

How to kill a global online survey

A 10-step guide to guaranteed project failure

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Does your company provide global online surveys for end clients in the U.S.? Or are you the end user? If you have Emerging Markets on your country list, in many cases you will need local support in remote geographies, especially for b2b studies. The details depend on particular project details but overall, a global online survey is a tough job.

We have been providing recruitment and data collection for online surveys for a couple of years now. This is sometimes an exciting experience so we decided to share it with the U.S. audience. Here is a vendor's advice how to kill your project. Good news: you don't need to follow it strictly.

- 1) Make sure that your project involves countries where online research methodologies are not well developed, so that your panel sample is well biased. Still better, the panel itself simply does not exist; in this case, tell your vendor they are free to use any method of their choice for survey recruitment. Sample quality is no longer an issue, is it?
- 2) Inform your vendor that the study is going live at the very last moment so that they have the opportunity to set up the project overnight.
- 3) Do not allow your vendor to translate the questionnaire or check if it's working properly in their language version. You have in-house native speakers who came to the U.S. 20 years ago, they will do the job.
- 4) Don't worry if broadband internet access is available everywhere, so that participants can wait downloading your graphics-heavy questionnaire.
- 5) Never adjust screening criteria or demographics to local requirements - you need consistent data, right?
- 6) Make sure that the survey server does not support the expected number of respondents who are logging in simultaneously.
- 7) If you provide your own sample list, make sure it is smaller than target sample and outdated.
- 8) If you use an external link in your survey e.g., to present a video, make sure it does not open in at least 5 cases out of 10.
- 9) Process your server updates at night when European and Asian fieldwork goes on in full swing. That will ensure that at least some questionnaires get lost midway or after completion.
- 10) At the end of the survey, tell your vendor you are not happy with at least 30% of the sample so you are not going to pay for it. They do not have the survey data so it's a good option for further savings. This will secure a good base for co-operation in the future.

If you think these are isolated cases, think twice, especially if you were happy to embrace off-shoring as a cost-effective alternative to data collection. And a caveat for end users: you probably have no idea what happens to your survey once it goes to field. Few companies offer transparency about their vendors worldwide. Well, maybe you should ask more questions?

For a detailed discussion, pls contact a.gornicka@inquiry.com.pl