ List to be prepared of questionnaire making

→ Make logical and sensible points of question

→ Response is needed, so make response answers before to get right answer.

→ Keep the order of questions straightforward to sensitive ones.

→ Formatted questionnaire with clear instructions.

→ Testing the questionnaire with some interviews.

Step 2 - Make a rough listing of the questions

A list is now made of all the questions that could go into the questionnaire. The aim at this stage is to be as comprehensive as possible in the listing and not to worry about the phrasing of the questions. That comes next.

Step 3 - Refine the question phrasing

The questions must now be developed close to the point where they make sense and will generate the right answers. Tips on how to write good questions are provided later in this chapter.

Step 4 - Develop the response format

Every question needs a response. This could be a pre-coded list of answers or it could be open ended to collect verbatim comments. Consideration of the responses is just as important as getting the questions right. In fact, considering the answers will help get the questions right.

Step 5 - Put the questions into an appropriate sequence

The ordering of the questions is important as it brings logic and flow to the interview. Normally the respondent is eased into the task with relatively straightforward questions while the more difficult or sensitive ones are left until they are warmed up. Questions on brand awareness are asked first unprompted and then they are prompted.

Step 6 - Finalise the layout of the questionnaire

The questionnaire now needs to be fully formatted with clear instructions to the interviewer, including a powerful introduction, routings and probes. There needs to be enough space to write in answers and the responses codes need to be well separated from each other so there is no danger of circling the wrong one.

Step 7 - Pretest and revise

The final step is to test the questionnaire. It usually isn't necessary to carry out more than 10 to 20 interviews in a pilot because the aim is to make sure that it works, and not to obtain pilot results. In theory the questionnaire should be piloted using the interviewing method that will be used in the field (over the phone if telephone

interviews are to be used; self completed if it will be a self completion questionnaire). Time and money can preclude a proper pilot so at the very least it should be tested on one or two colleagues for sense, flow and clarity of instructions. The whole purpose of the test is to find out if changes are needed so that final revisions can be made. When carrying out the pilot it is best to run through the questionnaire with the guinea pig respondent and then go back over the questions and ask for each one, "what was going through your mind when you were asked this question?".

Questionnaire design is one of the hardest and yet one of the most important parts of the market research process. Given the same objectives, two researchers would probably never design the same questionnaire.

Designing effective questionnaires

→ For Data extraction and give standards to give to be used in analysis in future, questionnaire is best practice.

The primary purpose of a questionnaire is to help extract data from respondents. It serves as a standard guide for the interviewers who each need to ask the questions in exactly the same way. Without this standard, questions would be asked in a haphazard way at the discretion of the individual. Questionnaires are also an important part in the data collection methodology. They are the medium on to which responses are recorded to facilitate data analysis.

There are five people to take into consideration when designing a questionnaire:

Client – the client wants answers to their particular problem and even, on occasion, to have their worst fears shown up to be unlikely or improbable.

Researcher – the researcher needs to uncover information and balance the needs of three groups of people. She or he needs to ensure that the interviewer can manage the questionnaire easily, that the questions are interesting for the respondent and that the questionnaire matches the client's needs.

Interviewer – the interviewer wants a questionnaire which is easy to follow and which can be completed in the time specified by the researcher.

Respondent – respondents generally want to enjoy the interview experience. They need to feel that the questions are phrased so that they can be answered truthfully, and so that they allow the respondent to actually say what he or she thinks. They may also want to

→ Keep feedback of the sample questionnaire to improve further

→ Particular Problem

→ Provide information in proper form

→ Easy to follow questions

→ Enjoyable experience for Respondent

know if they will receive anything in return for giving their opinion.

→ Data required

Data-processor - the data processor wants a questionnaire which will result in data which can be processed efficiently and with minimum error.

→ Insufficient thought and not structured well fails the questionnaire.

If questionnaires fail it is usually because they are dashed off with insufficient thought. Questions may be missed out; they could be badly constructed, too long, or too complicated and sometimes unintelligible. Good questionnaires are iterations which begin as a rough draft and, through constant refinement, are converted to precise and formatted documents. It is not unusual for a questionnaire to develop through to version 7 or 8.

There are normally five sections in a questionnaire:

- The respondent's identification data - such as their name, address, date of the interview, name of the interviewer. The questionnaire would also have a unique number for purposes of entering the data into the computer.
- An introduction - this is the interviewer's request for help. It is normally scripted and lays out the credentials of the market research company, the purpose of the study and any aspects of confidentiality.
- Instructions - the interviewer and the respondent need to know how to move through the questionnaire such as which questions to skip and where to move to if certain answers are given.
- Information - this is the main body of the document and is made up of the many questions and response codes.
- Classification data - these questions, sometimes at the front of the questionnaire, sometimes at the end, establish the important characteristics of the respondent, particularly related to their demographics.

Ten things to think about when designing a questionnaire:

10 things to think about in effective questionnaire design

- Objective should be clear
1. Think about the objectives of the survey: at the outset, the researcher should sit down with the research plan (the statement of what is to be achieved and the methods which will be involved) and list the objectives of the study. This will ensure that the survey covers all the necessary points

and it will generate a rough topic list which will eventually be converted into more explicit questions.

2. **Think about how the interview will be carried out.** The way that the interview will be carried out will have a bearing on the framing of the questions. For example, interviews carried out over the telephone have some limitations compared with face to face interviews. Self-completion questionnaires need to be very precise and explicit in the way they are designed.
3. **Think about the introduction to the questionnaire:** scripted introductions can sound "wooden". However, each interviewer should say the same thing so there has to be a standard introduction. It should quickly and succinctly communicate the purpose of the survey, any aspects of confidentiality and what is required of the respondent. The introduction is arguably one of the most important components of a questionnaire because if it fails to engage with the respondent, there will be no interview at all.
4. **Think about the formatting:** the questionnaire should be clear and easy to read. It should be easy for the interviewer to navigate around. Questions and response options should be laid out in a standard format and if the questionnaire is to be administered on a doorstep in winter, the typeface should be large enough to read. Where appropriate, there should be ample space to write in open ended comments. There should be somewhere (front or back) to write down the details of the respondent, the date of the interview and the name of the interviewer.
5. **Think about questions from the respondents' point of view:** questions should be framed in a respondent friendly manner. Researchers usually know what they want from a survey but this seldom converts into a straight question. The question usually has to be broken down into two or three parts to make it relevant from the respondent's point of view. Furthermore, researchers can be greedy for information and design questionnaires that are too long and impose impossible tasks for the respondent.
6. **Think about the possible answers at the same time as thinking about the questions:** the whole purpose of a question is to derive answers and so it is essential that some thought is given to all the possible replies that could be

received. It is the anticipation of the complete range of possible answers that throws up the faults in the question. For example, it is no good asking people how many loaves of bread they buy in a year if they think in terms of loaves purchased per week.

7. **Think about the order of the questions:** the questions should flow easily from one to another and be grouped into topics in a logical sequence.
8. **Think about the types of questions:** texture in the interview can be achieved by incorporating different styles of questions. The researcher can choose from open ended questions, closed questions and scales.
9. **Think about how the data will be processed:** the questionnaire is simply the vehicle by which data is collected from many individuals before being stirred in the analysis pot. Consideration of how the data will be analysed at the time of designing the questionnaire will make things easier later on.
10. **Think about interviewer instructions:** questionnaires are administered by interviewers who, skilled as they are, need clear guidance what to do at every stage of the interview. These instructions need to be differentiated from the text either by capital letters, emboldened or underlined type.

Key point

The best questionnaires are constantly edited and refined until finally they have clear questions and instructions, laid out in a logical order.

In addition to these points that will guide the overall design of the questionnaire, the questions themselves must be carefully designed. To write a good question you need to make sure that the respondents:

- Can understand the question
- Are willing to answer the question
- Are able to answer the question.

Below are twelve things to watch out for when formulating individual questions.

- *Ensure that questions are without bias.* Questions should not be worded in such a way as to lead the respondent into the answer.

- Make the questions as simple as possible. Questions should not only be short, they should also be simple. Those which include multiple ideas or two questions in one will confuse and be misunderstood.
- Make the questions very specific. Notwithstanding the importance of brevity and simplicity, there are occasions when it is advisable to lengthen the question by adding memory cues. For example, it is good practice to be specific with time periods.
- Avoid jargon or shorthand. It cannot be assumed that respondents will understand words commonly used by researchers. Trade jargon, acronyms and initials should be avoided unless they are in everyday use.
- Steer clear of sophisticated or uncommon words. A questionnaire is not a place to score literary points so only use words in common parlance. Colloquialisms are acceptable if they will be understood by everybody (some are highly regional).
- Avoid ambiguous words. Words such as 'usually' or 'frequently' have no specific meaning and need qualifying.
- Avoid questions with a negative in them. Questions are more difficult to understand if they are asked in a negative sense. It is better to say "Do you ever ...?", as opposed to "Do you never ...?"
- Avoid hypothetical questions. It is difficult to answer questions on imaginary situations. Answers may be given but they cannot necessarily be trusted.
- Do not use words which could be misheard. This is especially important when the interview is administered over the telephone. For example, fifteen and fifty can sound very similar.
- Desensitise questions by using response bands. Questions which ask women about their age or companies about their turnover are best presented as a range of response bands. This softens the question by indicating that precision isn't necessary and a broad answer is acceptable. The data will almost certainly be grouped into bands at the analysis stage, so it may as well be collected in this way.
- Ensure that fixed responses do not overlap. The categories which are used in fixed response questions (such as the age bands

of respondents, the turnover bands of companies etc) should be sequential and not overlap otherwise some answers will be caught on the cusp.

- Allow for 'others' in fixed response questions. Pre-coded answers should always allow for a response other than those listed.

Think about

How many questionnaires pass in front of you that you put straight in the bin? Start collecting them. In time you will have a good variety from which you can pick and choose questions and layouts when you have to design a questionnaire.

Matching the questionnaire to the research objectives

The survey plan will have a range of objectives which could require qualitative or quantitative methods (or both). The specific market research objectives will dictate the type of information needed from the questionnaire.

Figure 8.1 Types Of Questionnaires For Different Studies

Type of Study	Questionnaire Type	Method of Administration
Large, quantitative studies	Structured	Telephone/ Face-to-face Self completion
Business to business studies; investigative consumer studies	Semi-structured	Telephone/ Face-to-face
Qualitative studies	Unstructured	Depth Telephone/ Face-to-face/ Focus groups

Structured questionnaires consist of closed or prompted questions with predefined answers. The researcher has to anticipate all possible answers with pre-coded responses. They are used in large interview programmes (anything over 30 interviews and more likely over 200 interviews in number) and may be carried out over the tele-

Dear Mr. Jeam:

phone, face-to-face or self completion depending on the respondent type, the content of questionnaire and the budget.

→ It contains closed and open questions

Semi-structured questionnaires comprise a mixture of closed and open questions. They are commonly used in business-to-business market research where there is a need to accommodate a large range of different responses from companies. The use of semi-structured questionnaires enables a mix of qualitative and quantitative information to be gathered. They can be administered over the telephone or face-to-face.

→ New responses or questions should be entertained

Unstructured questionnaires are made up of questions that elicit free responses. These are guided conversations rather than structured interviews and would often be referred to as a "topic guide". The topic guide is made up of a list of questions with an apparent order but is not so rigid that the interviewer has to slavishly follow it in every detail. The interviewer can probe or even construct new questions which have not been scripted. This type of questionnaire is used in qualitative research for depth interviewing (face-to-face, depth telephone interviews) and they form the basis of many studies into technical or narrow markets.

It contains closed and open questions
Three types of questionnaires

includes i ii iii

Using one of these types of questionnaire, (structured, semi-structured, or unstructured) a check should be made on how meaningful it is, by asking "*Is it measuring or probing what they think it's measuring or probing?*". If you get this right respondents will be able to give valid answers.

Another simple measure is to think through all the possible responses. This will make sure that the responses that are obtained are reliable. Basically this means that the answers received should be the same as those that would be given, if you repeated the question.

There are two major issues that can have a bad effect on both the quality of your data, and a respondent's attitude towards market research. These are using excessively long questionnaires, and repetitive questioning techniques. Variety is the spice of questionnaires, as well as of life! Use lots of different question types to stop respondents getting bored. Stimulus materials, such as show cards and advertisements, can also help provide texture in the interview.

An introduction to different question types

Questions are designed to collect three different types of information from populations – information about *behaviour*, information about *attitudes*, and information that is used for *classification* pur-

poses The three different types of information that can be gathered and the surveys in which they are used is summarised in Figure 8.2.

Figure 8.2 Three Different Types of Questions

Question Type	Information Sought	Types of Surveys
Behavioural	Factual information on what the respondent does or what they own. Also the frequency with which certain actions are carried out.	Surveys to find out market size, market shares, awareness and usage
Attitudinal	What people think of products, services or brands. Their image and ratings of things. Why they do things.	Image and attitude surveys. Brand mapping studies. Customer/ employee satisfaction surveys
Classification	Information that can be used to group respondents to see how they differ, one from the other - such as their age, gender, social grade, location of household, type of house, family composition.	All surveys

Behavioural questions

Behavioural questions are designed to find out what people (or companies) do. For example, do people eat butter or margarine? How much do they eat? What brands do they buy? Who buys it? etc. They determine people's actions in terms of what they have bought, used, visited, seen, read or heard. Behavioural questions record facts and not matters of opinion.

Behavioural questions address the following:

- Have you ever
- Do you ever
- Who do you know

- When did you last
- Which do you do most often
- Who does it
- How many
- Do you have
- In what way do you do it
- In the future will you

Attitudinal questions

People hold opinions or beliefs on everything from the products they buy and the companies which make or supply them through to social issues and politics. These attitudes are important because they influence the way people act.

Researchers explore attitudes using questions which especially begin with the word 'why...'. Also useful are the questions How?, Which, Who?, Where?, What? In attitudinal and motivational research, the phrases are often used: "Why did you say that?" or "Would you explain?".

Attitudinal questions address the following:

- Why do you
- What do you think of
- Do you agree or disagree
- How do you rate
- Which is best (or worst) for

Scales are commonly used to measure attitudes. Scalar questions use a limited choice of response, chosen to measure an attitude, an intention or some aspect of the respondent's behaviour. There are five different types of rating scales which researchers commonly use:

1. **Verbal rating scales.** These are the simplest of all scales in which respondents choose a word or phrase on a scale to indicate the level of their feeling. They normally range across four or five possibilities such as:

Very likely
Quite likely
Neither likely or not likely
Not very likely
Not likely at all.

2. **Numerical rating scales.** This is a very similar approach to the verbal rating except the respondent is asked to give a numerical 'score' rather than a semantic response. The scores are often out of a number with 5, 7 and 10 being popular choices (where the large number is best and 1 is worst). It should be borne in mind that the bigger the scale, the more consideration is required from the respondent.
3. **The use of adjectives.** An alternative to a scale is to ask respondents which words best describe a company, a product or a brand. The adjectives could be both positive and negative and they need not be opposites. This could easily be converted into a scale, for example, asking people which of two adjectives they associate with a product or brand – reliable v unreliable. In a self completion questionnaire a line or scale could separate the two words and the respondent is asked to mark the line to indicate their view.
4. **The use of positioning statements.** Here the respondent is asked to agree or disagree with a number of statements. It is important that the respondent is readily able to identify with one of the statements and not left feeling that somehow they do not capture their mood. Positioning statements are a variation of the verbal rating scale and are often known as agree/disagree scales or Likert scales after the person who popularised them. Typically a statement is read out and the respondent is presented with five choices such as:

Agree strongly
Agree slightly
Neither agree nor disagree
Disagree slightly
Disagree strongly

5. **Ranking questions.** Researchers often need to find out what is the order of importance of various factors from a list. Typically this is achieved by presenting the list and asking which is most important, which is second most important and so on.

Think about

The questions we ask are who, what, when, where, why, and how. Which of these do you think is the most difficult for people to answer? Why is it the most difficult?

Classification questions

The third group of questions are those used to *classify* the information once it has been collected. Classification questions check that the correct quota of people or companies has been interviewed and are used to make comparisons between different groups of respondents. Most classification questions are behavioural (factual).

A number of standard classification questions crop up constantly in market research surveys. These are:

- *Gender.* There can be no other classifications other than male and female.
- *Marital status.* This is usually asked by simply saying "Are you"
 - Single
 - Married
 - Widowed
 - Divorced
 - Separated
- *Socio Economic Grade (SEG).* This is a classification peculiar to UK market researchers in which respondents are pigeonholed according to the occupation of the head of the household. Thus, it combines the attributes of income, education and work status. In addition to social grades, researchers sometimes classify respondents by income group or lifestyle.

In summary the socio economic grades are:

- A higher managerial, administrative or professional
- B intermediate managerial, administrative or professional
- C1 supervisory, clerical, junior administrative or professional
- C2 skilled manual workers
- D semi-skilled and unskilled manual workers
- E state pensioners, widows, casual and lowest grade workers.

For most practical purposes these can be reduced to just four:

- | | |
|----|--------------------------|
| AB | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| C1 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| C2 | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| DE | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Alternatively, a question may be asked about the income of the respondent or the combined income of the household. The question would be de-sensitised by using income bands.

- *Industrial occupation.* In Europe companies are classified according to their Standard Industrial Classification (SIC). Often researchers condense the many divisions into more convenient and broader groupings such as:

- | | |
|--|--------------------------|
| Accommodation and Food Services | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Administrative and Support & Waste Management and Remediation Services | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Police, Fire Service and Other Support Services | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Construction | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Educational Services | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Finance & Insurance | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Health Care and Social Assistance | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Information | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Management of Companies and Enterprises | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Manufacturing | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Mining | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Professional, Scientific and Technical Services | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Property, Rental and Leasing | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Retail Trade | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Transportation & Warehousing | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Utilities | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Wholesale Trade | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other Services (Except Public Administration) | <input type="checkbox"/> |

In surveys of the general public, it may be relevant to establish the level of employment of the respondent. For example:

- Working full time (over 30 hours a week)
- Working part-time (8-30 hours a week)
- Housewife (full time at home)
- Student (full time)
- Retired
- Temporarily unemployed (but seeking work)
- Permanently unemployed (eg chronically sick, independent means etc)

- *Number of employees.* The size of the firm in which the respondent works can be classified according to the number of employees:

- 0-9
- 10-24
- 25-99
- 100-249
- 250 +

- *Location.* Depending on the scope of the survey, this can be a country code or in any single country a code indicating the domicile of the respondent such as state in which they live or a broader grouping such as East Coast, Central, West Coast etc.

Think about

What classification questions would be most important in a survey for your company?

Key terms in questionnaire design

Questionnaire: a set of common questions laid out in a standard and logical form to record individual respondent's attitudes and behaviour. Instructions show the interviewer or the respondent how to move through the questions and complete the schedule. It could be printed on paper or on a computer screen.

Key point

Classification questions are some of the most important questions in the questionnaire as they are used to cross analyse the data and pick up different patterns of response across different groups of people.

Question: this is the framing of the precise questions that are asked. Care needs to be taken to ensure that the questions elicit a useful and unbiased response. The questions can be open ended (used in smaller, qualitative surveys) or closed (used in quantitative surveys).

Open ended questions: these are questions that invite free ranging responses – sometimes called verbatim responses. Such responses are extremely useful for obtaining a deep understanding of the respondents' views and behaviour but they are difficult to capture precisely (the respondent may give a long winded answer by the interviewer) and are time consuming to analyse. They are only suited to qualitative and small quantitative surveys.

Closed questions: these questions invite a response that is fitted into a preordained answer. Usually the answers are read out or shown to the respondent and they choose which best fits their reply. Sometimes the answers are not read out (as in a brand awareness question) though the responses are listed and to that extent are "closed". Closed questions are the norm in quantitative surveys. It is vital to ensure that the correct response codes are designed for the question otherwise there will be significant numbers that cannot be placed in any useful response and are put in the dustbin category of "others".

Direct questions: A direct question measures exactly what it appears to be measuring. For example, "How do you travel to work each day?"

Indirect questions: An indirect question usually disguises its true purpose. For example, "Which tour operators have you booked holidays through in the past two years?". This indirect question will also give some idea of how many holidays (if any) the respondent has taken over the last two years. Indirect questioning is usually used if a direct question might bias a respondent's answers to reveal the true purpose of the research.

Multiple response questions: some questions can receive a number of answers and others only one answer. For example, a question that asks how many brands someone is aware of could generate a list of names and therefore is multiple response. Another question may seek to find out which brand is used most frequently and this could allow for just one response (ie single response). Sometimes the questions are marked multi-response so that the interviewer knows that more than one answer is anticipated and allowed.

Prompted questions: A prompted question is used to give a common framework for the answers. The answer options are printed on showcards, within the questionnaire or read out, and the respondent chooses one of them. Prompted questions can help respondents to understand difficult subjects and make it easier for them to answer by indicating what's expected and prompting their memory. It also helps a researcher have some control over the scope of the answers. The drawback here is of course that the questions can become suggestive and leading, and they can also be complicated for the interviewers. Closed questions are prompted.

Unprompted questions: An unprompted question allows the respondent to give their own answer in their own words. Open ended questions are unprompted.

Response codes: the answers to closed questions, each requiring a mark to indicate which has been chosen. This could be by circling a number or ticking a box.

Question grid: questions may be laid out in grids to save space on the questionnaire. For example, a list of brands could be listed on the page and against these there could be response columns to indicate if the respondent has heard of each brand, ever used brands, is a frequent user of the brands etc. Grids are used to save space and to make it easier for the interviewer and respondent to quickly move through the questions.

	Heard of	Ever used	Frequent user
Brand 1	1	1	1
Brand 2	2	2	2
Brand 3	3	3	3

Rating scales: these are words, numbers or pictures that indicate a range of different responses to a question. Scales suit researchers as a means for locating a respondent's view on a continuum but they may not always be easy for respondents to relate to as they may not think in such terms. Scales have engaged the interest of researchers for years and some are named after their originator. Likert invented an agree/disagree scale with five positions. Osgood gave his name to the bi-polar scale. The Thurstone scale starts by generating a list of possible statements that relate to a subject and then a distilled list is created which is the scale of issues that covers the subject.

Routing: the instructions that tell an interviewer or a respondent where to go next when completing the questionnaire.

Trade-off question: at its simplest this could be a question which asks the respondent to spend a number of points between factors that influence their choice of a product or brand. The more sophisticated trade-off questions ask respondents to express their preferences between pairs of attributes or between concepts (with a price attached). This is a conjoint measurement that produces utility values indicating the weight of importance attached to the different attributes.

The respondent, the interviewer and questionnaire design

A questionnaire is the link between the interviewer and the respondent. In a good interview the process feels more like an interesting conversation than an interrogation. The combination of a good interviewer and a good questionnaire are crucial to the successful interview. The flow of the questions is critical to a good interview. The flow of the questionnaire is dependent on six factors:

- Easy to answer questions should be put at the beginning to give the respondent confidence in their ability to help
- Questions likely to interest the respondent should also be at the start
- Questions should be asked in a logical order
- Filter questions should follow each other without being interrupted by other questions
- It can be helpful to have an introduction before each change of topic to help the respondent make an easy jump

- Personal, emotional or complicated questions should be at the end to avoid people being put off answering further questions

Obtaining a market research interview is not easy, especially given the large number of surveys that are taking place and the bombardment of our privacy through the 'cold call' selling of financial services or double-glazing. The respondent believes, with some justification, that they are giving up their valuable time and may be getting little in return.

It is in the opening seconds of the introduction that the interview will be won or lost and so the questionnaire must have an introduction with a hook that interests the respondents.

Skills are required on the part of the interviewer to communicate the introduction as quickly as possible so that respondent can start talking and answering the questions. The more information that is packed in to the introduction and the longer it takes, the more time a respondent will have to think of reasons why they don't want to take part. A fast engagement is vital.

The interviewer's approach really does make a difference. Respondents like to feel that they are in the hands of a professional. Someone that is businesslike without being pushy.

Respondents will talk to people they trust. Building trust in a few seconds is difficult when the interviewer has only their voice and words. However both can be powerful ordnance if they are used correctly. The right words and voice will create legitimacy for the interview. The wrong ones will result in the brush off. It does therefore help to have a script prepared before making contact with the respondent to ensure that the introduction is, as near as possible, the best one to win trust and co-operation.

In most cases, once a respondent has started the interview, they will see it through to completion. Compliance is not a foregone conclusion and a different set of skills is needed for the execution of the interview itself.

The crucial requirement of any interview is to know the questionnaire thoroughly. This is especially the case with paper based questionnaires, as complex routings could break the flow of the interview.

The interview is, of course, a script of a kind and the questions have to be read out exactly as stated. Good interviewers develop their own style, speaking at a moderate pace and with good clarity and

dition. And, although it may be the last interview in a busy and tiring day, they must sound interested. In fact, they need to be interested because a good interviewer really does have to listen.

Key point

A good questionnaire will be successful in collecting accurate facts and opinions and will be an enjoyable event for the respondent.

Although the questionnaire is a script, and it must be adhered to, there is scope to build in social lubrication and verbal encouragements that indicate the interviewer is listening and is interested. The body language of the voice becomes even more important in telephone interviews as there is nothing else to create a rapport.

By the time the interview is finished, a relationship will have been created with the respondent. The respondent should be thanked for their time and effort and it

may be appropriate to ask permission to call again should it be necessary to clarify any of the answers. (This is more important in business to business interviews).

Think about

Write an introduction to a questionnaire that you think would be successful in winning your cooperation. The introduction should include all the necessary coverage of who is carrying out the survey (not necessarily who is commissioning it), promises of anonymity and confidentiality, how long it will take and a persuasive hook. See if you can use less than 100 words.

SCARY STORY

In the 1980s, Coke became seriously concerned that it was losing market share to Pepsi. In 1984 it only had a 4.9% lead of Pepsi in the US. This was despite the fact that Coke outspent Pepsi on advertising, by upwards of \$100 million per year. One major problem was that Pepsi's advertising was simply more effective. The Pepsi Challenge had been fabulously successful: Pepsi made great play in its ads that in blind taste tests, people preferred Pepsi to Coke.

Roy Stout, head of market research for Coca-Cola USA, put it this way, "If we have twice as many vending machines, dominate fountain, have more shelf space, spend more on advertising, and are competitively priced, why are we losing share? You look at the Pepsi Challenge, and you have to begin asking about taste."

In September 1984, Coke thought that it had found the answer with a new formula that beat Pepsi in blind taste tests by as much as 6 to 8%. Bearing in mind that Pepsi had beaten Coke by anywhere from 10 to 15%, this was an 18% swing. All discouraging market research was tossed into the bin and New Coke was launched – with disastrous results.

When it hit the streets, New Coke was rejected by huge groups of people. Comments were received such as "sewer water", "furniture polish", "Coke for wimps", "two-day-old Pepsi", and "I miss the battery acid tang".

What we can learn from this story is not that the research carried out by Coke or by Pepsi was wrong; rather that the wrong questions were asked. An assumption was made that Coke drinkers chose the drink on taste and this became the subject of the study. In fact the reality was far more subtle and the main driver of choice was the brand. For years Coke was promoted as "the real thing" and with the launch of New Coke, it implied that they had been duped.