

7 ESSENTIAL TIPS FOR WRITING ENGAGEMENT QUESTIONS



A good engagement question is relevant, well-written, easy to answer and should provide you with valuable insight. It's no easy task, so here are our tips on how to get it right:

START AT THE END

A good place to start is at the end, thinking through what you need to learn from the community and how involved you would like them to be. Once you get this list together, your questions will almost write themselves.

Starting at the end will ensure you include all the questions you need to be answered, and help you to word them in a way that you will get useful data. It will also prevent you from filling up on questions you already know the answers to or those that don't matter.



BE CONCISE AND EFFECTIVE

Write your questions in plain language, without jargon or complex information. The fewer words you need the better. Videos, images and illustrated maps can be a great way to communicate complex information, project scope as well as negotiables and non-negotiables.

Writing engagement questions also means using language that suits your audience and finding the right tools for the job. Engaging with young people to inform the design of a local skate park, for instance, should be done differently to a broader consultation on the development on a customer service strategy.



AVOID DOUBLE-BARRELED SURVEY QUESTIONS

Particularly relevant for surveys, be aware of double-barreled questions. That is, a question that touches upon more than one issue, yet allows only for one answer.

For example: Do you think the council needs to improve the town centre and shared pathways? This should be asked two separate questions.

The word "and" is often an indicator of a double-barreled question, so make sure you have someone review each question for ambiguity or confusing structure. Don't leave anything open for interpretation.



DIG DEEPER

Open-ended questions provide meaningful insight that can help your team or organization better understand the how and why, and can reveal values and perspectives.

Asking open-ended questions invites people to dig deeper than simply answering with 'yes' or 'no'. It's within these responses that the real gems of information are found, so make sure your team is prepared and willing to spend the time analyzing and making sense of the valuable input.



GO SPATIAL

Location-based input improves the quality of your responses because they are specific. We are all experts of our own neighborhood, which brings a sense of belonging and ownership. Ask questions about specific locations to deepen or even extend your understanding of a particular issue, challenge or opportunity.



ONLY ASK QUESTIONS YOU DON'T ALREADY KNOW THE ANSWER TO

Don't make a survey overly long with useless questions you already know the answer to.

Losing all unnecessary questions opens more opportunities to use the space for questions that could potentially bring something new and valuable to the table.



KEEP IT FUN (AND FAST)

Aim for an experience of five minutes or less. Survey length is the number one reason respondents drop out. Little incentives can be a drawcard. Think about the experience of the people answering your questions.

GET CREATIVE.

