Supporter Survey Question Bank

Last updated January 2019

the MEMBERSHIP PUZZLE PROJECT

Welcome!

We've compiled and created questions that your site might include in surveying potential supporters. While it's easy to survey only your **existing users**, you want to ensure you reach out to **possible future ("target") and past users ("lapsed" or "cancellers")** to include their responses and broaden your understanding of how people feel about your news products, including membership.

This is not intended to replace a professional survey writer and/or data analyst (please reach out for consultant recommendations if you're in the market). This question bank does not incorporate survey specifics including incorporating masking and randomizing -- or what incentives to use to garner responses. A good rule of thumb, though, to ensure your respondents are paying attention is to phrase your #1 must-know question two different ways so you can assure response consistency.

We've had success with the survey platforms Google Forms and Typeform, which has a paid product and a good user experience, particularly for mobile respondents. **We recommend that you diversify the question formats you use**: radio buttons (right) and Likert scales (below) are easiest to analyze, but open ended questions can give you more detail and nuance. Make sure to factor analysis time into your schedule: it can take two to three times as long as a survey is "in field" to understand the findings and potential directions suggested by the results.

- (•) Radio1
- ( ) Radio2
- ( ) Radio3

Labels are ordered ("Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree") and appropriate
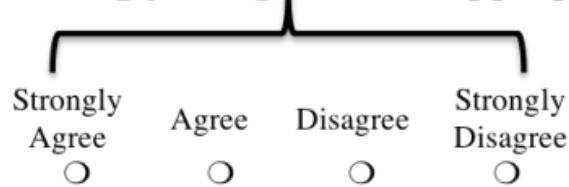
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.	○	○	○	○

Gonzalo del Peon, Emily Goligoski, Anne Koch, Jill Shepherd, and Joy Mayer contributed to this resource.

Best practices
From digital media researcher Alisha Alleyne, PhD.
Additional details in this [primer on survey writing](#).

Survey Design & Writing: Structure, Leading Questions, Masking

- **Wording:** simple, concise, avoid insider industry terms (if must use, explain)
- **Structure**
  - Use funnel for: general behaviors, attitudes, followed by specific brands, actions with brand
  - Time frame: use natural points of reference that parallel typical habits (e.g., past month, last week vs. past 2 months, past 10 days)
  - Use consistent amount of Likert scale points (suggest no more than 5 points, 7 points if necessary)
- **Avoiding leading questions**
  - Assume the opposite may also be true
    - E.g., "Sometimes people download a game and never play....we're curious to know which best describes your habits." vs. "When you download a game but do not play it...."
- **Masking**
  - Hide main activity among others; respondents tend to say "yes" upfront so they can take survey and get incentive
    - E.g., Insert target activity in select all question: "Which of the following activities have you participated in in the past month?"
    - E.g., Fake random selection: We'd like to ask you about one of the activities you mentioned: *Gaming while at work*

Additional resources

- [User Interface Engineering webinar on survey writing by Lauren Isaacson](#)
- [Local News Lab's focus groups guide](#)
- [Quartz Africa paid product exploration survey](#)
- [NYT customer satisfaction survey](#)
- [Listening Post Collective toolbox](#)
- [Membership Puzzle discussion guide](#)
- [MPP member motivation worksheet](#)
- [User Interviews guide to recruitment](#)
- [ASU News Co/Lab survey resource](#)
- [Learn to Ask Better Questions](#) from the Coral Project Guides
- For more detailed information and specific examples for researching a broader community's information needs (beyond existing supporters), please see the [Center for Innovation & Learning information needs map](#) and the [Chicago News Landscape study](#)
- From Local Fix:
  - [Video Explainer: Understanding survey question wording](#) - Pew Research Center
  - [Media Resources - American Association for Public Opinion Research](#)
  - [Resources and guides from Survey Monkey](#)
  - [Newsroom partners in Macon, Kansas City and Fresno learn about communities through surveys](#) - News Co/Lab
  - A [Trusting News](#) Strategy: [Be accessible and responsive](#)

Introduce the survey and why you're looking for users' feedback
- State how long you estimate it will approximately take for users to complete it
- Explain why you're asking for feedback and what you'll do with it
- Be sure to emphasize the value of feedback and to thank users for their time and thoughts
- You may want to give users a time window or deadline for when you're looking for responses by, and be sure to remind users (via a newsletter, social media, etc.) about the survey a few times within this time window.

Example from [Texas Tribune's 2019 reader survey](#)

How long will it take?

It should take you about 10 minutes to complete. You may skip any question, but please be as complete as possible. As a nonprofit newsroom, we truly count on the support of our readers — giving us survey feedback goes a long way toward helping us better serve our audience.

Thanks for taking the time to share your valuable insights with our team.

— **Amanda Zamora**, Chief Audience Officer, azamora@texastribune.org

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Create a privacy policy/disclaimer

At the beginning of your survey, include a brief note about what work the research may inform, how long respondents can expect to complete it, any incentive details, and **how their confidentiality will be protected**. See examples in this [online survey consent form](#) from IRB, this opioid abuse [coverage survey introduction](#) from the NYT, and this more detailed disclaimer template from [SurveyMonkey](#).

Question Pool / Options for survey inclusion

Background

Consider specific information that would be helpful to know about your target audience members' habits and experiences. This will change based on the information your site provides. For example, [Current](#) serves public media professionals and [surveys readers](#) about their roles to better help them on the job. Depending on the locations of the people you want to reach, you may want to know where they live and compare that with data analytics about existing users.

Optional: What is your full name?

Optional: What is your preferred email address?

Optional: Where do you live? [Suggest consistency: either city, state, or country]

Optional: What is your gender? Female / Male / Not listed here / Prefer not to say

Optional: What is the highest level of school you have completed? [Suggest [using standard templates for education](#) and other identifying questions; see ["Sample Demographic Survey Templates"](#)]

What is your occupation? [Alternatively: What is your industry? with optional dropdown list]

What is your age? [Suggest [closed age break options](#)]

News habits

What news do you read, watch, or listen to weekly or more often?

How you consume news? (Please select all that apply.) [multiple choice]
- Mobile browser
- Mobile app

- Tablet browser
- Tablet app
- Desktop
- Email
- Facebook
- Twitter
- Snapchat
- Others:

How do you consume news *most often* (on a daily or weekly basis)? Why is that your preference?

Which news sources do you go to for [the kind of coverage site does]?

Let's start with learning about a potential point of tension. What frustrates you most about news today? What would you most want to change about it?

Can you tell us about a recent news reading/listening/watching experience that was positive? What made it memorable?

What percentage of the news you interact with, roughly, do you pay for/pay to support?

Is there anything that you would like to see news sites offer that they don't currently?

Membership and participation

Do you think consumers of news should help fund it? (Via Chalkbeat)
- No, because news producers make enough money from other sources
- No, because news should be free
- Yes, because people who benefit from something should pay for it
- Yes, because quality news is danger of disappearing
- Yes or No for another reason. Please elaborate.

Which news outlets do you participate in? (By participation, we mean ways you are involved beyond making financial contributions.)

How are you involved with news organizations as a member? Please select all that apply. [multiple choice]
- I read
- I comment

- I share stories
- I've been a source
- I've contributed sources
- I've contributed proofreading
- I've contributed other research help (please describe in the next question)
- I've contributed tips or story ideas
- I donate
- I subscribe
- I volunteer (please describe in next question)
- Other

Please elaborate on how you've contributed and any other ways you are involved with media organizations.

For the ways you've participated or most often participate you selected above, what prompts you to participate?

In 200 words or less, why are you a member of [host or competitor news organization]?

Relationship with [site] - introduction

How did you first learn about [site] and how long have you read it?

How long have you supported it?

What prompted you to become a supporter?

Why do you still choose to support [site]?

Would you recommend [site] to a friend? [Scale with options from Unlikely -- Highly Likely]

Relationship with [site] - values

How would you describe the soul of [site]?

If [site] were a physical store, what store would it be?

What makes [site] distinct from other places where you get news and analysis?

Do you identify with or associate yourself with the site? With which values? How do you think the site reflects your personal identity, if at all?

Which coverage areas or reporters appeal to you most? [multiple choice]
- [We recommend a menu of relevant options here]

Why do the areas of [site] you selected above appeal to you?

Have any special reporting projects, major investigations or other coverage been particularly notable to you? Please describe why.

Describe what you know about [site's] financials. How do you know or perceive the site to be funded?

How do you see your contribution (financial or otherwise) as adding to the site's resources?

Contract: From your perspective, what is the "promise" [site] makes to you and what do you "promise" in return? How would you complete this sentence? [Site] gives me ____, I give [site] ___.

What do you expect in terms of how [site] communicates the "impact" of its reporting? Beyond the editorial mission, how satisfied are you with how [site] is communicating its work?

Access:
- Some members of media organizations have told the Membership Puzzle Project that they are comfortable paying to support organizations even when they don't "have to" and when others don't. What do you think about subsidizing coverage for other people? Or do you think about it in a different way?

- Does the idea of limited access contradict open/accessible information?

- How do you feel about the fact that you receive exclusive access to [TK] as a member?

What's the monetary value of [site's] membership to you now that you've been a member?

Relationship with [site] - user and member experience

What type of information on [site] do you find valuable? [List the types of info your site covers: for example: daily news articles, databases, explainers, investigations, videos, live streams, photos, graphics, podcasts, etc.]

In terms of the site's coverage, is there anything that you think could be improved? Is there anything you feel deserves more news coverage? If so, what/how?

In the last year, have you done any of the following as a result of news or information provided by [site]? (check all that apply) [Q via Texas Tribune]
- Recommended [site] to others
- Shared info learned with others
- Made a decision or taken action with info

What membership benefits have been valuable/useful to you? Select all that apply. [multiple choice]
- [Insert options]

Please briefly elaborate on why these benefits are valuable to you.

What has not been valuable/useful to you in regards to the membership? [multiple choice]
- [Insert options]

Please briefly elaborate on why these benefits are not valuable to you.

Do you have any feedback on the visual storytelling on the site, including:
- Data interactives?
- Multimedia?
- Videos (if you ever watch them)?
- Social media presence?
- Newsletters?
- Overall layout and site experience?

What do you think about [the ads/lack of ads], if anything?

Do you read comments (on site or social media)? [multiple choice]
- Yes / No

Do you contribute comments? [multiple choice]
- Yes / No

If so, what do you get out of doing so? If not, what would interest you in participating in that way, if anything?

Do you actively contribute to any of the following areas of the site? [multiple choice - list areas of your site where supporters are able to contribute; add "other" option]

Why do you contribute to the above areas, if applicable?

How do you want to participate?

What do you want to learn?

Do you have a preference for where you see and/or contribute to reader commentary?

Do you have any ideas for improving comments on site or off platform?

Have you attended an event by [site] in the last [week/month/year]? [multiple choice]
- Yes / No / I don't know / I don't recall

Please briefly elaborate on your answer above. If you've attended events, which did you attend and how were they valuable to you, if at all? If you have not attended, why not?

As a member, what would you change about [site] and/or its membership program?

Is there anything else you'd like us to know regarding your experiences as a member of [site]?

Are we living up to what you wanted when you joined? Why or why not?

Other membership program interactions

Beyond news, which organizations are you a member of? What are your favorite causes and organizations to support? Why?

Are you a member of any organizations (in or outside of news) whose membership you feel especially satisfied with? Why?

What especially attracts you in regards to requests for your time and attention? What turns you off?

Do you have a monthly or annual budget (of time, money, etc.) for the causes you elect to support? [multiple choice]
- Yes / No

If so, how do you decide how to allocate it?

Have you quit any organizations you used to be involved with (in news or outside of news)? [multiple choice]
- Yes / No

If so, why? How did you decide?

Optional: Letter writing exercise

We'd like to ask you to write a short letter to [site] outlining a few of your favorite and least favorite elements of the publication and/or membership program. This can be a short note.

Closing

Do you have any parting thoughts about what [site] needs to maintain (and/or add) to keep your interest? To expand?

Is there anything else that you'd like us to know?

Can we contact you with follow up questions? Yes / No [If Yes, collect email address]