

Think about the questions to be asked and the results desired.

Ensure that before you start to build the survey you have finalized the following:

survey goals

Product feedback, brand awareness, competition, net promoter score, email poll

text of the questions

Using the language of your respondent in a narrative fashion.

question types

radio, checkbox, likert, rating, free text, maxdiff, rank, allocation, sliders, sorters

order of the questions

Place most important first

color schemes/fonts/logos/graphics

SensorPro content editor ensures the survey matches your brand

Prototype the survey structure over a few pages and agree that this is how you would like to continue building the survey. Your style and narrative in the survey have a brand impact so take care. Avoid using online tools that could portray your brand in an unintended way.

The language and terminology you use is also important. Consider the following question posed in two different ways:

(a) Thinking about the last time you used Product X, which of the following best describes your experience with Product X?

(b) What do you think of Product X?

Studies have shown that in (a) above the respondent is more likely to reflect upon the experience longer than (b) where a knee-jerk answer may be given. Also if translating the survey into multiple languages ensure that the culture is respected since a direct translation will not always be appropriate. SensorPro supports deploying the same design in multiple languages with a built in content translator.

Think about whether your question is **open-ended** or **closed**. Different results are achieved by either. An open-ended question is designed to encourage a full, meaningful answer. Closed questions encourage a short or single-word answer. TIP: Use open-ended for free-text “Tell us what you think” questions and closed for data questions “Which color do you prefer”. The free-text questions in SensorPro get an automatic word cloud in the results dashboard. Always include a “Anything else you care to add?” free text question at the very end of the survey.

2: Short surveys are best.

The more questions you have, the larger the number of incomplete surveys. Keep the number of questions on a page under 10. Large numbers of questions can deter people from finishing the survey. Sensorpro tracks incomplete surveys and you can still extract data from them but obviously, the more complete, the better.

If it is possible to group the data into discrete groups then consider creating separate surveys, then you can link the taker to different surveys depending on how they answer a question, reducing the complexity of any particular survey.

TIP: Question skip logic, page branching, piped text or answering filtering can also reduce survey size.

3: Use multiple columns if a large list is presented

Take the following question:

Which color do you prefer?

- Red
- Green
- Orange
- Purple
- Maroon
- Lemon

By specifying columns=2 in Sensorpro this can be presented better as:

Which color do you prefer?

- | | |
|------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Red | <input type="radio"/> Green |
| <input type="radio"/> Orange | <input type="radio"/> Purple |
| <input type="radio"/> Maroon | <input type="radio"/> Lemon |

TIP: You can specify odd/even colors on the Question edit page to improve readability on long lists.

Combining questions can also reduce size. With SensorPro you can combine a Likert question with a Ranking question to avoid the respondent feeling they are answering the same question twice:

Please RATE the products, then RANK them in order of value for money:

	Poor	OK	Good	Rank
Product X	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	_____
Product Y	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	_____
Product Z	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	_____

4: Be clever when creating survey questions

Consider the following 3 questions:

What do you think of Product X?

- Poor
- Fair
- Good

What do you think of Product Y?

- Poor
- Fair
- Good

What do you think of Product Z?

- Poor
- Fair
- Good

It is more effective –and more likely to get answered- to combine these questions into a single Likert Text Question. You can also use a numeric scale but keep the scale options low.

Please rate the following products:

	Poor	Fair	Good
Product X <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Product Z <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Product Y <input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Also consider using the MAXDIFF question when you need to determine one single choice of least/most importance about a product. Respondents are better at judging items at extremes than in discriminating among items of middling importance. Since the responses involve one choice of either extreme rather than strength of preference, there is no opportunity for scale use bias.

Thinking about Product X, select one least important and one most important factor:

LEAST IMPORTANT		MOST IMPORTANT
<input type="radio"/>	ease of use	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	price	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="radio"/>	color	<input type="radio"/>

Now perhaps you want to get other feedback on the products but only for the products that were selected. It would be tedious for the survey taker to have to wade through questions that are not relevant. You may also want to just get feedback where option=Poor was selected. This is where you can use question skip logic and answer filtering in SensorPro.

5: Use Dropdown Questions where long lists are required

If you have a long list of answers, and you are asking the survey taker to select one, a radio question can take up a lot of space. Consider using a drop down question in this case to make better use of screen space.

Randomisation. Setting answers to show randomly can help remove bias. It is also possible to present questions in a random order with advanced logic in Sensorpro. There is also a built-in function which calculates the time taken to complete the survey. This can be used to detect potential fraud if the time taken is too short.

6: Progress Bar

Use a progress bar for multi-page surveys to indicate % complete or use a page heading which indicates how far into the survey the respondent is, e.g. page 1 of 5 etc. This is a standard library item in SensorPro and you just drag it on to the page wherever you wish it to display.

7: Ensure questions have a data value.

Avoid questions like “this is not applicable to me” as these have no data value. Use branching where applicable to show the survey taker questions that are relevant to them (and hide questions that are not relevant). If possible, send out the survey to a small sample, you can then analyze the drop out rate. It may be possible to re-structure the survey to take advantage of this information.

However do avoid the schoolboy mistake of not providing a “Don’t know” or “Other” option. If the respondent cannot see a place for the answer they will most likely abandon it. It is also worth noting that *not answering a question* is in of itself data and is telling you something. In SensorPro the reports provide “Skipped question” analysis for this reason.

Don’t ask questions which already have an implicit answer. For example Gender may already be available from your CRM system and you can pass into the survey. If you need to get geographic location analysis, this is provided as standard with SensorPro. If you need to ask which browser do you use, this is auto-detected and a report is available to show browsers used in each survey.

8: Use images only when needed.

When using images in surveys, use them sparingly. Too many images can clutter the survey and also hinder the load time of the survey page. Maybe just include your company branding in the survey using a header. Smart use of color can enhance the experience for the end taker. However there are questions that can be best deployed with images such as selecting brands. In SensorPro we provide a special question type where you can assign an image to each answer.

9: Invite email

Think carefully about the wording of your email invitation. Your email to a potential respondent has to feel like a personal invitation. Keep it short. Explain what the survey is about and approximately how long it will take to answer. Sensorpro customers experience very high complete rates when good segmenting is used. Industry average is under 10% but good email segmentation has generated 25-60% complete rates for Sensorpro customers. We integrate with top email vendors who can help with deployment and sending email reminders.

10: Entice people to finish the survey

It is well proven that people respond to incentives. So providing one will help improve the completion rate of your survey. This could be free samples of your product, entry into a prizewin or donation to a list of appropriate charities. There is a prizewin module in SensorPro and you can also place a quota on responses by device or email address to keep the incentive manageable.

Survey abandons increase when a survey is "too long". SensorPro provides a report showing complete vs incomplete responses and the page where the survey ended. This can be useful to indicate where the respondents may be having difficulty with moving to the next question or where the survey has reached its natural end.

11: Make your first survey page simple

Let people take the survey! Once people have decided to take your survey, they will want to get started. Studies show most people don't read extensive instructions.

12: Send reminder emails

Some people will not take your survey right away. You will get increased responses, however, if you send follow-up email reminders with the survey link included. It is best not to send more than two reminder emails. Be sure to filter out email addresses of (a) people who have already answered the survey, and (b) people who do not wish to be contacted again.

13: Keep survey taker focused

Avoid survey content that might entice the taker away from finishing your survey. If they leave to check out a link there is an increased chance they will not return to finish the survey. If possible leave this to the finish or "thank you" page. If you must include a link (for example, competition rules) then make sure that you specify "target=_blank" in the href link so that a new window is opened in the browser.

14: Capture demographics

The survey is an excellent opportunity to gather the preferences of your customers especially when integrated with an email marketing system. The results can be used in later surveys or newsletters and studies have shown that open rates and survey completes are higher when the communication is more relevant, targeted and focused on customer preference. Use Sensorpro Forms for email validation, name, address capture etc. Make sure that the appropriate legislation is complied with.

15: Personalise the survey.

Like good email practice it can pay to personalise the survey. You can pass data to Sensorpro in the URL eg email address, name etc. This removes the need for the respondent to have to re-enter information, a top reason for abandonment. You can also pass hidden data into the survey that can be later used for analysis in crosstabs etc.

16: Think about the results

It is important to think about the results that you wish to get from the survey. Is it just statistical data or are you building data for a marketing campaign? This drives the kind of data you need to capture. When looking at the questions make sure that you have captured the data you need. Note you can also pass data to the survey that can be captured and analysed in the metrics. When testing, look at the online metrics in Sensorpro to ensure that the data is captured as you wanted and that the graphs and pie charts are also meaningful. If exporting to excel or SPSS, run a test to ensure the data is as you expect.

17: Make surveys interactive

Use hide and show/page branching/survey branching to limit the number of questions the respondent is presented with. For example:

Do you have a car?

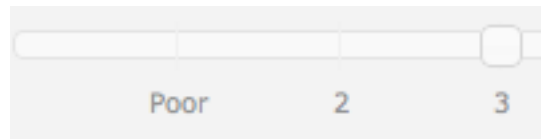
- Yes
- No

If Yes is selected then you can do the following:

- Dynamically show the car questions

- Set the next button to go to another page with just the car questions on it

A visually appealing survey will also help engage the respondent. Consider using slider questions like this:



And make surveys responsive:

Surveys can also be used to dynamically react to answers provided. For example send an email to yourself and the respondent if a poor response is selected. This shows that you are reacting quickly rather than waiting days or weeks to wade through analysis.

18: Test the survey

Go through at least 3 test cycles. If survey is multi-language and multi- country make sure you get people from those areas to help you. If integrated with an email campaign, send to a small segment first then fine tune based on feedback. eg “Couldn’t answer Q7 because...”. Sensorpro allows you to clear the data back before each cycle and finally before you go live.

...and design for mobile.

Now that the smartphone is ubiquitous, it's just as important to test your survey on the iphone, blackberry, android and iPad. Though there are emulation services it's best to test directly. Not all functions will work on mobile eg flash content or skip logic. With SensorPro a special mobile link is automatically generated that will make sure the survey will run on less capable devices. The survey response tool will provide a breakdown of devices and browsers used to access the survey so that should help decide testing platforms for the next deployment.

19: Your brand investment

Your style and narrative in the survey have a brand impact so do take care. Avoid using online tools that could portray your brand in an unintended way. If you or your client have an investment your Brand it is easy to replicate that in the survey using the style option and use of templates in Sensorpro. If the survey has a completely different look and feel to your brand the survey taker may not be as forthcoming. It is well established that brand loyalty and providing feedback on that brand are tightly linked. The SensorPro content editor allows you to reflect your corporate style guidelines. You can also create a template survey so that subsequent surveys always reflect your brand.

20: Say Thank you.

Always thank the survey taker for taking the time to complete the survey and that their feedback is valuable. Sensorpro has a special “Finish Page” that can be customised with the content editor. You can also include links to your own landing page and pass data from the survey if needed.

This is just a short guide on creating surveys that work. For more detailed methods consult our ‘Getting started” guide <http://urlx.ie/surveysgettingstarted> and How to videos here: <http://youtube.com/sensorprosurveys>

Create a free account on <http://surveys.ie> for your next survey
-use coupon code **howtoask** to grab extra survey credits.

Help someone else ask smarter questions by sharing <http://howtoask> with them. Use this link to share on Twitter <http://bit.ly/sharehow2ask>