

Why Survey?

Eight Compelling Reasons for Not Flying by the Seat of Your Pants

Accurate, relevant, reliable information is essential to activities of all kind. Nonprofit organizations are especially dependent on information—data about members, non-members, clients, customers, and the environment in which they operate. **Knowledge is power. Knowledge is life sustaining**, both personally and corporately. Obtaining accurate, relevant, reliable data and turning that data into information and that information into actionable observations and recommendations is the bottom line of survey research.

Survey research (quantitative data collection and analysis) goes beyond perception. It is often said that “perception is reality.” This may or may not be true; however, when action is based on faulty perception, failure is the ultimate reality. This is “why survey.” Megan Kirkegaard, President of **Association Research, Inc.**, a survey research firm located in Ijamsville, Maryland, offers these reasons associations should survey membership ever few years to ensure that members’ needs are being met.

1. Survey research gets beyond anecdotes to quantifiable data.

Going beyond “conventional wisdom” that is based on anecdotal information is important. While anecdotal information is useful, it may represent the exception rather than the rule. Survey research based on scientific statistical sampling methods provides a solid basis for quantifying and projecting information accurately and reliably. A confidence level can be predicated with survey research; none can be predicated based on perception and anecdotal observation.

2. Survey research obtains in-depth information (including nuances) about interests, needs, concerns, issues, and satisfaction.

Survey research enables use of rating scales, rankings, and comparisons. It cross tabulates findings based on key demographic and organizational characteristics. It enables cross-checking of responses to assure greater accuracy and understanding.



3. Survey research saves time and money.

Misdirected action squanders resources—time, talent, and money. Acting on scientifically gathered, measurable data—and not hearsay and perception—lessens the risk of misusing the invariably limited resources available to accomplish the organization’s mission and goals.

4. Survey research is inclusive.

Consideration of all constituents—comprehensiveness—is a hallmark of good decision making. “**EINO—everybody in, nobody out**”—is more than a catchphrase. It is a basic tenet of success in association management. Survey research is a primary way to assure comprehensiveness, inclusion, and the appropriate involvement of all constituents.



**KEEP
CALM
WE
CARE
FOR YOU**

5. Survey research demonstrates commitment to cause.

Whether trade, professional, or charitable, all nonprofits can benefit from survey research as a way to underscore commitment to purpose and cause. Soliciting information from members and prospective members says, “You count,” “We listen,” “We’re here for you,” and “We’re member driven.”

6. Survey research encourages frankness through assured anonymity and confidentiality.

Candor is essential to accuracy *and* anonymity and confidentiality are essential to candor. Survey research that requires no respondent identification, especially when carried out by a qualified, independent third-party, gives respondents the confidence and the opportunity to gloss over nothing. The result is a clearer, sharper, more accurate portrayal of prevailing attitudes, opinions, needs, desires, and expectations.

7. Survey research assures reliability.

Because the questions asked and responses enabled in survey research are consistent and standardized in wording and format, comparison and analysis is easier, more reliable, and valid. There is no interviewer bias. Every survey recipient addresses the exact same questions at a time and place convenient to them.



8. Survey research assures accuracy, maintains objectivity, and thereby achieves legitimacy.

Accuracy and objectivity are at the heart of all research activity. Quantitative survey research adds the dimension of measurability—being able to project from a scientifically-determined sample to a total universe, including key segments within that universe. In this way, legitimacy is obtained. The data become information, the information becomes actionable, and the actions carry legitimacy.

If you would like more information on this topic or have any other research needs, please contact Megan Kirkegaard, president of Association Research, Inc., at 240-268-1262, ext.102, or mkirkegaard@associationresearch.com. Since 1984, Association Research, Inc. (ARI) has produced customized survey research exclusively for associations and non-profit organizations, earning a superb reputation for analytical insight, professional service, and business integrity. Throughout its history, hundreds of professional, trade, and charitable organizations have been served. While ARI’s clients are exclusively non-profits, its services are wide ranging and include member needs assessments, benchmarking surveys, economic forecasts and analyses, marketing surveys, readership surveys, monthly business statistics, quarterly economic opinion surveys, annual operations surveys, and compensation and benefits surveys. ARI has successfully designed, developed, and processed thousands of survey instruments while maintaining total client confidentiality. ARI is a member in good standing of Insights Association, the national trade association that promotes standards and ethics for marketing research and data analytics.