**Telephone Survey Pros and Cons**

**Teaser:**
Surveys are a valuable tool for researching a new market or measuring client satisfaction at the end of a project or engagement. When planning a survey for your firm, be sure to consider the best delivery format. Although online surveys are increasingly popular, an “old school” telephone survey may be your best option.

Read the full article for an evaluation of telephone survey pros and cons.

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Surveys are a valuable tool for researching a new market or measuring client satisfaction at the end of a project or engagement. Several components go into conducting effective surveys, including clear objectives, relevant questions and an organized response to the end results. When planning a survey for your business, be sure to consider the best delivery format as well. Although online surveys are increasingly popular, an “old school” telephone survey may be your best option.

Based on our past experience and industry best practices, here are a few strengths and weaknesses we’ve found regarding telephone surveys:

**Pros**

1. **Increased Response** – Among people reached on the phone, the response rate is higher than that of more passive mail surveys. This higher response could mean a higher return on investment (ROI) for your firm.
2. **Thorough Answers** – Conducting a telephone survey allows for anonymity and more honest responses, especially when run through a third-party provider. Better responses to open-ended questions can also be elicited through discreet caller probing.
3. **Better Quality Control** – In a phone conversation, callers have better success in avoiding non-response. The quality of results documentation often increases as well with a handful of trained employees entering answers rather than numerous individual respondents. Callers can also listen to respondents’ questions and/or misunderstandings to help your firm identify any potential shortcomings within the survey instrument.

**Cons**

1. **Time Limitation** – Attention spans and patience are limited among telephone survey respondents, especially when you catch them in the middle of a work day. The general rule of thumb is to limit phone surveys to a maximum of 15 minutes.
2. **Specific Question Format** – Due to the solely auditory nature of phone surveys, questions must be simply constructed and clearly stated. Items requiring graphs or long lists of options will require revision if they are to be included in the survey.
3. **Larger Investment** – Telephone surveys generally require more of a time investment (either that of your staff or an outsourcing provider) than a mail or web survey. And, of course, time is money.

**Bottom line:** Although more expensive than some alternatives, telephone surveys often provide more accurate, thorough responses and potentially higher ROI. For best results, survey questions may need to be revised to meet time and format limitations.