Communication Brief

## What Not to Do When Writing Survey Questions

The success of your next survey hinges on the questions you ask. You can do everything else right, but if your questions are faulty, you won't gather meaningful data. Below are some common pitfalls to avoid.

- **Lack of validity** – Does the question truly measure what is of interest or something else? For example, asking people to report their level of understanding might be a better gauge of self confidence than knowledge.

- **Double-barreled question** – This problem occurs when two or more issues are addressed in the same question. For example, "Were the communications helpful and timely?" Responses to this item might pertain to helpfulness, timeliness or both.

- **Giving an example** – Examples can help clarify the question's intent. But people respond to the example, not the larger issue being addressed. For instance, "How would you rate Japanese cars (e.g., from companies like Honda)?" Answers to this question will reflect more on Honda than on Japanese cars in general. And if you change the example to Subaru, you might get different results.

- **Inadequate response choices** – Response choices for closed-ended questions need to be mutually exclusive and collectively exhaustive. That means there is no overlap in the choices and all possible answers are represented.

Three Steps to Communicating Change

1. RAISE AWARENESS: Formal communication about the change is good for raising awareness, but on its own it's unlikely to change attitudes and behavior.

2. CONVEY IMPORTANCE: Employees decide the change is important when leaders speak and, more importantly, act in ways that support it.

3. CHANGE BEHAVIOR: Employees change their own behaviors when doing so is in their self-interests. In other words…
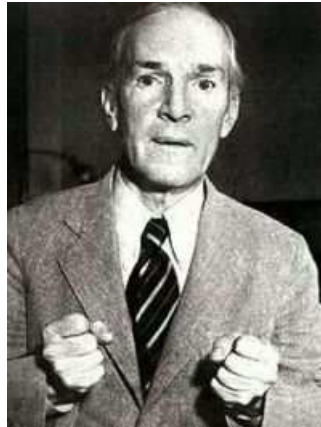
"It's difficult to get a man to understand something when his salary depends on his not understanding it."

– Upton Sinclair

Also keep in mind these general guidelines.

Talk less…listen more ➔	Give people the chance to ask questions and clarify implications.
Reach supervisors first ➔	Motivate supervisors to support the change by treating them like insiders.
Build a coalition of support ➔	Understand what matters to your natural allies and those likely to sabotage the objective.
Know what you want to achieve ➔	Clarify the purpose of each communication – why it's needed and what it's meant to do.
Create a rapid-response plan ➔	Monitor employee reaction and quickly address unanticipated concerns.

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