

The tightrope between feedback and survey fatigue

Online surveys are the most common way to engage with stakeholders. Most of us have been on both ends of online surveys: developing them for work or completing them as participants.

We know online surveys enable relatively quick and easy collection of data, but when last did we re-examine best practice survey design and delivery? Are we making common mistakes, as we try to balance both the art and science of writing survey questions?

With plans to send out a member survey in the coming weeks, we're stepping through these issues with you here (remember, we're talking about feedback, not research data).

Working on autopilot

For those of us who've administered surveys more times than we'd care to remember, there's a risk of working on autopilot (although the 'save as' or 'copy' functions are very appealing). Unless we're repeating a regular survey with established purpose, structure and content, it's crucial to revisit the reason you're doing the survey, define your target audience, select the right format, choose the right time and test your survey before releasing it.

Survey fatigue

[Survey fatigue](#) is a very real challenge when you want to engage with your stakeholders. Did you know there are two main elements to it? 'Survey request fatigue' is when we've been asked to give feedback so many times that we don't want to respond to another survey. 'Survey taking fatigue' ('question fatigue') happens when you run out of steam while completing a survey, because there are too many questions, or you've been asked the same question different ways. Not surprisingly, these affect the quality of survey responses and increases the risk of survey abandonment. The key message is this: if you don't need a question, ditch it.



"This internet survey is asking me to take another survey rating the survey I'm taking."

Think about accessibility

There are two main parts to improving the [accessibility](#) of your survey: the words you use and the way it can be completed. Even if you think you know your audience well, use simple language and avoid jargon. Keep questions clear and unambiguous, with answer options that match the question.

Depending on your audience, consider whether you can make printed versions (including large print) available, or offer to complete the survey on the phone. For

online surveys, use an accessibility checker (if available), or look up ways to enable screen magnifiers and readers, voice recognition software, or keyboard shortcuts. Also, use fonts and colour contrasts that are easy to read.

Make trust possible

At the most basic level, your survey should involve listening, acting and communicating. But to [build trust](#), you need to act on what you heard, listen again, and act again. It's not enough to only 'close the loop' at the end of a survey.

AAG member survey

With all of this in mind, AAG will soon distribute a survey to all members. To inform the development of the survey, we asked members of AAG committees and divisions to rate the importance of different topics and questions, and suggest the number of questions and estimated completion time. We're using their input to make the survey as relevant and meaningful as possible. Our overall purpose for the survey is clear: feedback from our members informs our commitment to continuous improvement. Tell us what you like, what we could do differently or better, and how we can help you make the most of your membership.

Watch this space!