

## **Video Six: Ethical Considerations in Research**

### **Page 1: Welcome**

Hi everyone, welcome to the last video in the Customer Satisfaction Survey Toolkit.

Funded by Community Sector Banking - 2019 Social Investment Grants Program and in partnership with the NSW Council of Social Service, Survey Matters produced these videos to help NGOs when conducting Customer Satisfaction Surveys.

### **Page 2 -Customer Satisfaction Survey Toolkit Videos**

I am sure you have seen this overview of the video series.

This final video – Ethical Issues in Research - the one you are watching now, will introduce you to the ethical issues surrounding survey research, including topics such as a confidentiality and privacy, as well as data security, transparency, and consent.

### **Page 3: Outline of this video**

There are a few things we will discuss in this video to give you an idea of the ethical issues you should take into account when conducting your survey.

1. Firstly we will briefly discuss why it is important to understand the ethical issues surrounding survey research.
2. We will provide a brief summary of the key ethical considerations when conducting customer satisfaction surveys – privacy, confidentiality, transparency, data security and working with children.

### **Page 4: Why are ethics important?**

There are a number of reasons why it is important to understand and follow good research principles:

- Firstly, market research principles are designed to protect participants in research. Everyone involved in the research process from the organisation conducting the survey through to the respondents have rights and obligations that should be recognised.
- For example, the organisation conducting the research have rights to the data that is collected. The respondent has the right to refuse to participate in the research, and a right to privacy if they do provide data.

- It is important to recognise that when market research principles are overlooked, organisations can impact the lives of their respondents. If confidential information is released, for example, it can affect the person who provided the data.
- Abiding by accepted survey research principles also encourages you to build good data governance guidelines. Privacy and data security is important in many areas of business, and implementing them in your survey research activities can provide guidance on how data should be treated in other areas too.

### **Page 5: Privacy**

The first, and possibly most important, ethical consideration when you are undertaking a survey activity is privacy.

- The Privacy Act and associated Privacy Principles regulate how personal information is handled. Common examples of personal information include an individual's name, signature, email address, telephone number, date of birth, gender and commentary or opinion.
- While many small NGOs will not be bound by the Privacy Act, as it applies only to organisations with an annual turnover more than \$3 million, it is worth being aware of some of the requirements.
- Australian privacy law allows an organisation or agency to use or disclose your personal information for the reason they collected it (the primary purpose). In the case of data collected through a survey, the primary purpose is the research.
- You must not disclose any personal information you have collected for any other purpose, unless express consent is provided by the person.
- It is very important that you treat any personal information you collect as sensitive information and are aware of how it is stored and used. You should have safeguards in place to protect personal information you collect.
- De-identification is a privacy-enhancing tool that can help your organisation meet its obligations under the Privacy Act and build trust in your data governance practices.
- De-identification involves separating the respondents' personal information (usually by deleting it) from the survey responses they provided. This prevents anyone being able to determine an individual's answers to the survey and inadvertently using it for a secondary purpose.

## **Page 6: Confidentiality**

Confidentiality is another core principle of survey research. It is important that the private information collected from respondents is handled confidentially and that personal information is not disclosed.

- Confidentiality includes giving participants the right to decide whether or not they want to take part in the research and not disclosing their identity should they choose not to participate, or to opt out before the research is completed.
- Identifying a person's 'research status' - which is whether they have or haven't participated in a survey - is a breach of their confidentiality. As a research provider, this is probably one of the most common things we are asked to disclose. And we always say no!
- If respondents have provided information, you must take measures to make sure that this information cannot be identified.
- This is particularly relevant when you are reporting results. To avoid disclosing confidential information, you need to ensure that all results are rolled up to an aggregate level and that adequate sample size (over 30) is maintained for all reported results. This prevents anyone from being able 'to work out' if a particular person responded in a certain way.
- Confidentiality also means that only those engaged in handling the respondent's data are allowed to identify respondents. You should ensure respondent's information is protected from third parties. If any other parties wants to identify respondents using your data, you need to seek written permission from the respondent.

## **Page 7: Transparency**

Transparency is also a very important concept in survey research. You need to be very clear about the reason for the research, who is conducting the survey and what you will do with the results.

- Transparency involves ensuring that respondents are aware of the purpose of the research, and how the results will be used. This should always be included in the survey invitation or introduction and should be explained to respondents before they complete a telephone or face to face survey.
- Transparency also refers to securing informed consent from respondents before engaging in research. It is important to recognise that respondents do not have to participate in your survey. Respondents have the right to withdraw from the research at any stage of the data collection process and are not obligated to continue under any circumstances
- It is therefore good practice to remember that you are required to seek permission from all participants involved in the research before collecting any information from them. A respondent who opts to complete your online survey is providing their implied permission, as they are able to 'drop out' of the survey and not provide further information at any stage.

## **Page 8: Data Security**

While a detailed discussion of data security is outside the scope of this video series, it is important to remember that protecting the privacy and confidentiality of any personal information you collect from respondents is reliant on the adequacy of your data security.

It is therefore important that you have data management and security procedures to ensure the data collected from respondents is protected. A few examples of things to look out for include:

- Data collection and storage devices should be password protected.
- Access to identifiable data should be limited to the staff of the research team.
- A confidentiality agreement is required to be signed if identifiable data is given to external research consultants or organisations.
- Data should be de-identified as soon as possible after the research to ensure anonymity of respondents and protect their privacy. As mentioned earlier, de-identification involves deleting any personal information such as name, email address, telephone numbers, IP addresses.
- Identifiable survey research data should only be stored for as long as it is required. It should be destroyed or de-identified as soon as it is no longer needed.
- Primary research records (such as paper surveys) are usually destroyed after 1 year, while research data is generally held for a period of two years.

## **Page 9: Working with Children**

When conducting research among children and young people (anyone under the age of 18 years) extra care must be taken to protect their interests.

- NSW have legislation requiring pre-employment screening for adults who come into contact with children. This would usually be a working with children check. If you are planning projects with children in other states, we recommend that you check the relevant state or territory requirements to see if you require a separate police check to release relevant criminal history information.
- If child abuse is suspected such as physical, emotional, sexual abuse or neglect, you may be obliged to report the suspected case of abuse to the authorities. It is recommended that if working with children, you are familiar with the changing NSW reporting requirements when conducting research.

### **Page 11 – Conclusion**

So that concludes our video on the ethical considerations in survey research. It also concludes our video series!

We trust and hope that this video series has provided you with the information you need to design and conduct your survey. I also hope it has given you more confidence to start your research activity on your own.

### **Page 12 – Questions. Get in Touch**

However, we are here to help. So, if you have any questions, we are also available by phone or email. So feel free to reach out to us at any time.