

EMAIL MESSAGING TO INCREASE WEB SURVEY RESPONSE RATES

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- Lauren Cripps

- For their work on this project

Goals

Two essential steps to a successful web survey are getting respondents to **open the e-mail request** and getting them to **click on the URL** and do the survey.

For that reason, we wanted to learn more about responses to:

- ▶ Subject lines
- ▶ Content of invitation letters

First steps

- Convened 3 focus groups of people who had seen a doctor within the previous 6 months
- Asked them to discuss and rate:
 - ▶ Sample subject lines
 - ▶ Sample content in invitation letters

Web Survey

- Using a national web panel, we then identified 300 members who had seen a doctor in the previous 6 months and asked them to rate slightly edited versions of what the focus groups had discussed.

Ratings of subject lines

- Pick the three subject lines that you would be most likely to open.
- Pick the three subject lines that you would be least likely to open.

Subject lines (worst)

- This is your chance to make a difference
(38% in bottom 3)
- You know something we need to know
(53% in bottom 3)
- PLEASE HELP
(63% in bottom 3)

Subject lines(best)

- How did you like your medical care?
(40% in top 3)
- What can your doctor's office do better?
(44% in top 3)
- Tell us how you felt about your recent visit to your doctor's office.
(57% in top 3)

Messages in invitation letter

- Pick the four messages that would be least likely to encourage you to do the survey.
- Pick the four messages that would be most likely to encourage you to do the survey.

Least helpful messages

- If you choose not to participate, this will not affect the health care you get from your providers. *(38% in bottom 4)*
- The accuracy of the results depends on having a high percentage of those in the sample responding. *(36% in bottom 4)*
- We have hired an independent professional survey organization to conduct the survey. *(35% in bottom 4)*

Very least helpful message

If you don't respond, we will underestimate the number of people who see things as you do.

(58% in bottom 4)

Best messages

- We carefully review the results of the surveys to figure out how to provide better service and care to our patients. *(44% in top 4)*
- Your answers are confidential. No one will link your answers with your name. *(45% in top 4)*
- We are committed to providing you with the best quality health care available, and your input will help us achieve this goal. *(46% in top 4)*

And the clear winner

We want to know:

- how easy it was for you to make appointments and get care
- how well you felt treated
- whether you felt listened to
- how clearly doctors explained what you need to know

These are the kinds of things that only you can tell us.
(58% in top 4)

Subject lines are best to the extent they:

- Communicate who is asking
- Say what is being asked
- Give some clue as to what good it might do

Invitation letter pluses include:

- Address concerns about downsides
- Communicate why it might be worth person's effort to respond
- Communicate what is in the survey: questions are sensible, respondents can answer them, answers actually might be of use to doctors' offices

Limitations

- Of course, these are thoughts and feedback from people who were not actually being surveyed by their doctors. May not generalize to actual respondent behavior

Evidence of validity

- Convergence of results from focus groups and web panel supports notion that the responses have meaning.
- When we looked at ratings across age, gender, education and ethnicity, while the percentages differed some, almost all groups picked the same subject lines and messages as the most popular.

Next step

Do a field test applying what we think we learned.

THANK YOU