

## ABSTRACT

### USING INCENTIVES TO INCREASE MAIL SURVEY RESPONSE FROM INDUSTRIAL POPULATIONS

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#### INTRODUCTION

Most mail survey experiments on industrial populations have focused on monetary and nonmonetary incentives (Jobber 1986). Few of these studies, however, have focused on sweepstakes or the prepaid dollar. This paper reports on two studies that investigate the effectiveness of these techniques among design engineers.

#### STUDY 1

Previous research has indicated that mail survey sweepstakes are effective only when prizes of substantial value are offered. Yet, no industrial mail survey experiment has been reported where the sweepstakes prize was worth more than \$100. The present study describes the effectiveness of an industrial mail survey sweepstakes that uses prizes of substantial value.

Design engineers were randomly assigned to one of three conditions. Those assigned to the control group received a standard cover letter, a questionnaire, and a return envelope with postage prepaid by a permit number.

Persons assigned to Treatment 1 received the package mailed to the control group along with information about a mail survey sweepstakes. In Treatment 1's cover letter, the following information was provided:

To show our appreciation, everyone who **completes** the questionnaire will be included in a drawing for **three HP Calculators**.

- \* **FIRST PRIZE** (choice of):
  - Hewlett Packard 18C (Advanced Programmable/Business)
  - Hewlett Packard 28C (Advanced Programmable/Scientific)
- \* **SECOND and THIRD PRIZES** (choice of):
  - Hewlett Packard 12C (Advanced Programmable/Financial)
  - Hewlett Packard 15C (Advanced

Programmable/Matrix Functions)  
**Hewlett Packard 16C** (Advanced  
Programmable/Computer Science)

To qualify for one of these prizes, just fill out the enclosed card and return it along with your completed questionnaire, in the envelope provided, by March 20, 1988.

In Treatment 2, the potential respondent was not only presented the same sweepstakes described in Treatment 1 but was also informed in the cover letter that all respondents would receive a special gift from the sponsor of the study. No description of the gift was provided.

Each of the sweepstakes conditions produced a significantly higher response rate than the appeal mailed to the control group. The sweepstakes more than doubled the response rate, from about 2.2% to 5.6%. Offering an unspecified gift along with a sweepstakes had no more drawing power than the sweepstakes alone, for there was no significant difference in response rate between Treatments 1 and 2.

#### Study 2

Few studies have reported on the effectiveness of the prepaid dollar on industrial populations. Those industrial studies that have reported on this incentive have not always found it to be effective. The purpose of Study 2 was to determine how a prepaid dollar affects mail survey response among design engineers.

Five hundred engineers were randomly assigned to a control group that received a standard cover letter, a questionnaire, and a return envelope with postage prepaid by a permit number. Another 500 engineers were mailed a dollar bill with the questionnaire package. The postscript on their cover

letters stated: "Please accept the enclosed dollar bill as our special thanks to you." Except for the dollar bill and postscript, both groups received identical information.

The prepaid dollar group yielded a significantly higher response rate than the control group (24.07% vs. 4.94%,  $p < .001$ ). Because of the relatively high response rate generated by the prepaid dollar, it yielded a lower cost per usable return than the control appeal. It also resulted in a slightly higher number of item omissions. Analyses of response speed and sample bias did not reveal any significant differences between the control group and prepaid dollar group.

#### REFERENCES

Jobber, D. (1986), "Improving Response Rates in Industrial Mail Surveys," Industrial Marketing Management 15, 183-195.