# Measuring Employer and Learner Satisfaction:
## Hints and tips for collecting feedback.

**Skills Development Scotland**

**Lisa Hamilton**
Modern Apprentice, FES

## Conducting surveys

It is important to ask your customers what they think about your services on a regular basis to understand what you are doing well and where you could make improvements. Regular surveys can be one way to collect feedback.

There are survey platforms like Survey Monkey which can help you do this online, but you can also use paper-based surveys and input the data into an Excel spreadsheet for analysis.

When picking an online survey platform think about your budget, how many surveys you are going to be doing and what size of response you might get, as these considerations will affect the cost. Look at how you can get your results as well; you want to be able to download your results from the survey platform so that you can create reports of your results to share within your organisation and perhaps your customers. Free platforms do not always allow you to download your data easily.

## GDPR considerations

It is best to limit or avoid collecting personal data as far as possible. One of the best ways of doing this is by making your surveys anonymous. You should tell people why you are surveying them and what you are going to use the results for (say, improving our services).

It is always good to ask people if they consent to taking part in the survey and give them the option of withdrawing their response if they change their mind about taking part. Treat the responses as you would any other confidential data.

# Tips for designing surveys

## General considerations

The main general considerations when thinking of the design of the survey are:

- Will this provide us with **reliable** information; that is will each person taking the survey understand the survey in the same way? If you repeated the survey would you get broadly similar results?

- Will this provide us with **valid** information; that is will the questions measure what we want them to measure and accurately reflect what is true?

Surveys are more reliable and valid if they are clear and reduce any factors which might influence the results, (which is called bias) to the minimum. You want to be able to trust the results of your surveys so that you can make any decisions based on the survey results with confidence! You should design your survey to reduce bias as much as possible. The factors which affect bias include access to the survey, the types of questions asked, the way they can be interpreted by people and the order they are asked in.

## Access to the survey

It is important to think about how people will get the survey:

- Is it in a format that is accessible to everyone?
- Is it on a platform that everyone has access to?

If any of these are not true, the survey could potentially be biased.

## Length

When designing each question always think about how you are going to use the answers – what are you going to use this for? The survey should be as short as possible. Don't ask questions about things it would be good to know; just ask them about things that you **need to know**.

Remember as surveys get longer, motivation decreases, responses become more similar and completion rates decline.

## Designing questions

Keep the language as simple and clear as possible.

Ask about one thing in each question (for example don't use a question like 'How would you rate the quality *and* usefulness of our workshop?').

When thinking about the design of the question there are some questions that you should ask yourself:

- Is this question sufficient to generate the information I need?
- Do the words have the same meaning to all respondents?
- Are the questions clear and not ambiguous?
- Are any of the words or phrases loaded or leading in any way?
- Will the question be understood by everyone completing the survey?
- Are any words or phrases vague?

# Tips for designing surveys

## Types of questions

Surveys should have a mix of open and closed questions.

Closed questions where respondents pick from a set of answers can help people complete surveys quicker and are a lot simpler to analyse, although they can put words in people's mouths! From a practical perspective it is probably best to keep open ended questions to a minimum; but remember that one or two can often give you useful insight.

Scale questions can be useful to understand more about the range of views people have rather than a simple 'yes' or 'no'. These can be used when you want more nuanced information.

Studies have shown that it does not really matter whether the negative or positive scale is presented first, as long as there is consistency in the presentation throughout the survey.

## Likert scales

Likert scales are popular and useful. A typical question using a Likert scale is:

> **Q1. How satisfied are you with the delivery of the learning elements of the MA training?**
> - Extremely satisfied
> - Very satisfied
> - Moderately satisfied
> - Slightly dissatisfied
> - Not at all satisfied

In this example it is clear what each of the scale points mean as there is a description.
It is also good that there is a middle point. It is best to have odd scales and there should probably be no more than 7 scale points.

## Numerical scales

Another option is to use numerical scales. A typical question using a numerical scale is:

> **Q1. Overall, how helpful did you find the training course? Please rate on a scale from 0 to 10 where 0 is 'not at all helpful', 5 is 'moderately helpful' and 10 is 'extremely helpful'.**

Some people find a numerical scale a bit easier to interpret and this could potentially give you a bigger range of responses. You can also calculate a mean score for all your respondents which could help you to compare across time periods or different groups of customers.

## Question order

Start with a few simple questions.

Put critical questions that you really want answered quite near the start.

Also think about the question flow – they should be in a logical order so that one question leads easily to the next and questions about certain topics should be grouped together.

## Testing your survey

It is good to test out the survey with a few people who you are targeting as respondents. This can help test the acceptability of the questions, how they are interpreted and how difficult or not they may be to answer.

*We hope you found the hints and tips in this document useful. It was written by the Skills Development Scotland Evaluation and Research Team to support your continuous improvement.*