

Telephone Data Collection and Respondent Relations – Part 1



**United States Department of Agriculture
National Agricultural Statistics Service**

NOD-Training Group, March 2020

Who Am I?

- I am competing for your time & attention:
 - With other callers.
 - With your other activities.
- You cannot see me:
 - There is no personal contact.
 - I can't show identification to prove who I am.
 - I can't show a calendar, printed list, or other visual aids to help you answer the questions I am asking.
- I cannot see you:
 - I can't see your reaction if you might be confused or concerned by a question.
 - I can't see any distractions you maybe experiencing.
 - I can't read your non-verbal clues, body language, etc.

The Challenge

Convincing Operators To Respond

- We aren't technically "selling" anything - BUT we do need to "sell" ourselves and the importance of the survey.
 - Response rate: Number of operators who respond out of the total selected (Sample) for contact.
 - High response rates important for broad representation and quality of results.

"Only one opportunity to make a first impression."

Why People Choose to Participate

- Understand the survey and the uses for the data.
- Perceive that the survey is not too difficult.
- Believe that the data is important to the industry.
- Believe the information is personally beneficial.
- Trust that their privacy and confidentiality will be protected.
- Perceive you as a professional.
- Feel a rapport with you.

The Reluctant Respondent

- Who is the reluctant respondent?
 - Has been contacted frequently or recently.
 - Has never been contacted before.
 - Doesn't know you or your organization.
- Reluctance is not:
 - A Refusal
 - Bad
 - Personal
- Reluctance is:
 - A request for information.
 - A test of credibility.
 - An opportunity to identify and respond to respondent concerns.
 - An opportunity to educate.



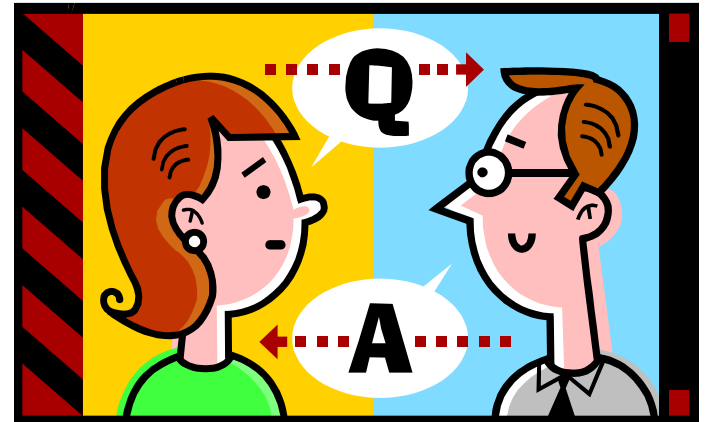
Why People Might Be Reluctant

- Are busy.
- Having a bad day.
- Feel their time is being intruded upon.
- May be confusing you with a “pollster” or a “telemarketer.”
- Do not like or trust the government.
- Question the legitimacy - do not want to reveal personal information to a stranger.



What Do We Know About Them?

- Asking questions?
 - “That’s a great question!”
 - “I’m glad you asked that!”
 - 92% will participate.
- I’m too busy?
 - 80% will participate.
- Initial negative comments?
 - 52% will participate.



Concerns ARE:



A request for more information.

OR

A need that has to be satisfied in order for the respondent to say YES.

I Don't Have Time For This



- Difference between “Time” concern and “Burden” concern.
 - Time: *When* they are being asked to participate.
 - Burden: *Effort* needed to participate.
- Remember the 80%.

Confidentiality Concerns

- All information collected is confidential:
 - Employee Oath of Confidentiality.
 - Individual operations guaranteed by law that their information will be kept confidential.
 - Individual information is also protected from Freedom of Information Act requests.
 - Title 7 provides severe consequences for breaching this confidentiality.
- By Law we cannot share individual information with anybody else.
 - Including other government agencies.

Other Concerns

- The Government
 - Intrusion
 - Distrust/Anger
 - Earnings/IRS
- The Data
 - Affects prices
 - Reports aren't accurate
 - Too personal
- The Operation
 - Too small to matter
 - Death/Crisis/Loss
- The Contact
 - Suspicious
 - “Don't do surveys”
 - Burn out
 - Pass Off/Gatekeeper
 - “Don't know”



YOU Are The Key

- You are the public “voice” of NASS.
- You are the key to quality information.
- You are VITAL to the success of NASS



The screenshot displays the USDA National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) website. The header includes the USDA logo and the text "United States Department of Agriculture National Agricultural Statistics Service". Below the header is a navigation bar with links for Home, About NASS, Newsroom, Publications, Data and Statistics, Contact, Summary, Help, and Contact Us. The main content area is titled "You are here: Home?" and features a search bar on the left. The search bar contains the text "SEARCH NASS" and a search button. Below the search bar is a list of search filters: All Issues, Advanced Search, Search Tips, Reverse NASS by Subject, State and Farm, Commodity, Economics, Expenditure, Livestock and Animals, Cattle and Pigs, and Education and Outreach. The main content area is divided into several sections: "Today's Reports from NASS" with a "More" link, "August 31, 2006" section containing "Healthy Hogher" (Released at 9:00 AM ET, Text | PDF | CSV), "Agricultural Prices" (Released at 9:00 AM ET, Text | PDF | CSV), and "Food Stocks and Processing" (Released at 9:00 AM ET, Text | PDF | CSV); "Quick Stats (Agriculture Statistics Database)" with a "More" link; "U.S. and State Data" with a "Select U.S. and State-level Data for various agricultural goods, or only query a specific state." section and a "Select a U.S. State (over)" dropdown menu; "State and County Data" with a "Select county-level data for all U.S. counties or the counties of a specific State(s)." section and a "Select a State(s) - County Query" dropdown menu; and "2002 Census of Agriculture" with a "Query results from the 2002 Census of Agriculture. Click here for additional Census of Agriculture data and publications." section and a "Select a Census Query" dropdown menu. On the right side of the page, there is a "Want To..." section with links for "Today's Reports from a State (over 50 States)", "Find OASD Systems", "Find Meetings Plans", "Request a Special Publication", "Holler your Pre-recorded", "Find photos or images on geographical data", "Visit the NASS Data Site", "Career Opportunities", "Receive reports by Email", "National", and "State". Below this is an "Optimization" section with links for "Today's Reports", "News & Events", "Publications", and "Webinars". At the bottom right, there is a "Quick STATS" logo and a "QUICK STATS" button.

Telephone Data Collection and Respondent Relations – Part 2



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Prepare

Be familiar with the questions and know the survey purpose.

Why are we conducting this survey?

Who might be using the data for this survey?

Where might the data “show up?”

How might the results specifically help the respondents or people like them?

What is the personal benefit to the respondent?

The Call

- Maintain a courteous and respectful relationship.
- Elicit responses and listen carefully without “leading” the conversation and skewing the interview results.
- Emphasize direct, specific benefits of the data to their farm, their community, or their industry.
- Use every opportunity to increase respondent education - *even if they refuse.*

Techniques

- Agree & Educate:
 - Assures them that their concerns are valid and you understand.
 - **“You’re right”** (To be cautious..., To be concerned..., To ask about...) **“That’s Why...”**
 - Then educate about survey purpose.
- Feel, Felt, Found:
 - Allows the respondent to feel heard and to identify with others.
 - “I understand how **you feel. Others have felt** that way too. **They found....”**
 - Then educate about survey purpose.

Techniques

- Partial Commitment:
 - Agree to a partial interview.
 - May share more than originally intended.
- Paraphrase & Educate:
 - Shows you listened.
 - Restate their concerns as a question and get the “yes”.
 - Then educate about the survey purpose.
- “Don’t you think”?
 - Can encourage participation.
 - It asks the question AND gives the answer.
- Clarifying Questions:
 - “Would you tell me more about that?”
 - “Could you be more specific?”

Listening Habits

Not really paying attention

OR

Focusing on the speaker

Rambling on, changing topic

OR

Paraphrasing for understanding

Interrupting

OR

Listening for the whole message

Focusing on your next response

OR

Addressing concerns with specific information

Avoid

- Dead Air
 - Stay Engaged
 - ***(Talk & Do)***
- Repetition
 - Actively listen
 - Jot a quick note
 - Phrase follow-on questions to show you listened
- Speech Habits
 - Asking Permission
 - Over-talking
 - Interrupting
 - Habit Phrases
 - (“OK”)
 - (“Cool” - “Awesome”)
 - (“You Know”)
 - Fillers
 - (Uhm)
 - (Uh)

Your Voice is Your Passport

- Tone of voice:
 - Show energy/enthusiasm
 - Inflection/Pitch
 - Varied
 - Animated
 - Rate
 - Too fast – Feel rushed
 - Too slow – Cause impatience
 - Match rate to respondent
- Clarity of speech:
 - More Formal
 - Enunciation
 - Articulate
 - Pronunciation
 - Familiarize
 - Practice



Show them your personality and let them hear your smile!

Angry

- Remain calm, detached, and professional:
 - Do not argue, defend yourself, or defend the agency/government.
- Be quiet and allow them to vent:
 - Interrupting sends the message you are not listening or are not sensitive to their needs or concerns.
 - Interrupting causes the “start over.”
- When they have finished:
 - Empathize
 - Paraphrase back
 - Restate objections as questions
 - Ask clarifying questions
- May feel better after the venting:
 - May even agree to the interview.



The words

- “I can see how you might feel that way.”
- “That would be frustrating to anyone.”
- “That is a very difficult problem.”
- “I can understand what a problem that must have been for you.”
- “It’s unfortunate that happened to you.”
- “I’m sorry to hear that.”

Respect

Should a respondent use racist, sexist, vulgar, or profane language which an employee finds offensive, that employee has the right to terminate the call solely at their own discretion.

Should such an incident occur, mark the record with a short comment about the incident and let a supervisor know what happened.

Avoid the “No”

- Proper introduction:
 - Confident
 - Professional
 - Prepared
- Educate respondent about the process:
 - Importance of survey
 - How information is used
 - Confidentiality
- **Active listening:**
 - Identify concerns
 - Keep them engaged
 - Respond appropriately
- Empathizing:
 - Heard what they said
 - Acknowledge how they feel
 - *Doesn't mean:* You agree with the feelings, or can do anything about them



Things to Remember

- ***Do not ask permission*** – act “as if”
- Pick-up + Hang-up = Call back.
 - Second hang up or straight to machine is a refusal.
- Identity verification Call Back Requests

The Final “No”

- Sometimes cannot be avoided.
- Don't take it personally:
 - Not necessarily rejecting *you* – just the survey
- Provide as much information as you can.
- Thank them:
 - Just because they said “no” today doesn't mean they will next time.
- Maintain positivity and professionalism.
- Regroup and move on.

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