



THE CONSENSOR SURVEY PROCESS

REMEMBER THE LAST TIME YOU PURCHASED A NEW CAR?

From its inception as a company, Development II has offered clients a variety of innovative survey capabilities and methods. Although stock methodologies such as telephone and paper based mail surveys always have an occasional use, our forte has long been in the introduction and use of creative, functionally superior and friendlier approaches. Our pioneering work with such advances as the ConSensor® Survey Box and Internet Based Surveys has continued to reinforce our position as a world leader in improving survey technologies.

In 1990, Development II, inc. developed a survey tool designed to break through the clutter of executives' desks, in such a way that it became noticed, completed and returned. The survey vehicle is a three dimensional plastic box with five compartments. Each compartment is labeled with a scale of satisfaction, from Totally Satisfied to Totally Dissatisfied. A deck of cards is included with one statement or question printed per card. The participant is asked to take these cards and sort them according to their level of satisfaction, placing one card at a time in the appropriately labeled compartment. This product, called ConSensor®, has been proven a very successful means of getting through to business-to-business survey participants. We consistently enjoy return rates of over 70%, and even as high as 95%. Our return rates from consumer studies are similar.

The uniqueness of the ConSensor® survey box attracts the attention of the recipient. The intrinsic value of the box keeps it from being tossed into the trashcan, like so many paper surveys are. While not every survey is returned, we do know that few of them are actually discarded. We have received completed ConSensor® surveys as long as a year after they were originally mailed.

Supervised Versus Unsupervised Surveys

Unsupervised surveys like ConSensor®, whereby the respondent sets the time and pace of survey participation, tend to be much less biased than supervised surveys such as the use of a telephone interviewer or face-to-face surveys. Telephone surveys, when used for Customer Satisfaction measurement, will bias the results positively, and the range of answers will be much more constrained than with an unsupervised survey. The scores and responses evidencing low satisfaction levels will be almost twice as positive in a telephone survey than in an unsupervised survey. In other words, expressions of dissatisfaction are not as openly expressed when an interviewer is involved.

Though this inherent weakness is well known and documented in the survey industry, in our wherein both telephone and ConSensor® were used to survey customers, the flaw was convincingly confirmed. We found that:

- Telephone survey answers were consistently more positive than ConSensor®, and
- The range of unsolicited answers was approximately half.

A second major concern behind the use of telephone surveys is that the interviewer influences the answers, even with a structured survey. People tend to form impressions of interviewers. Audible characteristics such as voice, command of language, tonality and perceptions on the interviewer's knowledge of the subject matter influence how questions are answered. Some people will listen to an interviewer and subconsciously make an effort to try to "impress" or please the person they are talking to.

The third and final issue behind telephone surveys is a much higher rejection rate, which itself impacts the quality of the answers. In a recent test we offered 353 respondents the option of taking a 69 question Customer Satisfaction Survey by telephone, Internet, or ConSensor®. 35% elected to use the Internet and 65% elected to use ConSensor®. None chose to take the survey by telephone.

It is important to assess a telephone survey from the respondent's point of view. Whereas the respondent always has the option to take an unsupervised survey whenever and wherever they feel like it, a telephone survey dictates the time and the place. The interviewer, not the respondent controls the process.

Despite these severe limitations, there are still a number of valid reasons for using a telephone survey. Telephone surveys are usually easier to set up than a ConSensor®, written, disk-by-mail or Internet surveys. They allow for an interactive discussion of issues. They are excellent for qualitative information. Consequently, even though there are compelling reasons why telephone interviews should not be used for Customer Satisfaction Surveys, the method is effective for a variety of other Market Research activities. Conducting competitive surveys, for example, where relative evaluations are of primary importance, is a viable application of this method.



The Validation Process

If the purpose of a Customer Satisfaction Survey is to help strategically determine the future direction of a company, it is essential data collected be the best and most reliable possible. We therefore contact each and every potential participant prior to shipping a survey. This validation serves three functions:

- It extends the courtesy of asking for the customer's permission to accept and participate in the survey. They then are expecting its arrival and have committed to complete it.
- It allows us to screen out those who are not of the right profile for the survey. For example, if we are looking for decision-makers, having users complete the survey will give us incorrect indications. Similarly, if we need users' inputs, the check-signer's opinion may be misleading.
- While we have the potential survey participant on the phone, we take the opportunity to ask, "Who else within your organization would benefit from participating in this survey?" We find that in about 20% of the cases we add names of influential survey participants that otherwise would have been overlooked.

Survey Distribution

All surveys sent to U.S. customers are mailed via first-class mail through the U.S. postal system and returned to us via pre-paid business reply mail. For Canadian surveys, we include a pre-addressed envelope with Canadian stamps affixed to the package so that the customer need only drop the survey package into a postal box for return to us. Latin and South American surveys are shipped via Airborne Express. The surveys in Europe are distributed through Global Mail, an international mailing company located in the U.S. which uses a combination of hand delivery in major metropolitan areas and working with postal services worldwide for an average delivery time of 3-6 days. Similar to the Canadian surveys, each package includes a pre-addressed envelope with stamps from the country it is mailed to so that the customer can drop the survey package into a postal box for return to us. To avoid the problem of customs regulations, the surveys are mailed to an affiliate in the UK and bulk-shipped back to us on a weekly basis. Most of the surveys sent to the Asia/Pacific region are sent via Airborne Express, to ensure delivery and to expedite the distribution. There are some exceptions: In Japan and China we have local contacts who takes care of the distribution and collection of the surveys, which is done through the local postal system.

Data Entry and Report Generation

Once the surveys have been returned to our facility in Connecticut, we enter the data into our proprietary survey software in preparation for analysis completed through a variety of standard and proprietary techniques.

The ConSensor® Internet Survey

In the beginning of 1995, we made the decision to take our ConSensor® survey box and replicate it on the web. Our decision to duplicate our box was influenced by several factors. First, we knew we had a good thing going with the high rates of return with the box. We figured that since it was an eye-catcher in three dimensions, we should be able to make it the same in two. Secondly, when we searched the web for surveys and questionnaires, we found that the only ones out there were simply boring representations of paper surveys.

There was no web-ergonomic thought put into the process. These questionnaires required a lot of grab and scroll; a task we found tedious. Thirdly, we wanted to be able to aggregate the data gathered through the ConSensor® box with the data accumulated on the web. Through our own experience, we knew that respondents give different answers based upon the media used to capture their responses. For example, responses to a telephone interview give higher scores than to the same question asked on a written document or through our ConSensor® survey. Respondents suffer from boredom on most written surveys and often rush to finish without much thought given to each individual subject. Knowing that different media can produce different results, we wanted to maintain as much consistency between answers on our three dimensional technique as we could using a two dimensional medium. We specifically designed our Internet survey to emulate the appearance and function of our ConSensor® Survey Box. By having a consistent "look" and question sequence, we eliminate differences generated by methodology, cultural variations and bias.

Our criteria for creating the ConSensor® Internet Survey was threefold:

1. It had to look like our regular survey box.



2. We wanted an interesting, fun, eye-appealing survey on the screen that one could use as a single picture... that is, "no scrolling required". We wanted to minimize the grab and scroll mouse action common to "ordinary" web based questionnaires.

3. The survey had to accommodate multiple languages.

We worked with Blink-On-Line Publishing from New York to create the web site for us.

This image was the first to be seen by a Digital customer, who incidentally, had been pre-screened and asked to participate in the survey.

They then choose which language they wish to use, highlight the appropriate box, click with the mouse and the next screen comes up in the language of their choice.

Please note that whether the survey vehicle is via the box or the Internet, the validation process remains the same. Obviously, the survey distribution and method of collection are different.

The "notepad" allows survey participants to type in comments as they read each question. On the average, 48% of the participants add comments, with an average of three per person.

Since the initial launch of the ConSensor® Internet Survey in 1995, we have developed four versions due to changes in available programming languages and browsers. Our ultimate goal, as always, is to make the surveying process better, faster and more accurate.

3D versus 2D

The decision to use the three dimensional ConSensor® Survey Box or the two dimensional ConSensor® Internet Survey is fully dependent upon the sophistication of our clients' customers and what proportion has access to the Internet.

Both of the Development II methodologies provide extremely valid and reliable data.

With our proprietary ConSensor® process, you gain the ability to:

- See your business the way your customers see it.
- Hear what your customers want you to hear.
- Gain a standing invitation to meet with top-level customer decision makers - armed with concise insight into their needs, opinions and desires about their business relationship with your company.
- Strengthen Customer Loyalty
- Increase Customer Repurchase Intent and Activity
- Identify and Eliminate Customer Needs and Issues That Are Costing You Sales.
- Improve Customer Satisfaction
- Avoid Customer Defections
- At a large telecommunications company, a \$90,000 purchase was about to be canceled. ConSensor® identified both the problem and the cause, giving the company a last minute opportunity to save the account. Once aware of the pending loss, and armed with concise insights to the customer's needs, the account was not only retained, but \$277,000 in additional sales was realized.
- For one client, ConSensor® uncovered a \$1.8 million maintenance contract that was about to be canceled. Using our full process, the contract was not only saved, but \$900,000 worth of new business opportunities was also generated.
- A precision manufacturer had built a substantial portion of its business marketing around a proprietary product finish. After ConSensor® discovered that the finish, under certain conditions, didn't work, additional refinements were implemented that eliminated the problem. Sales of that particular product the following year increased 12%.

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