



Getting the Most Out of Your Mobile Survey

As paper surveys slowly go the way of the dinosaur, mobile surveys are becoming more and more reliable and convenient.

While online surveys are great, there are times where respondents won't have a computer handy.

Maybe you'd like to conduct a survey in the field and don't feel like toting around your old dusty desktop and trying to find somewhere with a dial-up connection you can leech off of.

Or maybe you just don't have confidence in the wifi signal at a conference and need to be sure you're collecting accurate data.

These are great examples of when building a survey specifically for offline mobile devices could be a huge asset.

But there are things to take into consideration when doing so. Because of their smaller size, mobile surveys need a special amount of consideration, particularly when it comes to question types, formatting, and styling.

Check Compatibility For Mobile Surveys

The first step for building a mobile friendly survey is to check the compatibility listings of your survey software. By consulting with a compatibility list, you can save yourself the time and hassle of creating a survey only to discover that your question types won't work out.

There are a number of reasons that a question or feature may not be compatible with mobile, but knowing ahead of time can save you a lot of headache later on.

Which Question Types to Use

After your compatibility check you should have an idea of what question types are **compatible with mobile surveys**. Now it's time to look at which are best.

While your survey software may allow you to build extravagant custom tables or cram a ton of data into a single grid, this might not provide a good user experience for mobile respondents.

Because these respondents will be taking your survey on a small device, it is a good rule of thumb to avoid larger question types.

Some question types that you should steer clear of:

- ✘ Sliders and slider lists
- ✘ Matrix or table-based questions
- ✘ Essay/long answer
- ✘ List of text boxes
- ✘ Custom groups
- ✘ Custom Tables

Let's take a look at each of these question types, why they aren't a good fit for mobile devices, and what you can use instead.

Sliders and Slider Lists

While these questions may not be the worst thing to happen to your mobile survey, on smaller devices such as a phone they can be difficult to slide to exactly the desired point.

In addition, on some devices, if you try to slide across the bar but miss the mark, you could trigger a page forward or backward.

Consider using a dropdown menu for better ease of use.

Matrixes and Tables

The problem with this type of question is its overall size. It can be difficult to fit an entire table onto a small screen, and seeing the whole grid could require scrolling. This can lead to confusion if the respondent doesn't realize that there is a scroll bar available.

While some software will reformat these questions into single questions per row, you will definitely want to test this out to be sure that you're comfortable with the final product.

Essay/Long Answer and List of Text Boxes

We can lump these together because the issue at hand is the same: it can be truly painstaking to type on mobile keyboards.

By asking your respondents to fill out a lot of open text questions with such a limited keyboard, you risk them growing irritated and either leaving the survey or providing shortened answers which may not give you the data you were hoping for.

Consider trying to turn open-text questions in a radio button question with an, “Other – write in” option if needed.

Custom Groups and Custom Tables

Custom groups and custom tables can run into the same problems as matrixes: they are larger questions by nature and can lead to survey fatigue as well as a less than ideal design.

While custom groups can help you get around a “one at a time” mobile formatting, use them sparingly and test them to make sure you don’t overwhelm a page.

Regardless of the questions you decide to use, be sure to test your survey. You may feel like you’ve created a super straightforward survey only to find that the radio button question you created with 25 answer options is a bit difficult to answer and would be better as a drop down menu.

“ By asking your respondents to fill out a lot of open text questions... you risk them growing irritated ”

3 Tips to Format Specifically for Mobile Surveys

While an online survey can allow you to include instructional text or pass on information by way of text elements, mobile surveys need to be condensed. Survey fatigue can set in much more easily when a person is straining their eyes to read on such a small device. Keep these things in mind when developing a survey specifically for mobile.

Tip 1: To avoid losing responses, steer clear of large text blocks

There are tricks to making larger amounts of text slightly easier on your respondent, such as using bold text for key points and using bulleted lists to break up bulky paragraphs, but as a general rule, avoid excessive text in your mobile surveys.

By keeping the survey concise, your respondents are much less likely to get intimidated by its length and leave the survey without finishing.

Tip 2: Reformat wider questions for better ease of use

Questions such as likert scales and sliders look great and have wonderful functionality on a desktop computer. **But for mobile devices**, their width can require scrolling and could potentially cause respondents to not see some of the answer options.

To get around this, see if your survey software gives you the option to reformat these into vertical questions. This will re-align your answer options vertically, giving the question a much more natural flow.

Tip 3: Cut back on the images

Images can be a great help in breaking up text, passing along information, and being visually appealing, but in excess they can slow down the load time of your survey. Resizing can cause issues as well.

If you're creating a survey for both mobile and desktop, do you size down so they look good on mobile but are tiny on desktop, or do you size for desktop and have huge images for mobile?

You could write in code to make the images responsive to device size, but resizing this way could affect the quality of the image as well.

Including images can be a necessity, but be mindful when doing so. You want to create the best user experience possible to keep people engaged. Limiting the number of images in your survey can help with this.

Styling Your Survey

No one is interested in sending out an online survey that looks like black text on a white sheet of paper. Styling your survey can give it character while promoting your brand.

However, when customizing your survey for mobile, be conscientious of how you do so.

In case the theme of minimalism hasn't become apparent yet: keep it simple.

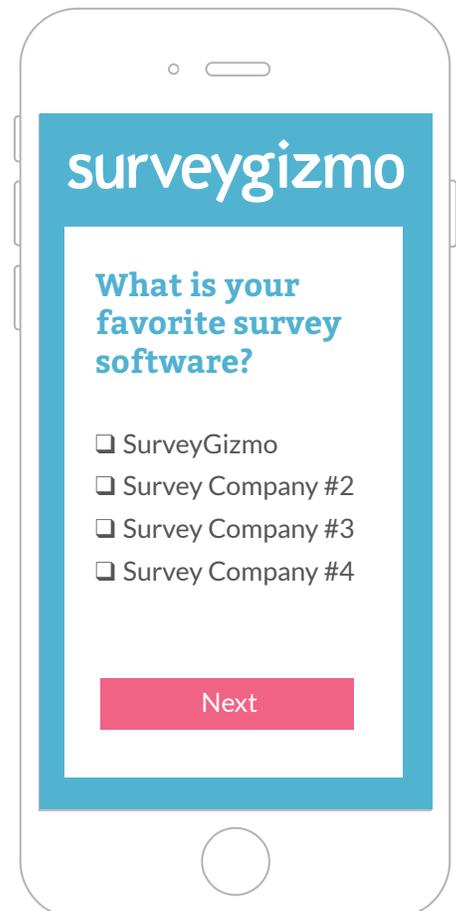
It is no secret that surveys can be designed to be really impressive visually. The trade off is that they can be clunky to load, less responsive than a user may hope for, or just be too busy overall.

By keeping your survey simple, you ensure smoother transitions between pages and a clean, refined look.

Some recommendations for styling your survey for easy mobile consumption:

- ✓ Stick with solid backgrounds rather than images.
- ✓ Use contrasting colors between background and text for easier readability.
- ✓ Limiting your survey to one question per page can help limit survey fatigue and keep respondents moving through the pages.
- ✓ Use easy to read fonts. Minimize eye-strain by making the text as easy to read as possible.
- ✓ Limit headers and images. You may want to include a company logo and tagline but steer away from huge banners that will have to load on each page.

Your survey is certainly yours to style however you'd like, but keep in mind that you will not be the person taking the survey. Style for the needs of your users rather than trying to make the fanciest survey in all the (mobile) land.



Planning for an Offline Survey

One of the greatest features about building your survey to be used on mobile devices is the ability to take it offline.

By downloading the survey to a smartphone or tablet, you can take your survey into the field where internet connection may be limited or nonexistent.

Before you get started building a survey for offline use, here are some guidelines:

- ✓ Read the compatibility list. What is available for mobile devices may not also be available for offline.
- ✓ Look into supported devices, operating systems and browsers.
- ✓ Avoid advanced logic features. While you may be able to use basic show/hide logic, any advanced logic, javascript and custom scripting will not be available while offline.
- ✓ Practice downloading the survey, taking it in offline mode and uploading your responses afterwards.

Keep all of this in mind and you can forget about having to worry over whether or not the venue your event is has a steady internet connection.

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Sharing and Testing Your Mobile Survey

While mobile surveys are a huge perk to moving your surveys from paper to online, it is important to remember that you are working in a limited medium by taking them into the mobile (and especially offline) world.

Many of the bells and whistles that you love in your surveys may need to be reworked to create a user friendly experience on mobile devices.

With all of this taken into consideration, now is the time to get your survey out there.

While you may have someone in the field monitoring participation, you might also have it set out at a kiosk or be sending it over for individuals to take at their leisure.

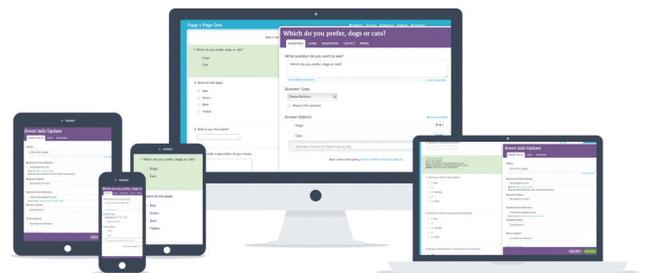
Here are some ways to maximize the user experience when sharing the survey.

- ✓ Short Links can be really beneficial if you think a user may ever have to type the URL into a browser.
- ✓ QR Codes are a great option to make it as easy as possible for a respondent to open the survey. By using a QR reader, they can jump right in without having to key in a URL at all.
- ✓ Kiosk Mode allows the survey to loop back to page one after a designated amount of time. Perfect if you have your survey pulled up on a device for respondents to use unattended.

Don't forget to test your links in advance.

The most important takeaway from these best practices: **test your survey.**

Test it on multiple devices. Test for its compatibility across browsers, operating systems and device types. Test the question types and be flexible if need be. Text your formatting. If anything feels off to you, it will definitely feel off to your respondents.



You can break every rule listed here but, please, test your survey.

Let Your Respondents Know What to Expect

After you've tested and reworked your survey, go back to page one and provide instructions.

Let your respondents know what to expect.

- ✓ Will the pages submit upon answering the questions or should they expect to click "Next" or "Submit"?
- ✓ Does the survey work best in landscape or portrait?
- ✓ How long should they expect to spend filling it out?
- ✓ Will they need anything to help them answer questions along the way?
- ✓ By giving your respondents the information they need upfront and ensuring that you have created the most user friendly survey possible, you can really increase your odds of getting the highest quality and quantity of actionable data.

Goodbye, old dusty desktop.

Ready to put your new survey knowledge into action?

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