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Survey Emails: Best Practices to Maximize Response

For online surveys, organizations often choose email as the primary means to invite participants to complete a survey. Whether your list consists of employees, customers, organization members, students or other groups, a well-designed email campaign is relatively inexpensive and can reach a large number of people quickly and efficiently.

At many organizations, implementing a survey email campaign can be a challenge. At DataStar, we have years of experience and success helping organizations like yours to simplify the email process.

Following are a few tips and guidelines to help optimize how your survey is communicated and achieve the desired results.

★ The Survey Invitation:

Compose an attention-capturing, descriptive, yet not overly promotional <u>subject line</u>. Examples:
- *XYZ Medical Group needs your feedback.*
- *Please help us improve our financial services.*
- *Reminder: The deadline for completing the XYZ Survey is this week.*

Keep the <u>email body</u> brief, but be sure to include several key attributes:

1. Fully explain why the survey is being conducted, its purpose and importance, as well as any incentives or other benefits for completion. Examples:

   - *"Your participation in this survey will help us better serve the interests of our patients. Please take a few minutes now to answer a few questions about our plans to expand our practice in your area."*

   - *"Please assist us with how to best offer XYZ products by completing this brief survey to help us define our strengths and areas of improvement. Your feedback is an essential part of helping us to meet the needs of our customers."*

   - *"As a small token of our appreciation, a donation to further cancer research will be made for each completed survey response."*

2. Include (and honor!) a commitment to confidentiality. You want your participants to provide honest opinions and perspectives. Explain how the identities of individuals and small groups will be protected when responses are analyzed or reported. Examples:

   - *"Your responses are completely confidential. To maintain confidentiality, DataStar, Inc., an independent research firm located in Waltham, MA, will conduct the survey and analyze the results. No one at XYZ Medical Group will have access to individual survey responses."*

   - *"Responses to items will only be reported in aggregate form, not provided to any unauthorized parties and will not contain any information that would permit identification of an individual."*

3. State clearly how to begin by including the survey link prominently in the email. At DataStar, you have the option to send out a generic survey link to all participants, or unique links for tracking completion and/or merging database tie-back information to the results. Example:

   - *"[Click here to begin the survey.](#)"*

4. When the survey should be completed. Set a due date so that surveys are completed in a timely fashion and are able to be included in your data analysis. Example:

- *"Please complete the survey by (specify date). Thank you in advance for your participation!"*

5. Include other important instructions about the survey. Also, be sure to comply with the U.S. CAN-SPAM Act or other regulations which may govern the sending of commercial emails. If applicable, include an opt-out link or other required messages. Examples:

- *"Please do not forward this email to others; the above link is for your unique use only and can only be used to submit one survey. The survey link includes an access code which has been randomly generated and assigned to you. Its purpose is to allow you to return to your partially completed survey in the event that you need to take a break for any reason. It will not be used to associate your responses with you individually."*
- *"Completing the survey will take approximately 10 minutes."*
- *"If you have any questions, you may contact (contact name & info)."*
- *"We respect your privacy. If you have received this email in error or wish to be removed from any future mailings, please click here."*

★ The Reminder Email:

Once the initial email invitation is sent, you will most likely see a steady response rate for the first few days. It is generally good practice to remind participants to respond, just in case they forgot or accidentally deleted or lost the information needed to participate.

Two to three reminder emails may be required to achieve your desired response rate. Typically the first reminder should go out a few days to a week after the initial invite, with a final reminder a day or two before the end of administration. Be sure to include the due date each time so that participants can plan their time accordingly.

★ Other Considerations:

If desired, personalize the email with the recipients' names and other pertinent information.

Where appropriate, be sure to make the survey available to non-English speaking participants. DataStar has the capability to send emails in multiple languages, based on a preferred-language field in your database, or by user selection in the email body or on the survey landing page.

No matter how up-to-date your database may be, in today's rapidly changing environment, undeliverable emails are a fact-of-life. We can assist by returning a list of bouncebacks to you for updating or removal from your database.

Once all data has been processed and your analysis is complete, consider sharing the results with those who participated. We can help you do this quickly and efficiently by emailing a simple thank-you or a brief synopsis of the findings

Following these best practices will help ensure the success of your next survey effort.

DataStar is a leading provider of surveys and other assessments. Contact us today for more information or a free, no obligation quote.