

Finding Out For Yourself

Questionnaires

CAMPAIGN BOOTCAMP

Questionnaires usually consist of a set of written questions that are either asked by the interviewer (for example knocking door to door or over the telephone) or completed by the individual.

A questionnaire usually consists of closed questions (where the answer is YES/NO or it is multiple choice) these allow people to talk more generally about whatever they want to and not be constrained by the options given.

Advantages



- It's easy to get lots of statistics from the information gathered (for example '50% of people interviewed said they have used the community centre in the last year').
- When all the questionnaires have been completed, it's relatively easy to work out the results.
- They can be done just about anywhere.

Disadvantages



- If you approach people with a questionnaire they often assume you are trying to sell them something and may be reluctant to talk.
- Some people may speed through the questions without thinking to get it over and done with.
- Answers are usually from closed questions (i.e. yes/no questions, a fixed number of choices etc) so answers can be very simplistic.

Questionnaires and Your Campaign

Questionnaires are great for finding out the opinions of a particular community on a specific issue for example, the opinions of a local community on plans to open a casino or build a new road. They can also be used to test how aware people are of a certain problem or proposal. Finding out what people think about your campaign ideas and whether or not they agree with your ideas for change is another way that questionnaires can be used.

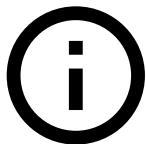
TIPS:

1. When designing your questionnaire start with short closed questions and finish with open questions.



2. Use simple, clear language.

3. Write a very short explanation of who you are and what you want, for example 'I'm from the Belchingam Community Action Group, can you please spare me five minutes to help me do a quick questionnaire on life in Belchingam?'



4. Explain what will happen with the information you collect (will they be able to see the results?)

5. When deciding what questions to write think about exactly what it is you want to find out and remove any questions that don't help you to find this out. The shorter the questionnaire the better.



6. If they seem particularly interested in what you're doing and the issue, ask for their contact details, they might want to join your group and help you in your work.

TIPS:

7. When all your questionnaires have been completed and the results are in, there will inevitably be some people that don't like the results that you came up with. They will find ways to criticise your approach. So, try to find ways of making your approach difficult to criticise for not being representative. For example if you are doing door-to-door try to knock on every door. If this is unrealistic because of the size of the area you are covering you could knock on every third door and so cover a larger area. Likewise if you are doing it in a public place, approach for example, every third person that you see. This is important as sometimes in this situation we choose people we may feel more comfortable talking to, this forces us to be a bit more random and so makes it more difficult for people to pick holes in our approach.



8. If you are knocking door to door its best if there is always two of you together.

9. If you're doing the questionnaire face-to-face think about where people may feel comfortable talking to you for example on the doorstep, at the school gates at drop off time (get permission from the school first), bus stops, cafes, outside shops etc.

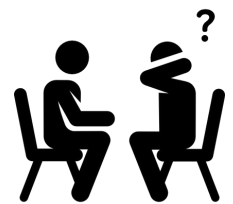


TIPS:



- 10.** If you have taken notes about what someone has said, it's a good idea to read back to them what you wrote so they can check you have been accurate.

- 11.** Practice your questionnaire with someone who knows nothing about your issue.



- 12.** Some people respond better if there is an incentive, for example 'everybody that takes part will be entered into a draw for a £20 voucher'.

- 13.** The more questionnaires you get filled in the more impressive your survey will be to others and the harder for them to ignore.



- 14.** Using questionnaires can be very time consuming so make sure you are prepared and/or have others to help you.

TIPS:

- 15.** It's best to try and get people to fill in a questionnaire while you are there with them. However, this may not always be possible. If you are leaving questionnaires with people, make sure it's clear where they need to take it to (or maybe you'll come back and collect it) and by when. The number of questionnaires you get back may not be high at all if you rely on people to bring questionnaires back to you.



- 16.** You might want to collect some information on the person filling in the questionnaire as this may help you with your results (for example gender/age group/where they live) you can then produce statistics such as;



'15% of men said they feel safe in the area after dark'.

- 17.** Many people feel much happier to answer a questionnaire if they know that it will be anonymous and confidential. You may want to stress to them that you will not take their name and that any quotes used will be anonymous. If they do say something that maybe a useful quote you should read back to them what they have said so they can check they are happy with it and that they couldn't be identified from it

