

## Six Ideas For You During Questionnaire Design

All surveys have a few general “rules to the road” applicable to the development of content and survey structure. Keep these in mind as you go through the design process.

### **1. Make things simple at the start.**

Surveys should begin with a question, or short series of questions, easy to answer. Asking difficult questions at the start may discourage participation. For example, asking a rating question about a supervisor may be a bit more difficult to answer than one asking about whether you’re happy in your job.

### **2. Be mindful of the number of questions asked.**

A survey’s job is to gather feedback about information that matters. Resist the urge to use lengthy questionnaires filled with questions that might provide results that would be “nice-to-know”, rather than those that you really need to know. A well-designed questionnaire stays focused and orderly to optimize completion.

### **3. Essential questions or not.**

One of the best ways to determine how essential a question may be is by asking yourself the following: “How will we use the results to this question?” If you can’t see a use for it, then may not be needed!

### **4. Structured questions vs. open-ended.**

Most surveys use question formats that rely on rating scales or multiple choice. These are typically a bit easier to complete, rather than where there are no answer choices provided. That said, don’t be afraid to use at least one open-ended question that yields a verbatim comment. Verbatims often bring life to what a survey taker is trying to convey and yield additional insights.

### **5. A few cooks, but not too many.**

Before developing the survey, get a general feel from stakeholders about survey content. Once you’ve heard from them, develop a questionnaire and have it reviewed by a colleague or two to make sure the content and structure is clear. Ambiguity or confusion are hindrances to a successful process.

### **6. Responsive design probably matters.**

Finally, be aware of how your target audience may be taking the survey. Today, most are done online and this means respondents on workstations, tablets or even a smaller mobile device. This has implications on question structure and calls for a system that offers responsive design. Check to be sure your program can accommodate these various response possibilities.