

10 tips for a better survey

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UPA2012, Las Vegas

Story 1: My experience of surveys in UX (up to about 2010)



We need lots of data.
Your samples are too small.
We're going to do a survey.



But, but... er, er, ...

Story 2: Interviews with UX experts, mostly in Australia, changed my views

Do you use surveys?

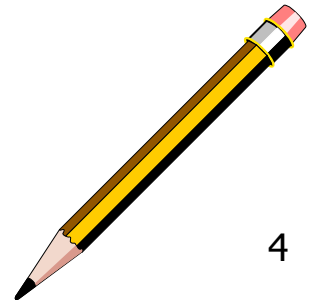


Sure. Alongside other user research, all the time.



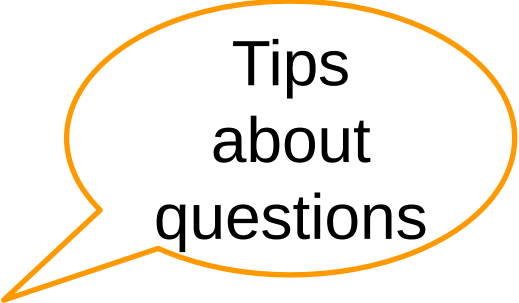
Where do we stand on surveys?

- Do you do surveys?
- Who decides whether to do the survey?



Agenda

Survey =



Tips
about
questions

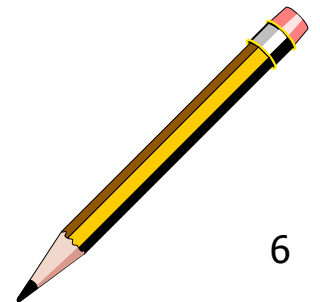
Questionnaire

+ Process

Any ideas?

Question 25

In your **last five days at work**, what percentage of your work time do you estimate that you spent using publicly-available online services (not including email, instant messaging, and search) to do your work using a work computer or other device?

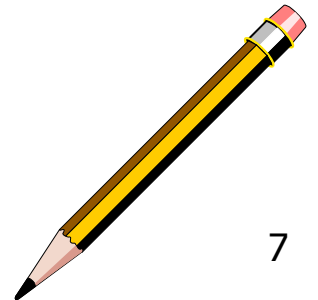


Any ideas?

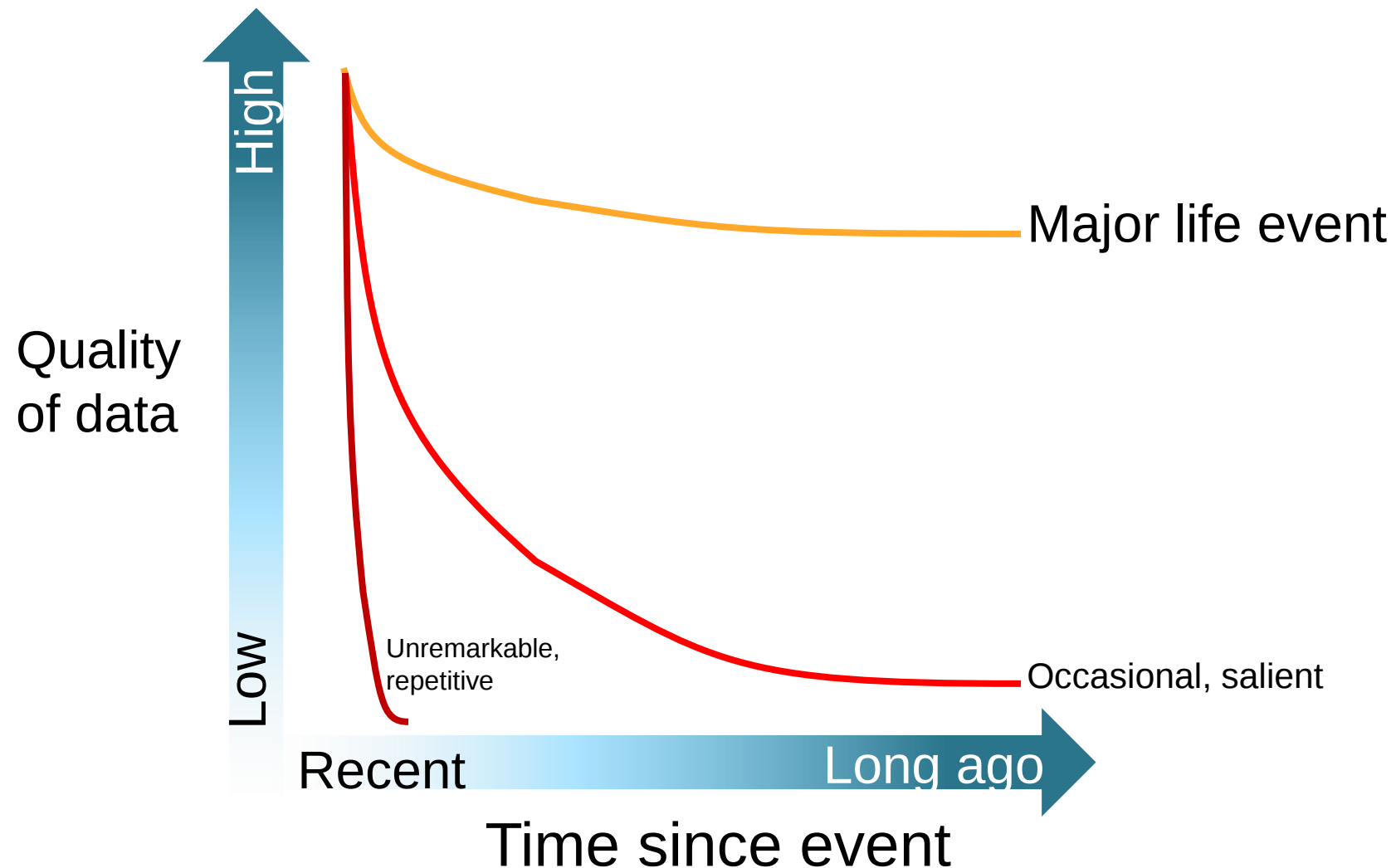
Question 25

In your **last five days at work**, what percentage of your work time do you estimate that you spent using publicly-available online services (not including email, instant messaging, and search) to do your work using a work computer or other device?

This is a badly-written question, and most of us could only guess wildly at an answer



The approximate curve of forgetting



Tip 1

Ask about recent vivid experience



Image credit: Fraser Smith

Looks like bands ...

4. On average, how many hours per week do you spend using the Internet? (web surfing, IM)

- ☐ Less than one hour per week
- ☐ 1 to less than 4 hours
- ☐ 4 to less than 8 hours
- ☐ 8 to less than 12 hours
- ☐ 12 to less than 24 hours
- ☐ 24 to less than 36 hours
- ☐ 36 hours or more per week

Continue

Looks like bands ... works like rating scale

4. On average, how many hours per week do you spend using the Internet? (web surfing, IM)

☐ None or hardly any

☐

☐

☐ About average

☐

☐

☐ Totally addicted

Continue

Tip 2

Be careful when offering
banded answers



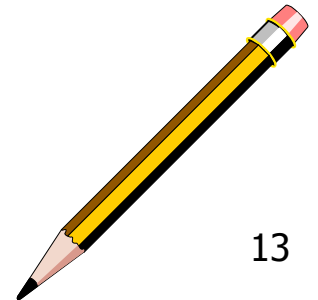
Image credit: Caroline Jarrett

How many questions can you find here?

And again, how likely would you be to purchase rail tickets through the National Rail Enquiries website or a mobile app from National Rail Enquiries, using a smartphone or a tablet device such as the Apple iPad or Samsung Galaxy Tab? Please use the scale of 1-10, where 10 is very likely, and 1 is not at all likely.

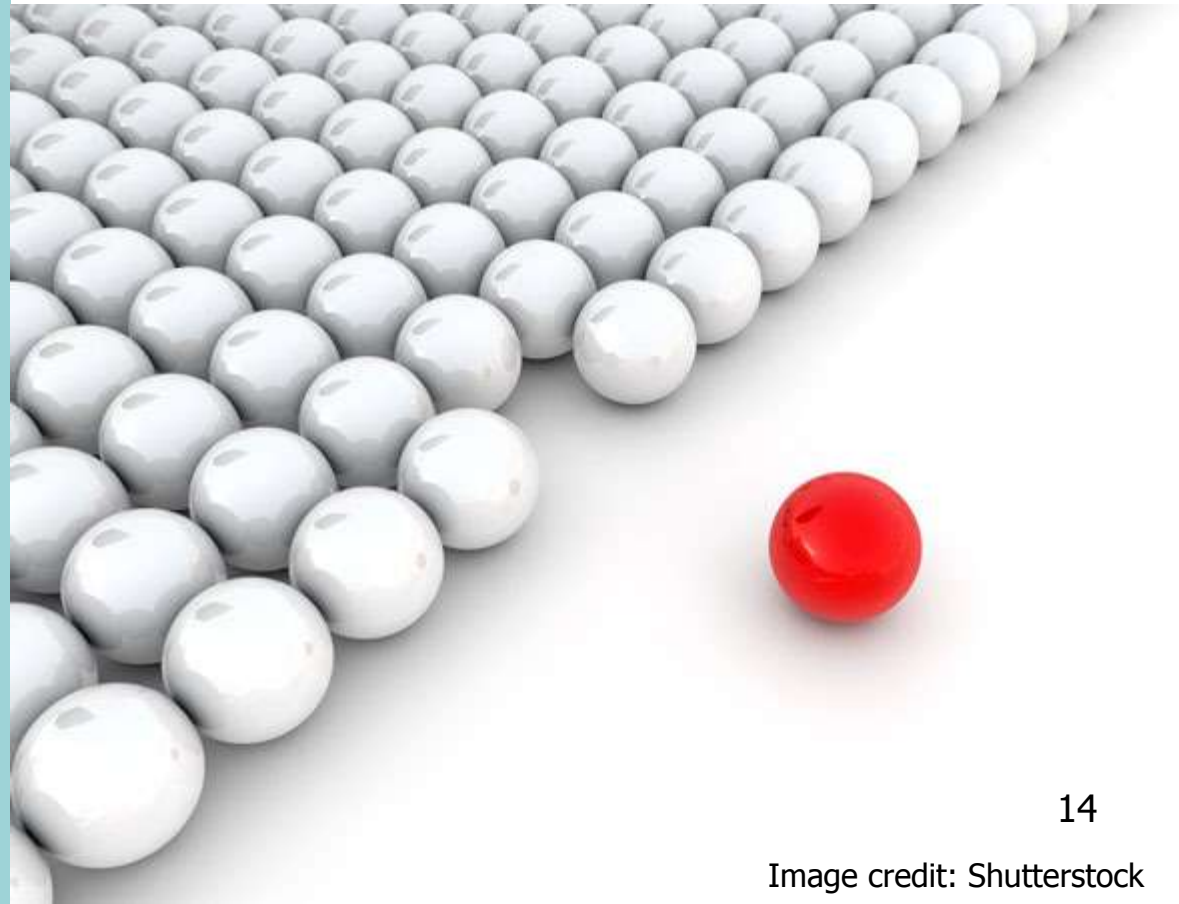
Not at all likely	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Very likely
1									10
☐	☐	☐	☒	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

And again, how likely would you be to purchase rail tickets through the National Rail Enquiries website or a mobile app from National Rail Enquiries, using a smartphone or tablet device such as the Apple iPad or Samsung Galaxy Tab?



Tip 3

Ask one question at a time



Most surveys I see have ratings from 1 to 5

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Not Applicable
	5	4	3	2	1	
Overall, I was satisfied with my experience in Hayward Dining Room	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Wouldn't it be easier to have just two ?

	True	False
I usually get what I want in life.	☒	☐
I need to be kept informed about news events.	☐	☐

7 points are more accurate!

	Completely satisfied	Very satisfied	Quite satisfied	Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	Quite dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Completely dissatisfied
Your outward journey with easyJet	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Your whole experience with easyJet on this latest occasion	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

What about 1 to 10?

1: *Please rate how well the site is organized.

1=Poor									Excellent=10	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Don't Know
☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☒

Likert had several different types of question in his scales

13. How much military training should we have?

- (a) We need universal compulsory military training. (1)
- (b) We need Citizens Military Training Camps and Reserve Officers Training Corps, but not universal military training. (2)
- (c) We need some facilities for training reserve officers but not as much as at present. (3)
- (d) We need only such military training as is required to maintain our regular army. (4)
- (e) All military training should be abolished. (5)

17. The United States, whether a member or not, should co-operate fully in the humanitarian and economic programs of the League of Nations.

Strongly Approve (5)	Approve (4)	Undecided (3)	Disapprove (2)	Strongly Disapprove (1)
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You can find an academic paper to support almost any number of points in a range

- Krosnick and Presser refer to ~87 papers on ranges
 - Krosnick, J. A. and S. Presser (2009). Question and Questionnaire Design. Handbook of Survey Research (2nd Edition) J. D. Wright and P. V. Marsden, Elsevier
- If you'd like to track down the research yourself:
<http://comm.stanford.edu/faculty/krosnick/docs/2010/2010%20Handbook%20of%20Survey%20Research.pdf>
or
<http://bit.ly/KNWlio>

Users don't care much about the number of points. They care more about the questions.

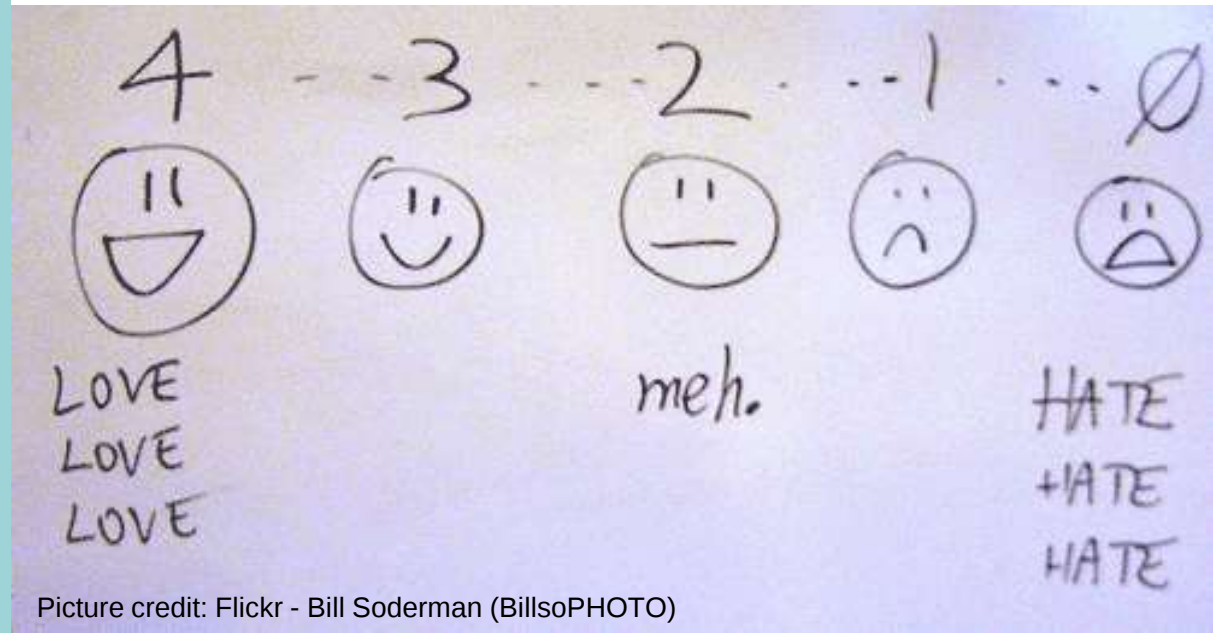
	Complete satisfied
Your outward journey with easyJet	☐
Your whole experience with easyJet on this latest occasion	☐

What's the difference
between those questions?
This survey is too repetitive.



Tip 4

Don't stress too much about the number of points in your rating scale



Well, OK, stress a bit.

Based on today's visit, how would you rate your experience on the *Harvard Business Review* site overall?



This scale is
downright peculiar.
Avoid.

How would you improve this questionnaire?

In replies all text above this line is added to the ticket

Hello Caroline Jarrett,

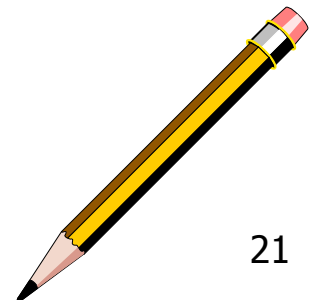
We'd love to hear what you think of our customer service.
Please take a moment to answer one simple question by
clicking either link below:

How would you rate the support you received?

How would you rate the support you received?

[Good, I'm satisfied](#)

[Bad, I'm unsatisfied](#)



How would you rate the support you received?

Lots of ways, e.g. the instructions are too long. But the biggest problem is: many people will want to choose 'other' but there isn't an 'other' option

In replies all text above this line

Hello Caroline Jarrett,

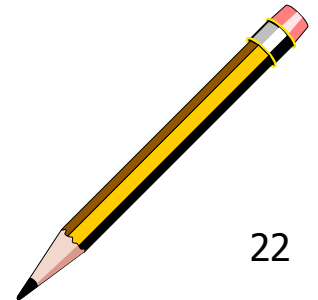
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[Good, I'm satisfied](#)

[Bad, I'm unsatisfied](#)



Tip 5

Stress a lot about 'other'



Design by @RickyBuchanan; t-shirt from nopitycity.com or zazzle.co.uk

Agenda

Survey =

Questionnaire

+ Process



“Shared reference”: both sides interpret in the same way

Please note: mandatory questions have a * next to them

Q1. How did you find out about the website? *

Other:

Q2. In the last 6 months, approximately how many times have you visited this website? *

Q3. What was the main service area that you were interested in today? *

Other:

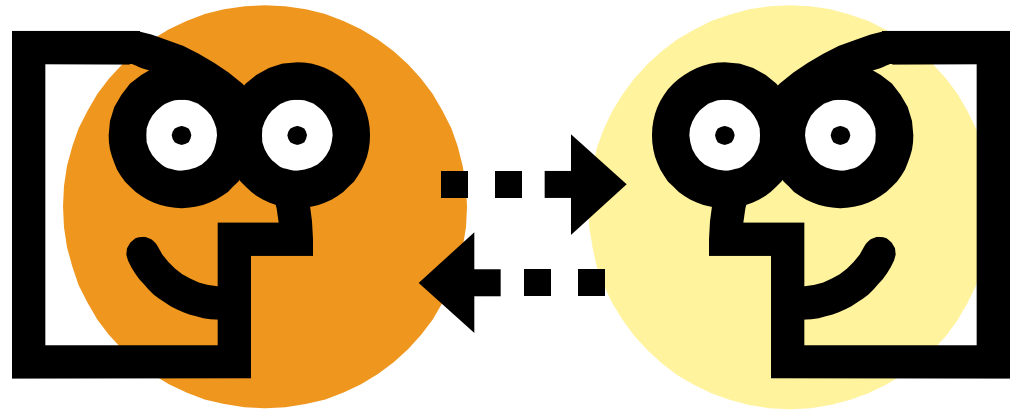


Service area?



Tip 6

Interview users about the topics in your survey



Collecting data used to be expensive.
A survey was a rare event.



Today, we get surveyed constantly



News | Sport | Weather | iPlayer | TV | R

Commercial Availability

Clare in the Community



All formats



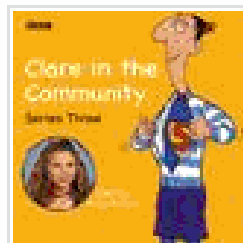
Audio Download
(from £5.36)



CD
(from £10.44)

Sort by Release Date ▼

3 items



Clare in the Community: Series 3

Release date: Jan 2008

Formats available: Audio Download

Prices from: £5.49



Clare in the Community: Series 2

Release date: Oct 2007

X

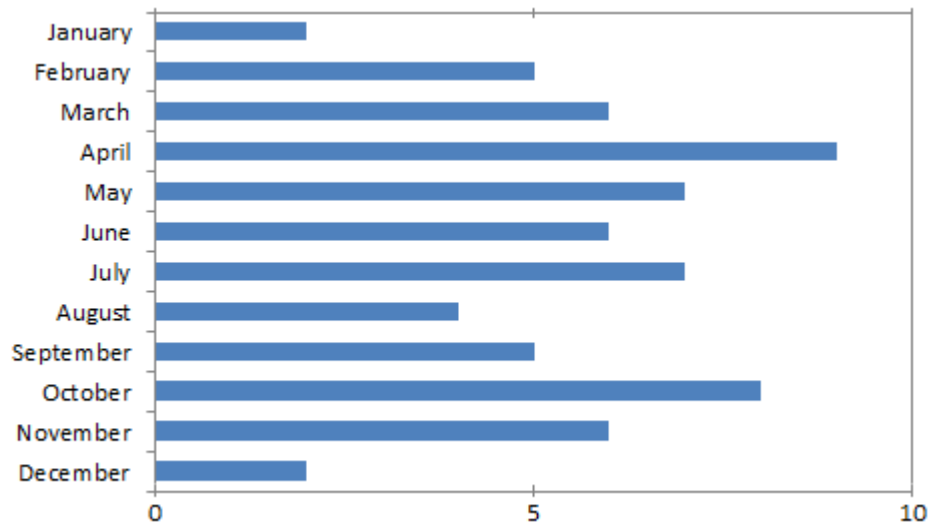
We are always looking to improve the site and your opinions count.

Do you have a few minutes to tell us what you think about this site?

Yes

No

I respond to a lot of surveys

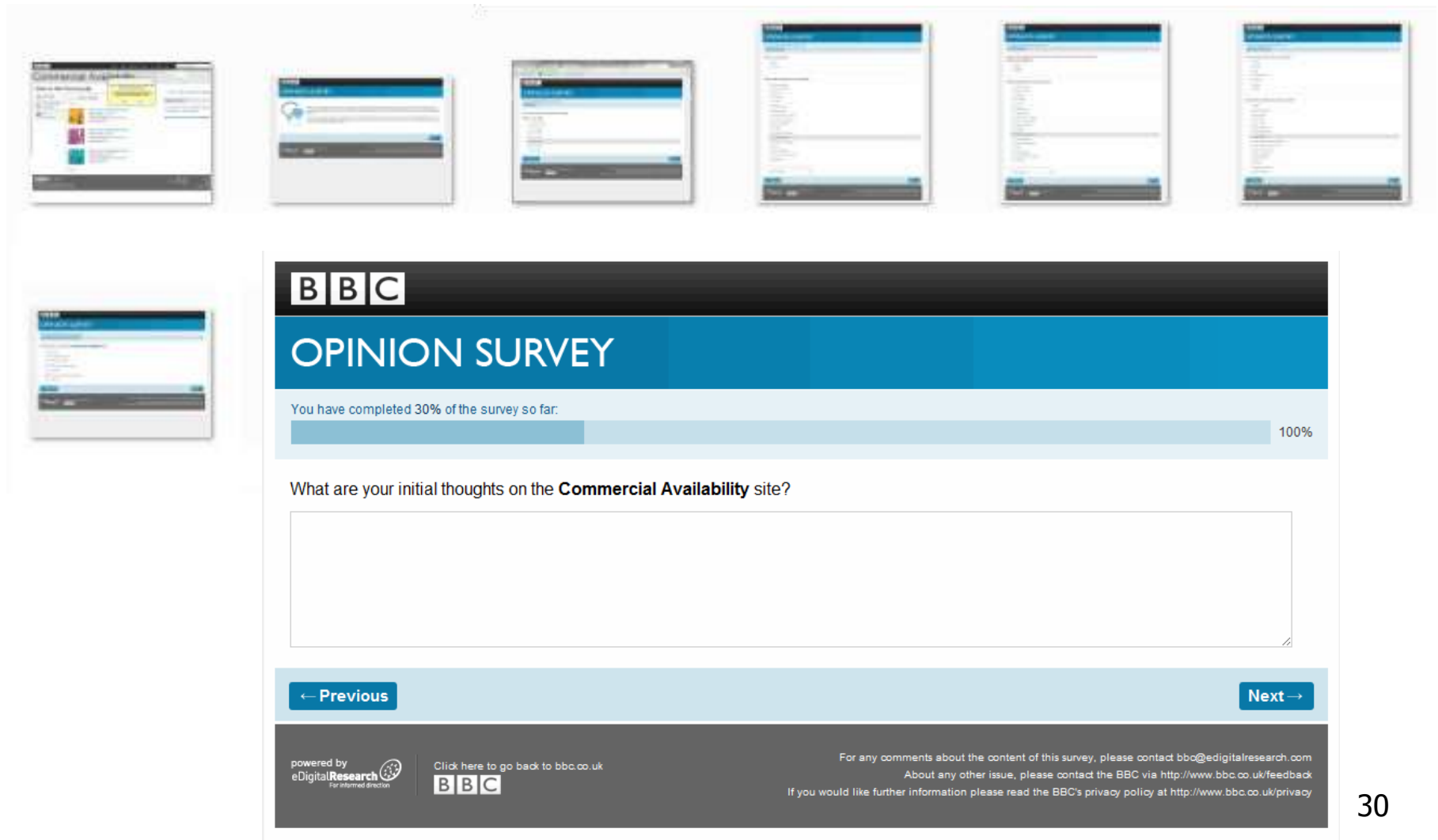


89 invitations

67 completed surveys

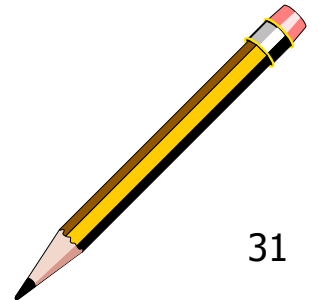
1387 questions

They wanted my opinions but it took 6 screens to get to the first opinion question



Could the BBC trim some of these?

- Gender
- Region you live in
- Ethnic origin
- Type of Internet connection
- Rate how it looks
- What do you like about it
- What do you dislike about it
- Your main reason for visiting the site today



Why not ask one really simple question?

SUTTONS SEEDS
Est. 1806

0844 922 2899
(Customer Services)
8.30am to 5pm, Mon to Fri

0844 922 0606
(Orders only)
24hrs a day, 7 days a week

Plant Despatch Schedule

Sign In / Register | My Account

1 item **£1.45**

View Basket

Enter Search Here **Go**

Home | Vegetables | Flowers | Garden Equipment | Fruit | Perennial Plants | Special Offers | Garden Advice and Help

Home » Gardening » Vegetables » New Vegetables for 2012 » Brussels Sprout Continuity Collection

Brussels Sprout Continuity Collection

Code: 216121

Harvest October-February

Collection contains 18 plants (6 of each variety): **Nautic** (a vigorous, high-yielding early variety with good standing)

Pack of 18 Plug Plants (6 of each variety)

Quantity: **+** **-**

Add to Basket **£6.99**

Add to wish list

to grow your own. Even the smallest patio or that will give you a bumper crop of delicious fresh

Help us improve

We value your opinion.
What do you like about our site and what can we improve on?

Click here to type...

SUBMIT

Tip 7

Remove the questions
that you don't need



Image credit: Flickr - Enokson

If you ask for answers,
you have to read and think about them

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Est. 1806

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1 item **£1.45**
View Basket

Enter Search Here **Go**

Home | Vegetables | Flowers | Garden Equipment | Fruit | Perennial Plants | Special Offers | Garden Advice and Help

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Pack of 18 Plug Plants (6 of each variety)

Quantity: **+** **-**

Add to Basket **£6.99**

Add to wish list

to grow your own. Even the smallest patio or
at will give you a bumper crop of delicious fresh

Help us improve

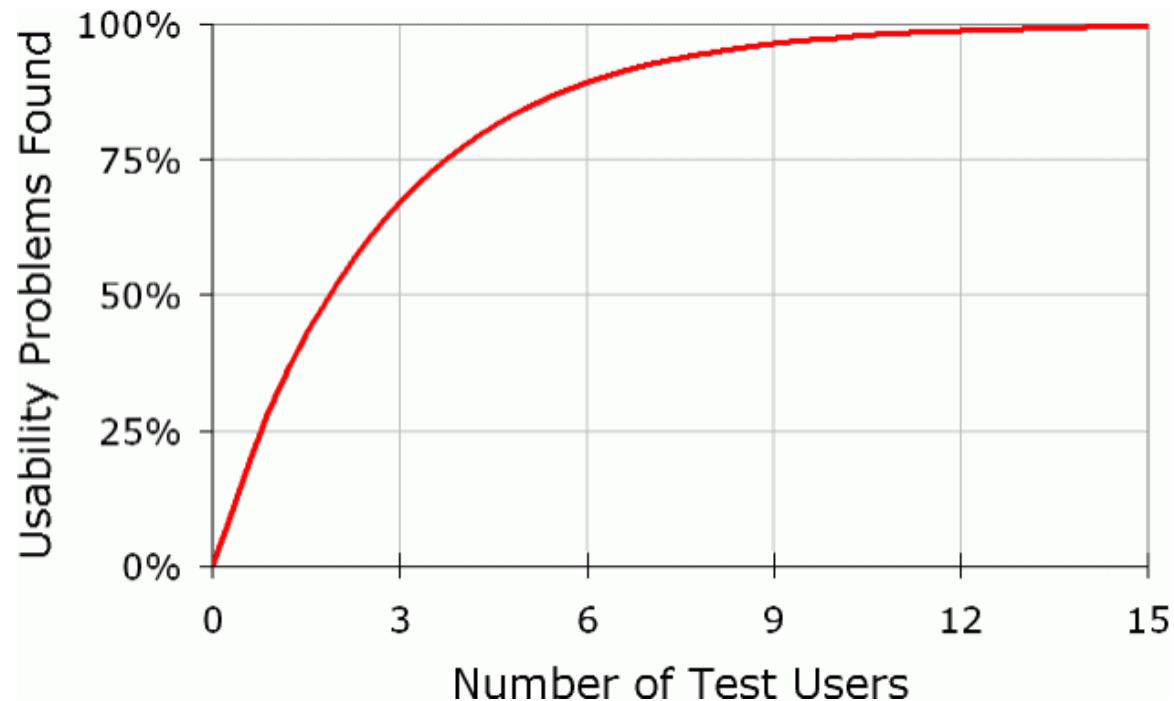
We value your opinion.
What do you like about our site and what can we improve on?

Click here to type...

SUBMIT

Tip 8

Decide how many responses you really need

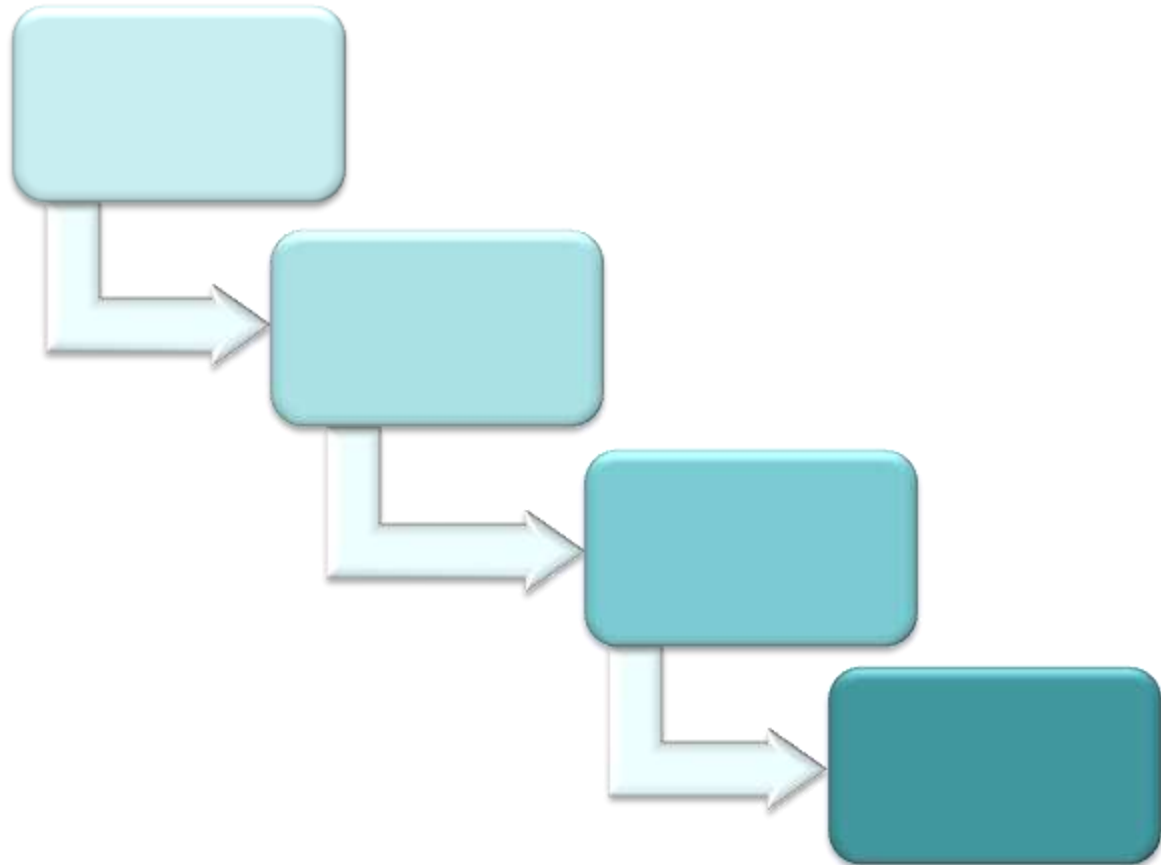


We got so much great data
that I put every detail in
this report

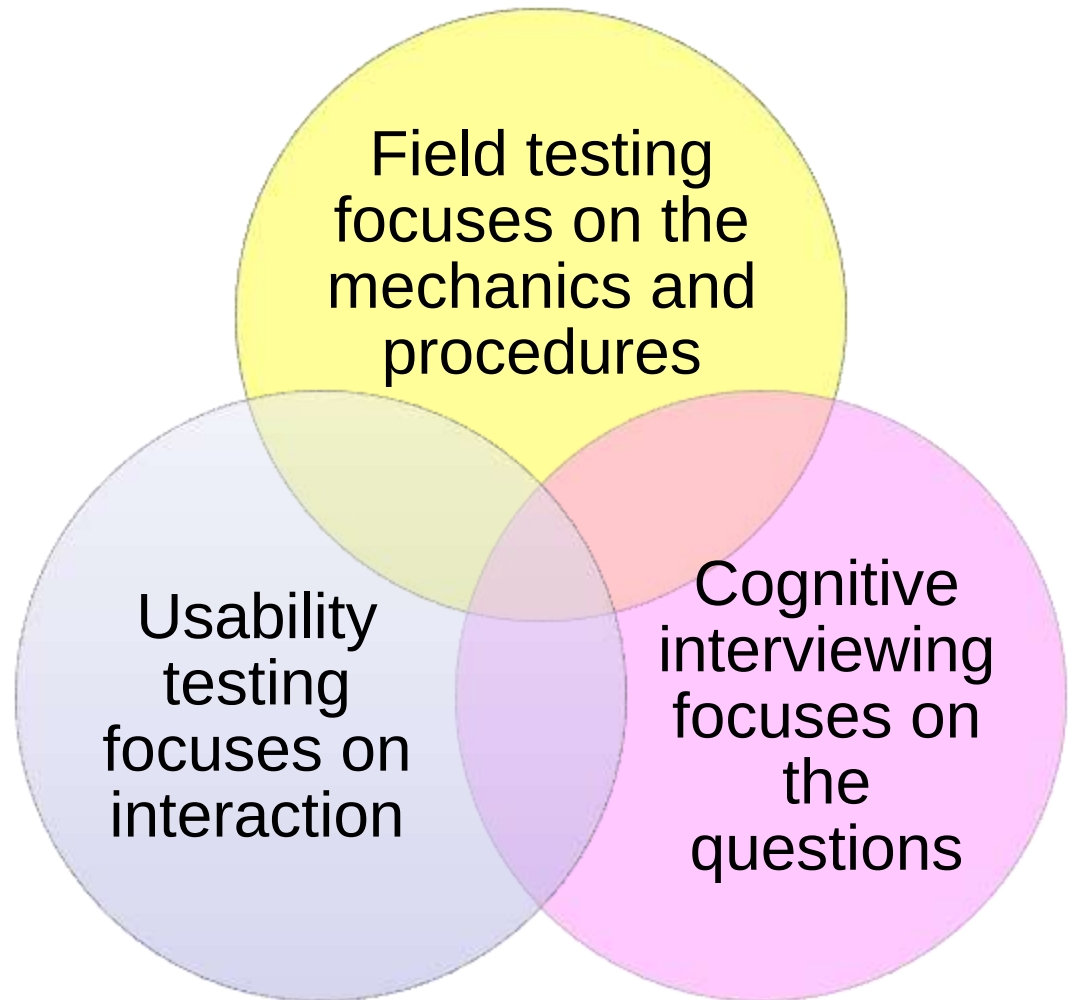


Tip 9

Create a draft presentation, early. Really early.

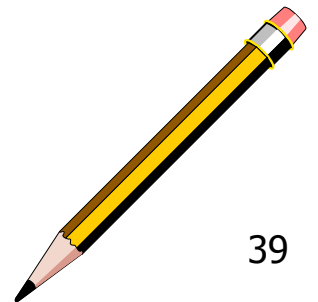


Presser et al 2004: pretesting focuses on a “broader concern for improving data quality so that measurements meet a survey’s objective”



Try some cognitive interviewing

- Pair up. One person gets to be the interviewer.
- Think aloud as you try to answer this question:

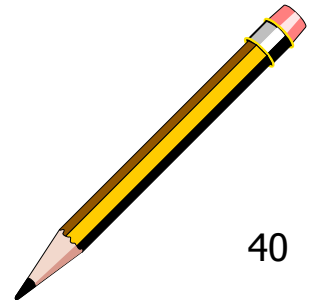


Try some cognitive interviewing

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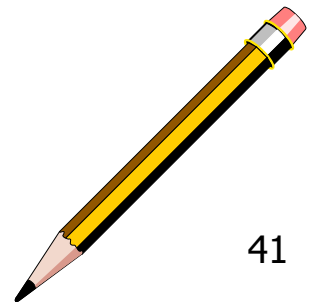
'how many windows are there in your house'

(Dillman et al, 2009)



OK, now swap and try this question

- Please think about a computer system or web site that you used recently. Now think aloud as you answer this question:

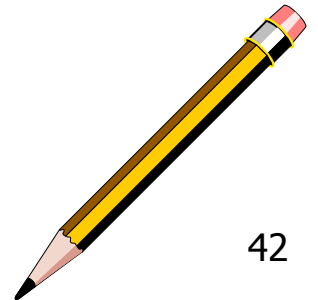


OK, now swap and try this question

- Please think about a computer system or web site that you used recently. Now think aloud as you answer this question:

‘I thought there was too much inconsistency in this system’

(from the System Usability Scale, Brooke 1986)



Tip 10

Test, test, test, test

Top
tip



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Slides: <http://www.slideshare.net/cjforms>

Blog posts and more resources:

<http://www.rosenfeldmedia.com/books/survey-design/>

