Planning the Online Survey

A sound plan is essential to the success of any research endeavor. Survey research is a process, and each element has an impact on the others. Research objectives guide questionnaire format; questionnaire format determines the types of questions that may be used; the types of questions used determine data analysis; data analysis reflects research objectives; and all of this is bound by time, budget, and ethical considerations.

The first step in the planning process is to articulate a plan for the survey. This plan will be a handy map to which you can continually return as you address the individual components of the survey-planning process. These outlines are also particularly useful when the survey is part of a team research project.

In this chapter, we consider the major elements of a survey plan—namely, choosing an e-mail or a Web page survey, selecting survey software, writing clear project objectives, preparing timelines, and ethical considerations important in the online survey environment.

E-Mail Surveys

E-mail surveys are economical and fast to create. However, they are limited to simple questionnaires, whereas Web page surveys can include audio, video, complex branching patterns among the questions, and randomized questions. Although the use of e-mail is growing rapidly, it is not universal. According to a 2003 U.S. Census Special Study, 88% of adult Internet users
use the Internet to send or receive e-mail. Many segments of the population, notably the elderly and the lower-income groups, do not have access to e-mail. It is therefore best to confine the use of e-mail surveys to professional, corporate, academic, or other environments where most members of the population are known to have e-mail access. The following are the specific advantages and disadvantages of e-mail surveys.

**Advantages**

- **Speed:** An e-mail questionnaire can be sent to hundreds or even thousands of people by entering or importing the distribution list and hitting the send key. It can gather thousands of responses within a day or two (McCullough, 1998).

- **Economy:** Creating e-mail surveys does not require survey software or the services of a Web survey host. Once the sample has been selected and the questionnaire drafted, there is practically no cost in administering the survey.

- **Convenience:** Having the questionnaire in the body of an e-mail message makes it easy for respondents to return the questionnaire by using the reply feature of their e-mail program.

- **Simplicity:** No special software or technical expertise is needed to conduct e-mail surveys. The developer only needs to be familiar with basic e-mail and word-processing programs.

**Disadvantages**

- **Availability of a sampling frame:** You must have access to a list of the population you wish to survey. If you do not have access to such a list, you must be able to purchase or compile one.

- **Technical limitations:** While it is possible to include graphic elements in an e-mail survey, this may create large file sizes that are often blocked by e-mail servers. For reasonable file sizes, it is best to limit e-mail questionnaires to text only.

- **Limited question types:** E-mail surveys cannot automatically skip or randomize questions.

- **Unsolicited e-mail (i.e., spam):** Many e-mail programs have filters to flag unsolicited messages as junk mail. Some filters will not accept bulk e-mails.
Data entry: E-mail surveys require data entry before analysis.

Anonymity is not preserved: The researcher will have the e-mail address of the person who responded to the e-mail and can link the responses to the respondent.

Internet/Intranet (Web Page) Surveys

Web surveys have many of the speed and convenience advantages of e-mail surveys plus added features that may make them a more practical option for researchers contemplating online surveys. However, taking advantage of these added features often means additional costs and the need for technical expertise. Consider the following advantages and disadvantages of Web-based surveys.

Advantages

• **Speed**: If posted on a popular Web site, a questionnaire has the potential to gather thousands of responses within hours.

• **Audience**: You can post the link on numerous Web sites with the permission and cooperation of the site’s owner. This could broaden your audience as you could have the link located on sites whose audience consists of researchers, teachers, children, students, and so on.

• **Economy**: Web surveys are the most economical means by which to collect data from large numbers of respondents who may be geographically dispersed. After the initial set-up costs (software, Web hosting, etc.), it costs no more to target large samples than small ones. Moreover, direct data entry eliminates the need for data-entry personnel, thus further reducing costs.

• **Added content options**: Many Web survey hosts and software packages offer the facility to embed images and audio and video files. This may increase the time it takes for the Web page to load, so these options should be employed judiciously.

• **Expanded question types**: Web page questionnaires can include a wide variety of question types and can be programmed to skip questions when necessary, ensuring more accurate data than when respondents are asked to skip questions in an e-mail questionnaire.

• **The ability to ask sensitive questions**: Web surveys are similar to other forms of self-administered surveys in that there is no researcher present and participants complete the questionnaire at their own pace. This type of
self-administered format has been shown to be optimal for inquiring about sensitive or embarrassing information (see Schaefer & Dillman, 1998).

- **Anonymity is preserved:** There is no e-mail address linked to a Web survey response.

Disadvantages

- **Limited populations:** Internet use is quickly becoming the norm in America, and the number of people using computers and accessing the Internet increases substantially each year. Even though there is some disagreement about the exact number of households online, one fact is clear: The online population does not reflect the general population of the United States. There is an upward bias in socioeconomic status among Internet users, and Web surfers are not evenly represented across ethnic groups. (See Tables 2.1 and 2.2 for details about the worldwide and American Internet populations.) This precludes the use of Internet surveys for projects aiming to draw conclusions about general populations.

- **Abandonment of the survey:** Respondents can easily quit in the middle of a questionnaire. To minimize the likelihood of respondents quitting, questionnaires should be as short as possible—that is, ask only the questions that are related to the project objectives. Avoid the temptation to add a few more questions because “you’re conducting the survey anyway.” It also helps if the questionnaire is easy to navigate and fun to complete. Pretesting the questionnaire will provide feedback about ease of navigation, and an understanding of the target population will aid in the inclusion of items that are interesting and relevant to the respondents. Offering incentives may help prevent abandonment of the survey.

- **Dependence on software:** Internet surveys require researchers to use software to create and deploy questionnaires. There are numerous choices of software packages and online survey companies. The products vary greatly in cost, ease of use, and flexibility. The novice may find the choices daunting. In the following section, we suggest some factors to consider when purchasing software.

### What to Consider When Buying Survey Software and Selecting a Web Survey Host

To conduct a Web-based survey, you will need software and the services of a Web-based survey host. There are hundreds of commercial software programs and Web-based survey hosts on the market (see Appendix A).
### Table 2.1  
Internet Users Worldwide, 2002 and 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>2002 (%)</th>
<th>2005 (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Netherlands</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Great Britain</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>—</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lebanon</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jordan</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOURCE: Data from Pew Reasearch Center. Used with permission.

NOTE: Data are based on the question “Do you ever go online to access the Internet or the World Wide Web or to send and receive e-mail?”

### Table 2.2  
Internet Use in the United States, June 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age (years)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18–29</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30–49</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50–64</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65 and older</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less than high school graduate</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school graduate/GED</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College graduate</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SOURCE: Based on data from Pew Research Center.

NOTE: a. Total percentage of American adults using Internet = 68. Data are based on telephone interviews with 2,001 adults living in the continental United States.
Web-based survey hosts (also known as application service providers [ASPs]) typically offer customers a full range of services, including the ability to create questionnaires, conduct surveys, analyze data, and produce and share reports, all via the company’s Web site. Some Web survey companies offer the option of purchasing software that can be used locally on the researcher’s computer; questionnaires are then uploaded to a Web site or e-mailed to respondents. This option leaves researchers responsible for installing the software and providing their own technical support for the system. Many of the ASPs (e.g., Zoomerang.com, SurveyMonkey.com) offer free trial versions of their services, and most software vendors have mini versions of their full packages available for customers to try.

There is a multitude of benefits that comes with using commercial software and Web-based survey hosts. The advantages include reduced development time and, hence, lower costs; a variety of design templates from which to choose; and the ability to compute basic statistics and the capability to export data to Excel or SPSS files for more complex data analysis. The challenge comes in selecting an appropriate software and online survey host for your needs and level of technical expertise. Although we won’t evaluate specific vendors here, we will address some important considerations when choosing software and a survey host:

- **Expense:** Survey software and ASPs vary greatly in price. One company advertises downloadable survey software for a little more than $20.00; at the upper end of the range, we found a company that offered a custom software package plus Web hosting for approximately $16,000. The issue of cost is usually one of finding a product that contains the features you will actually use for the lowest price. Custom software packages may be appropriate if your needs are very specific (and your budget large); however, you may find that an off-the-shelf product may be adequate if your survey requires only basic features. Clearly, the $16,000 software will include many more options than the $20.00 version, but if you do not make use of those added features, they will slow down the questionnaire development process as you will have to navigate around them.

- **Ease of use:** Look for survey software that has an easy-to-use design interface with drag-and-drop capabilities for questions and scales, notes, and other text. **Wizards** that walk users through the survey creation process and questionnaire templates can be useful if you’re new to using survey software. You also should be able to save a survey you create as a template so that you may use it again in the future. Question libraries also can be valuable for new survey researchers. These libraries typically include standard demographic and opinion items and can speed up the creation of the questionnaire.
• **Question number, formats, and response options:** Check for the capacity to ask a wide variety of questions using different response options. Question formats that should be included are single response, multiple responses, scale responses (i.e., agree-disagree; 1–5 points, etc.), and matrix responses. Other useful features allow developers to use radio buttons, check boxes, and open-text boxes and to randomize question order, which may be helpful for lengthy questionnaires that may result in respondent fatigue. It is also desirable to be able to choose whether respondents may be allowed to skip questions or whether answers will be forced before they are allowed to continue with the questionnaire. Forcing responses can lead to abandonment of the survey.

• **Contingency questions:** Contingency questions allow your respondents to be directed to a new set of questions on the basis of their responses. With online surveys, this means that participants are not forced to read and answer unnecessary questions. Also, look for a “skip-and-hit” option that can be based on respondent demographics or other criteria. For example, the president, accountant, and administrator of an organization can receive the same survey but be redirected to different sets of questions depending on their position.

• **Questionnaire options:** Less expensive software packages and ASPs sometimes limit the number of questions you can place on the questionnaire and the number of responses you can collect with any one survey. Other typical limitations include the inability to use tables, images, audio, video, and ALT tags on the survey. If you know you will be conducting simple surveys with small samples, these limitations may not pose a problem. If, however, you wish to expand to longer questionnaires or survey large samples of respondents, you will need to look for software without these limits.

• **Questionnaire appearance:** Evaluate the options for customizing questionnaires. Ask if the software allows you to include logos; also, ask about the available fonts and colors. If you will be surveying special populations such as children or the elderly, this is especially important as you will want to ensure that large font sizes are available. Also, inquire about the configuration of navigation and progress bars.

• **Sampling features:** If you do not have an e-mail distribution list, some Web survey hosts, such as Zoomerang, will generate a sample for you, for a fee. Look for the ability to select random, stratified, systematic, and cluster samples.

• **Distribution options:** Look for survey software that allows for different modes of survey delivery. Even if you are only interested in conducting
online surveys, you may want the option of printing a paper copy of the questionnaires as an alternative for respondents who have disabilities or who prefer a hard copy.

- **Respondent lists:** Your survey software should allow you to import a respondent list from another software program or your e-mail address book. This reduces the time associated with manually entering the respondent data. You also should have the options of sending prenotification e-mails and thank-you e-mails.

- **Tracking respondents:** You may want to track who has responded or limit replies to one recipient. A higher response rate means less error; effective survey software offers the option of follow-up reminders to nonrespondents. Tracking these nonrespondents in the software application provides quick access for follow-up correspondence. In addition to tracking who replied, you also should be able to limit replies to one respondent. This is especially important for online surveys because you avoid skewing the data with multiple replies from one user. The use of cookies, Internet protocol addresses, and randomly generated codes should be potential options for limiting responses to prevent multiple replies from a single user.

- **Reporting and analysis options:** It is important to choose software that allows you to analyze your data and provides user-driven views of the results. How much data analysis you want to conduct online will vary according to your research purpose. Most survey software applications allow users to conduct descriptive analysis online and produce basic reports. For more complex analyses, look for software that provides the option of exporting data directly to a data analysis package like SPSS or SAS; at the very least, data should be easy to export to Excel for later importing to the statistical software package of your choice. For individuals and businesses involved in frequent online data collection and intricate data analysis, an all-inclusive package may be the appropriate solution; STATPAC, for example, offers a reasonably priced product that includes software to create e-mail and Web-based surveys and conduct basic and advanced statistical analysis (including analysis of open-ended survey questions) and free Web hosting of surveys.

- **Sharing results:** You may want to post your results on a Web site or share them with the respondents or an outside party. Many Web hosts give researchers the option to share results with others by providing a URL for a Web page containing the results. These programs allow survey developers to post the URL on a Web site so that viewers can see the real-time or final responses, depending on when you post the URL. The developer also has
the option to allow respondents to see the results immediately after he or she has completed the survey.

• **Accessibility:** You may require a Web host that can create questionnaires in an accessible format for those with visual impairments. WebSurveyor, for example, can create surveys for respondents who use screen readers. Some Web hosts, such as Zoomerang, will translate a survey into 42 languages and, if necessary, translate the responses. This translation service is provided for an additional fee.

• **Accounts:** Some Web-based survey hosts provide only one password and user name for each account. Therefore, a company with 100 people and one account can have only one person logged onto the Web-based host at a time. Other Web-based hosts will provide more than one password and user name for the price of one account. If multiple members of the research team will need access to the Web host at the same time, it is important to investigate the vendor’s account restrictions.

• **Survey security:** Password protection prevents unauthorized users from responding to the survey. Depending on the nature of the surveys you will be creating, this may be a necessary feature.

• **Customer support and training:** Be sure to evaluate the online help and customer support features of the survey software provider. Most applications come with help menus, and some are more helpful than others; it is advisable to test the software’s help menus during the trial period. Also, look for toll-free customer service phone numbers, live online support, and on-site training options.

## Survey Objectives

All research should begin with clarification of objectives. What are you trying to find out by conducting an online survey? The objectives of the project determine whom you will survey and what you will ask them. If your objectives are unclear, the results will probably be unclear. Commit to these goals in writing to help keep the survey focused. Make sure that you can tie in every questionnaire item to one or more of the survey’s objectives.

## Guidelines for Writing Survey Objectives

1. **Make objectives specific:** To write specific objectives, it is useful to start with a general goal statement that begins with the word to followed by
an action verb, such as describe, explain, explore, identify, investigate, gauge, measure, assess, or test—for example, “To investigate customer satisfaction levels.” A list of specific objectives can then be generated from this goal statement. Example 2.1 shows a general research goal followed by a list of objectives. The level of specificity in the objectives will guide the researcher when writing questionnaire items.

Example 2.1

Goal: To assess credit union members’ satisfaction with the current services

Objectives: To assess credit union members’ satisfaction regarding the following:

A. The waiting time to speak to a customer service representative
B. The loan application process
C. Membership fees
D. Telephone banking services
E. Checking account services
F. Savings account services
G. Bilingual services

Be sure that the survey objectives are in alignment with the format you choose to administer the survey; e-mail and Web-based surveys have innate coverage biases. For example, if your objective is to determine the satisfaction level of residents of the XYZ Retirement Village, then placing that survey on that village’s Web site may not target the correct set of respondents. Evidence indicates that people aged 65 and older access the Internet less often than younger people. The Web site of a retirement village may be viewed more often by family members of the residents than the residents themselves.

2. Write measurable objectives: Whether an objective is measurable should be evaluated in light of the proposed survey format. Some objectives, such as those involving physiological variables, may very well be measurable but not in an online survey. Example 2.2 presents some measurable online survey objectives.

Example 2.2

A. To assess students’ opinions about the proposed mascot
B. To determine the percentage of citizens who are likely to vote for Candidate A
C. To determine employees’ attitudes about the new delivery system
D. To collect members’ ratings of the workshop
3. **Have your objectives reviewed by experts:** There are two types of experts to consider: (a) content experts and (b) methodologists. Content experts have in-depth knowledge in specific areas. For example, if you’re conducting an election study, you might seek out political scientists or sociologists with expertise in voting behavior. These individuals can offer advice about the topic of the survey and provide a context for the research. Methodologists, on the other hand, are experts in the survey process. They can help you create specific and measurable objectives and offer advice about the feasibility of achieving your objectives with an online survey.

4. **Review the literature related to your topic:** A literature review is a basic component of most academic research papers. Even if your project does not require a formal literature review, it is valuable to conduct one anyway. In doing so, you can learn from the work of others; specifically, you will see how others have formulated their research objectives and approached specific problems in the research process. In addition, you may find that the data you are seeking to collect already exist. There are numerous research consortiums and institutes that routinely collect a host of social data (e.g., the General Social Survey conducted by researchers at the University of Chicago) and make it available to member institutions and their constituents.

**Survey Timelines**

Timelines need not be complicated. They can be as simple as listing what you plan to accomplish each week. If there is an external project deadline, you will need to start from that deadline and work backward to the present. In this scenario, researchers often find that they need more time than is available. There is a couple of options for this situation: (a) limit the research objectives to only those that can be adequately addressed in the available time or (b) decrease the acceptable sample size, thereby reducing the amount of time the survey stays in the field. Note that by decreasing the sample size, you will increase the error associated with the statistical estimates obtained from the sample data. Example 2.3 gives a timeline showing the major steps in conducting an online survey research organized by week.

**Example 2.3: Research Timeline**

- **Week 1:** Write research objectives. Begin literature review.

- **Week 2:** Continue literature review. Have research objectives reviewed by experts.
Week 3: Revise objectives. Decide between e-mail and Web-based survey administration.

Week 4: Select survey software and Web host if using Web-based survey. Locate or compile sampling frame. Select sample or import e-mail list of potential respondents.

Week 5: Prepare a draft of questionnaire online. Have experts review questionnaire for content and technical difficulties. Pretest questionnaire with sample of target respondents and experts in the field.

Week 6: Revise questionnaire and test it again. Prepare survey invitations.

Week 7: Deploy questionnaire. Monitor responses.

Week 8: Continue to monitor responses. Send follow-up reminders to nonrespondents.

Week 9: Process and analyze data.

Week 10: Write first draft of research report.

Week 11: Write second draft of research report. Prepare research presentation.

Week 12: Complete research report and presentation.

Week 13: Present research paper and results.

Obviously, timelines for research vary greatly depending on the nature of the project, the hours per week devoted to the research, the number of researchers involved, and the complexity of the data analysis required. The preceding example is intended to outline the major tasks to be accomplished and not to suggest time limits for the completion of each task.

Survey Research Ethics

Sometimes all the daily activities involved in conducting a research project cause us to forget about the “big picture” issues related to surveys. Survey researchers frequently encounter situations that are open to a variety of interpretations. Situations requiring an ethical interpretation are no different. Two individuals faced with an identical situation will likely perceive that situation in their own way and consider two different courses of action to be equally acceptable. As a result, organizations concerned with research (e.g., the American Psychological Association), and survey research in particular (e.g., the Council of American Survey Research Organizations), have developed guidelines outlining researchers’ ethical responsibilities. These guidelines are
much too lengthy and involved to review in detail here. We encourage researchers to visit the Web sites of the major survey research organizations for comprehensive information regarding survey research ethics (see our Resource Guide for Web addresses). We will discuss three of the major issues covered in most ethical guidelines: (a) informed consent, (b) ensuring respondent confidentiality and anonymity, and (c) ethical interpretation and reporting of results.

Informed Consent

In almost all cases, respondents to online surveys will be volunteers. To make an informed decision about participating in the research, volunteers should be briefed on (a) the general nature of the survey, especially if sensitive or potentially embarrassing information will be addressed; (b) the identity of the sponsor of the research; (c) how the data will be used; (d) the average length of time to complete the survey and if they will be contacted in the future with additional surveys; and (e) whether there are any risks involved in participating in the survey, such as asking respondents to disclose uncomfortable or embarrassing information.

This information can be provided in the e-mail survey invitation or as part of the introduction to the questionnaire. Institutional review boards (IRBs) generally do not require signed consent forms for participants in surveys; in fact, it would be nearly impossible to get signed consent forms in online surveys. If you believe that your survey may pose any physical or psychological threat to respondents, you should consult with the appropriate IRB representative at your institution to ensure that the research protocol includes appropriate safeguards to protect participants.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

Perhaps one of the most stringent requirements in all social research is maintaining the confidentiality of participants. Frequently, the respondents to your survey will expect that the information they provide will be confidential—that is, neither the fact of their participation nor the information they provide will be disclosed to third parties. If you have promised confidentiality, you have an ethical responsibility to ensure that participants’ identification and information is protected. If you cannot (or will not) prevent the disclosure of respondent information, you must make this fact abundantly clear in the invitation to participate in the online survey so that respondents have the opportunity to refuse participation.
Often the promise of anonymity is included in the same sentence that guarantees confidentiality, almost as if the two concepts were the same. The statement typically reads “All your responses will remain strictly confidential and anonymous.” Unfortunately, many people forget that anonymity extends beyond not requiring names and addresses on a questionnaire. Technically, responses to e-mail surveys are never truly anonymous, because researchers know the respondents’ e-mail addresses. Even without this information, it is easy to attach identifying code numbers to questionnaires or to link survey numbers to databases containing respondent information. As a result, many potential respondents are skeptical of electronic surveys offering anonymity. The important fact here is not that researchers must promise anonymity. What is essential is that if the promise is made, the researcher is obligated to take the necessary steps to ensure that identifying information about survey respondents is kept separate from their responses.

Additionally, even if survey respondents know that their anonymity is not guaranteed (e.g., so that follow-up information can be gathered or so you can contact the respondent again in the future), you have a responsibility to the respondent to guarantee that subsequent contact is appropriate. For example, don’t tell a potential respondent that he or she may be contacted to gather more information when you are really selling the name to a marketing company.

Survey Reporting and Interpretation

When reporting survey results, a host of situations arises that can potentially jeopardize respondent confidentiality and the accurate interpretation and presentation of research results.

When gathering demographic information that can identify respondents, the survey researcher has an obligation not to produce reports that can lead to the identification of individuals. For example, in an employee survey, it is reasonable to ask about gender and ethnic background to ensure that the needs of all employees are being met. If this information is gathered, be careful not to provide a report that can lead to the identification of individual employees. For example, when providing information at the department level, do not present the data so the only male, Hispanic employee can be identified. A reasonable rule of thumb to avoid this problem is to produce results only for groups containing at least 10 individuals. This way, no individual can be singled out.

Data interpretation can present another set of problematic issues for survey researchers. Efforts should be made to fully and accurately represent the results gathered by the survey. Too often, people do not present enough
information about the procedures used for gathering the data, the sampling strategy, the error and confidence levels, the response rates, or how the data were analyzed. Without this information, it is easy to misinterpret the results or overinterpret some findings, which will lead to erroneous conclusions.

Another situation arises when researchers are asked not to report data that present the host organization in an unfavorable manner. As mentioned above, every effort should be made to present the results of the survey completely and accurately. This may mean presenting some information that suggests areas of discord or opportunities for improvement. These results should not be hidden or simply forgotten. Doing so is a disservice to the organization and the people who responded to the survey, not to mention questionable ethics.

Summary

In this chapter, we have addressed some foundational issues relevant to many online survey situations. Having considered the advantages and disadvantages of e-mail versus Web page surveys, features to look for in survey software packages, writing objectives and creating timelines, and a few key research ethics topics, we now proceed to sample selection and writing survey questions.