

CYBERBULLETIN

The bulletin that powers up your online presence



More Than Just a Pretty Site!

Webmaster for Hire, LLC

November 8, 2006

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Want to Know What Your Clients Think? Go to the Source!

Have you ever wondered what visitors to your web site think? How about your clients or customers? Well, there is a way you can find out — use a survey!

Surveys can tell you all sorts of things about your customers, your business, your marketing campaigns, and your web site. With the right questions, you can profile your most profitable customers in order to target your marketing efforts; you can determine which marketing campaigns are working — and which are not; you can see what is working at your web site — and what isn't; and you can determine why some products/services are selling better than others. These are only a few results that surveys can give you.

A survey can be used in two different ways. You can post it at your web site for all visitors to use, or you can send it by email to your top 50 customers. You can also do both, but ensure that you know from which survey the results are coming by putting a "subject tag" in your email address that is linked to the survey's submit button. A subject tag automatically places verbiage you have specified in the subject line of the email survey response. For example, you may use the words "email survey" for the subject tag on surveys sent to your top 50 customers, or "web site survey" for the subject tag for the online survey at your web site.

An online survey at your web site will give you information about your non-client visitors, as well as about your customers. With the right questions, this feedback is invaluable to determine why you are not turning some visitors into customers.

An email survey to your top customers can be tailored to garner more information about them and their buying habits. They will be more willing to provide this type of detail, since you already have a working or selling relationship with them. This type of feedback is invaluable for creating your "best customer" profile, which can be used to obtain more such clients through targeted marketing.

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When developing a survey (whether you create it yourself or hire a professional to do it for you), begin with what you want to know:

- First, list the areas of concerns for the survey (for example: your web site, your products or services, and client profile). **Sample: Web site.**
- Second, list what you would like to know about each area of concern that you listed, grouping the questions by area. **Sample: Repeat visitors.**
- Third, write out the questions as if you were asking them. **Sample: How often do you visit my web site?**

Fourth, you must rewrite each question objectively, so that you are not inadvertently persuading the survey taker to answer the way you want. By using objective questions, your results will be more accurate and usable.

- **Sample: I visit this site:**
 - **Less than once a month**
 - **1-2 times a month**
 - **3-5 times a month**
 - **6-10 times a month**
 - **more than 10 times a month**

Some things you always should include in a survey are:

- Ask for the survey taker's name, address, daytime phone number, and email address;
- Include a "n/a" option for applicable questions. Not all questions will apply to all survey takers;
- Always include a "not sure" or "undecided" option;
- Use radio buttons (round buttons you click with your mouse), rather than drop-down menus;

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- Always ask for their suggestions in each area of concern or overall;
- Include a "block" comment box, titled "comments", allowing them to tell you whatever they wish;
- If you ask what they like or dislike (or similar language) **most** about something, also ask **why**;
- Ask about **them** in order to build a profile of best, as well as worse, customers — do not include overly personal questions, such as household income (they either won't answer it or give you bogus data); instead ask how many overseas trips they are planning for next year, if (for example) you are a travel agency, which still gives you an idea of their buying power;
- Ask about their buying habits that are related to your products or services;
- Include a check box to sign them up for your newsletter, web site updates, or whatever you offer from your web site via email; and
- After they click the submit button, give them a confirmation page that their submission was successful and thank them on that page for taking the survey. People get frustrated if they click a button and they do not see anything happen.

Always give an incentive for taking your survey, regardless if it is an online or email survey. Though many people use drawings for a gift, you will get a better response rate if you give every survey taker something in return (a link to it may be placed on the confirmation-thank you page). An inexpensive motivator is an informative article or short e-book on a subject relating to your business, which also seeds in their mind that you are the "expert".

For example, the travel agency could offer an informative booklet in PDF format on preparing for vacations that gives what needs to be done to prepare to leave the home vacant, leave children with relatives, what to pack (especially those often forgotten items), and so on, which includes check boxes to ensure each item is completed.

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Compile the data as the results come in — do not wait until a deadline date. It then becomes overwhelming; whereas, compiling the information as you receive it, makes the work easier. Though some people suggest using a spreadsheet program, I suggest you use Microsoft® Word in landscape (horizontal) page setup and its table feature to compile the data. Spreadsheets have limited field lengths. Word table fields are unlimited, allowing you room for the comments and explanations.

Once you compile several survey results into your table, you should begin to see some patterns emerging. Pay particular attention to the patterns. They will be the most useful information, indicating what is working and what isn't.

Contact Webmaster for Hire today to discuss how surveys could work for your unique business!