



Seeds . . .

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In the past few years the use of the Internet has changed the way research firms collect data. Yet, despite their prevalence, Internet surveys still manage to create headaches for marketers and researchers. Having completed two dozen surveys within the past year, we wanted to share our thoughts about this methodology, including its good and bad points

There are a number of advantages to this methodology. These include low data collection costs and quick turnaround for data collection. There are, however, a number of items to consider when using this methodology, such as:

- Database - Is it current? How large is it? Is your audience mobile or tied to a desk?
- Questionnaire - Is it conducive to an on-line format? Are the questions too sensitive for this approach?
- Segmentation - How complex is the segmentation? Is the database large enough to provide adequate segmentation?

This methodology requires special consideration to these areas because you lose most of the control over where interviews come from. Unlike a telephone survey, where you are in direct control over which segments you contact, an Internet survey relies on the goodwill of the respondent to complete the survey.

So what can you do to increase the response rate? There are a number of approaches:

1. Create a good invitation and have the client deliver it via e-mail. Often the respondent has no idea who the research firm is. If they are your (potential) customers, they'll know who you are and may have more incentive to participate.
 2. Conduct a pre-test with a representative sample of respondents.
 3. Track responses on a daily basis.
 4. Review the returns from the pre-test. If returns are lower than expected, consider a respondent incentive - a drawing for a large screen TV, a small gift for each respondent, extended warranty on the next purchase.
 5. For smaller segments, use reminder emails to show the respondent their participation is important
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