Authentic Response


# 26 QUESTIONS YOU SHOULD ASK YOUR PANEL PROVIDER

**Buying online sample can be a complicated process. How do you know if the sample you are getting is of high enough quality? How do you compare providers to decide who really has the best offering?**

**We believe that understanding your panel provider's methodology and panel management practices is crucial to being sure you are getting the highest quality data on the market. This document is based on 26 questions that ESOMAR recommends all research buyers ask their panel providers. We've provided our answers to these questions which we believe demonstrate our commitment to getting you the best responses possible. If you want to discuss any or all of these points, please contact your sales representative.**

## ESOMAR 26, Version 1 (2/5/2009)

**1) What experience does your company have with providing online samples for market research?**

Since the company's inception in 1998, Authentic Response has established itself as a leader in the online sampling arena by providing high quality global online B2B and consumer samples. We invented the Double Opt-in recruitment process, the gold standard for quality panel building, and were one of the first companies to offer data quality technologies such as duplication removal and 'gamer' detection through our propriety, industry leading Authentic Validation process, going back to early 2006, hence the name Authentic Response. This thought leadership has not only provided our clients with actionable data but also established our company as a trusted partner. Over the years our clients have relied on our sample to develop numerous published university case studies, conduct political polling, develop public and private investment strategies, construct defense strategies in legal cases and, of course, conduct marketing related research.

**2) Please describe and explain the types of source(s) for the online sample that you provide (are these databases, actively managed panels, direct marketing lists, web intercept sampling, river sampling or other)?**

Our panel, known as the brand MyView (www.Myview.com), is an actively managed panel used solely for online market research surveys. We use a truly unique passive sourcing process called Authentic Recruitment where respondents are recruited to our panel while actively engaged in a Web site unrelated to market research. For example, many of our panelists are recruited while registering for newsletters or signing up for online services on their favorite Web site. Over the years we have developed strong relationships with over 400 B2B and consumer sourcing Web site partners such as CNET and MSNBC and have been working with many for as long as ten years.

**3) What do you consider to be the primary advantage of your sample over other sample sources in the marketplace?**

As a sample provider our primary advantage stems from how our firm was developed, from the ground up, to be a customer centric organization. This can be seen in the breadth and depth of our panel recruitment, the level of in-depth experience and client service we demand from our expert staff, and our comprehensive quality processes covering the full life cycle of our panel and sample distribution, all of which truly set Authentic Response apart. This orientation enables us to provide our clients with access to difficult to reach but highly sought after online populations, control for potential data integrity issues with high precision, provide better in field management of projects, and deliver global samples of the highest quality.

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**4) If the sample source is a panel or database, is the panel or database used solely for market research? If not, please explain.**

Our panel is used exclusively for online market research purposes.

**5) Please describe the opt-in process.**

In contrast to our competition, we do not refer to or offer incentives during our recruitment process, nor do we participate in panel co-registration or affiliate marketing programs to build our panel. We believe these practices encourage duplication and increase the likelihood of attracting professional panelists.

Rather, we use a truly unique passive process called Authentic Recruitment where panelists are recruited through our publishing partners: content driven Web sites where visitors actively seek out information on a given topic. For example, many members of our IT Professionals panel are sourced from leading Web sites that cover IT related news and information.

Our recruitment process is initiated after a potential panelist signs up for a newsletter or registers to participate in the partner Web site's online services. After indicating interest in participating in our panel, a Double Opt-in confirmation message is sent via e-mail. Only after clicking the link in this e-mail is the potential panelist admitted into the panel. At this point they are required to create a profile through our introductory profiling and demographic questions. Truly unique in the industry, this process ensures a highly engaged, responsive sample is provided for client studies.

We created the Double Opt-in process and own the patent on this methodology, an industry standard for high quality recruitment (U.S. Patent No. 6,167,435, issued December 26, 2000).

**6) Do you have a confirmation of identity procedure? Do you have procedures to detect fraudulent respondents at the time of registration with the panel? If so, please describe.**

Leading the industry in identity confirmation, we developed Authentic Validation – a proprietary, industry leading multi-step validation process with security checks from the panel registration process to post survey analysis.

Some more commonly used validation techniques include e-mail confirmation, use of cookies, and examination of IP addresses. More complex steps of our process include validation against mailable addresses, challenge response tests, use of proprietary digital fingerprinting techniques, examination of IP geographic location down to the country and even city level of granularity, and other techniques to limit participation to unique responses based on the PC in use.

Additionally we have complemented our own security processes with an additional layer of independent, 3rd party validity and support using RelevantView's RelevantID™ technology. This widely adopted de-duping system further enhances our offering at no added cost to our clients.


 

**7) What profile data is kept on panel members? For how many members is this data collected and how often is this data updated?**

The following basic information is kept on all of our panelists: age, gender, country, postal code, education level, marital status, presence and age of children, employment status, housing status, job title, industry, company employee size, household income, primary language spoken at home, and ethnic background (when appropriate).

Panelists are asked additional profiling questions relating to their hobbies, household, lifestyle, shopping behavior, medical conditions and health, personal finance, automotive preferences, travel habits, business decisions, and other questions of interest to our clients. For a more comprehensive explanation, please click here.

We also maintain behavioral tracking on panelists particularly as it relates to their activity as a member of MyView. We are constantly looking to collect additional information to improve the panelist experience and enhance the depth of the data we can offer our clients.

Data points on file are comprehensively updated every 6 months, though certain time sensitive profile information is updated on a 3 month basis.

**8) Please describe your sampling process including your exclusion procedures if applicable. Can samples be deployed as batches/ replicates, by time zones, geography, etc? If so, how is this controlled?**

Our sampling process is dependent on the type of study and client needs. For general population studies we take into account response rate variables and use stratification tools to balance the sample so the incoming survey starts mirror the latest census figures. For niche audiences (subsets of the general population) we deploy sample representative to the segment needed if a model of representation exists. We also use pre-screening tools before sending a panelist into a survey to check for consistency in answers and append new information to their profile for future targeting. We have knowledge and control over source origin (partner Web sites) for all our panelists, as well as a full respondent activity history, which enables us to either exclude or re-contact panelists based on the individual needs of the study.

Using our sophisticated sampling tools we are able to deploy sample as batches and schedule sample deployments at any time of the day. Relevant local time zones, geography, and holiday periods are taken into consideration when deploying mailings to provide higher response rates and better distribution of responses.

**9) Please describe the nature of your incentive system(s). How does this vary by length of interview, respondent characteristics, or other factors you may consider?**

Panelists are not provided an incentive to initially join the panel. Once a panelist joins and passes through our initial battery of security and data quality tests we offer incentives to reduce attrition and reward them for their time. Those who qualify and complete a study are provided cash incentives through PayPal, while panelists who terminate from a study are typically entered into a monthly sweepstakes drawing.

The incentive level is based on the type of audience, fielding time period, incidence, length, survey topic, complexity of the study, and survey design. Longer surveys, surveys to groups with lower response rates, and surveys to B2B audiences typically merit a larger incentive than participants in shorter and more engaging research exercises. Each project is distinct and we work with our clients to design the best incentive program to achieve their goals. Indeed, this customized approach enables us to provide global samples of the highest quality, even when faced with tight fielding deadlines.

 

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**10) Is there a privacy policy in place? If so, what does it state? Is the panel compliant with all regional, national and local laws with respect to privacy, data protection and children e.g. EU Safe Harbour, and COPPA in the US? What other research industry standards do you comply with e.g. ICC/ESOMAR International Code on Market and Social Research, CASRO guidelines etc.?**

Our panelist privacy policy is available by clicking here.

We take privacy very seriously and have taken many steps to help safeguard the personal information collected from our panelists. To demonstrate our commitment our information practices were reviewed for compliance by TRUSTe, an independent, non-profit organization whose mission is to build user's trust and confidence in the Internet by promoting the use of fair information practices.

Our policies and practices have been implemented to comply with all applicable laws governing the collection of user information. In fact, we employ a Chief Privacy Officer to ensure on-going commitment to complying with applicable legislation and follow industry best practices. Lastly, we abide by the standards of conduct of MRA, ESOMAR, and CASRO and are active members of all three associations.


**11, 12 and 13) What data protection/security measures do you have in place? Do you apply a quality management system? Please describe it. Do you use data quality analysis and validation techniques to identify inattentive and fraudulent respondents? If yes, what techniques are used and at what point in the process are they applied?**

Data integrity is of paramount importance to Authentic Response and the clients we serve. In order to guard against poor quality data it is the responsibility of the panel provider to add quality assurance to their recruitment and sample management practices and the responsibility of the researcher to design questionnaires that engage participants and detect potentially bad data.

Our first line of defense is our invitation-only, patented Double Opt-in recruitment process. This passive recruitment process attracts panelists interested in participating in relevant research, not those interested solely in incentives.

Furthermore, we developed Authentic Validation, a proprietary and innovational security process used to deter inattentive and fraudulent participants. Authentic Validation weighs the specific characteristics of each respondent before they can complete the registration process and before they are allowed to enter a given survey. Some of these security checks include proprietary 'cookie like' technologies, proxy server detection, e-mail address duplication, past history of survey participation, time testing of surveys, and survey link deactivation to prevent additional persons from entering the study through the same invitation. This deactivation also stops panelists from posting survey links on message boards -a common practice of professional panelists familiar with less secure panels.

We also provide suggestions to our clients so they can design studies that improve data quality. Along the same lines, we are very proactive in our communication regarding bad or pattern responses such as 'flat liners'. As we do not have access to the questionnaire data it is important to stay one step ahead of gamers, satisfiers, cheaters, and professional panelists.

There is no silver bullet on data quality. Instead, we are very committed to the continued development of security measures and are very vigilant on validation -we immediately remove any bad, flat, questionable, or fast cases from our panel permanently and perform a thorough evaluation of such cases to continue to stay one step ahead. For more information about our specific Authentic Validation security techniques please click here.

 

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**14) How do you source groups that may be hard-to-reach on the internet?**

As explained briefly in our responses to Question 2 and 5, we source our panelists by working in partnership with Web based publishers, service providers, and content providers who have active and growing memberships. As new potential panelists register on these Web sites they are asked whether they would like to participate in market research. The membership of our recruiting network, which is based on more than 400 distinct Web site partners, is truly multi-sourced bringing populations into our panel with varied backgrounds, interests, demographics, and lifestyles. The invitation process is closed by design for quality control purposes and for tracing the origin of all incoming panelists. Potential panelists cannot simply visit MyView.com to join, as they can with many other panels.

We are constantly evaluating the mix of incoming panelists to increase our penetration with harder to reach online populations such as Spanish-speaking Hispanics and lower responding groups such as young males. Additionally, we actively pursue partnerships with Web sites that attract lower responding groups and harder to reach populations on the Internet. For example, we partner with several IT specific trade publications and are subsequently able to offer one of the strongest IT panels available globally. For our consumer panels, we partner with Web sites with specific appeal to harder to reach groups to improve the natural distribution of our panel.

As we continue to build our panel, these sourcing efforts enable us to conduct larger and larger studies that truly mirror the latest Census data.


**15) What are people told when they are recruited?**

Potential new panelists are specifically asked to participate in surveys relevant to their interests and profiles, and are only contacted for legitimate market research.

**16) If the sample comes from a panel, what is your annual panel turnover/attrition/retention rate and how is it calculated?**

Panel turnover and attrition is important to examine as a particularly high turnover rate could be a reflection of a given sampling company's lack of respect for their panelists' time. Often research studies are conducted of poor quality design and/or are unreasonably long. We routinely turns down proposal requests for very long surveys or poorly designed studies out of respect for our panelists' time and to provide our clients with consistent, scalable solutions in the long run. Many of the issues often discussed in our industry around panelist fatigue and the declining response to research surveys within the wider population relate to panelist abuse in one form or another. Our attrition rate is lower than many other panels given our attention to customer service and respect for our panelists.

The attrition rate from our panel is approximately 2-3% monthly. This figure is based on opt-out requests from panelists, panelists purged due to poor quality responses, and e-mail addresses that return a hard bounce (once) or repeated soft bounces. The average tenure of an active panelist is 16 months from the date they first register.

 

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**17) What is the size and/or the capacity of the panel, based on active panel members on a given date? Can you provide an overview of active panelists by type of source?**

As of January 2009 we have 4.1 million panelists globally, which includes our proprietary consumer and B2B panel figures. Through our approved partner network we can expand our reach further (more details on this are covered in Question 23).

One-hundred percent of the panel counts provided qualify as being active, meaning they have participated or registered for a survey within the last 12 months. Inactive embers are re-engaged every six months. If they remain non-responsive they are removed from the panel.

**18) Do you have a policy regarding multi-panel membership? What efforts do you undertake to ensure that survey results are unbiased given that some individuals belong to multiple panels?**

Our policy around multi-panel membership relates to the frequency of participation overall. We have led the industry in terms of digital fingerprinting and offer invitation-only recruitment for our panel precisely because of concern over the same panelist responding more than once to a single survey. If a panelist attempts to access the same survey more than once the survey is blocked. Likewise, we proactively restrict panelists from taking the same type of research study within a 60 day period (or as defined by our client). We use these category lock-outs to encourage panelists to be more interested and engaged in the research process, which also ends up improving the results we provide.

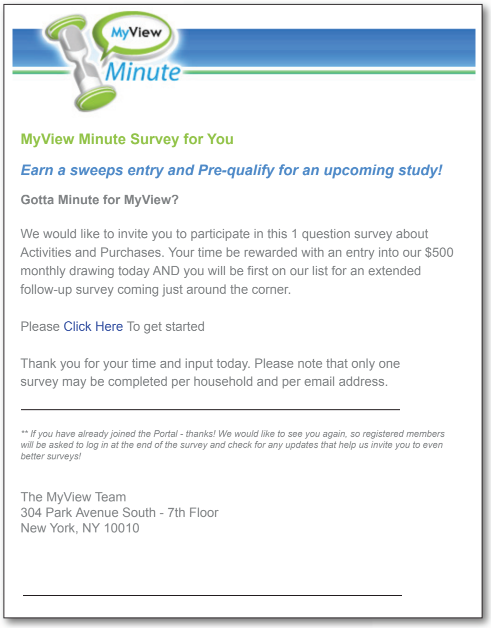
**19) Do you measure respondent satisfaction?**

Respondent satisfaction is measured with individual surveys and on an overall level with our processes, communication, and services. At Authentic Response, we strive to offer the best possible user experience for our panelists -if we notice complaints on individual surveys they are quickly investigated. We also vet new processes through the help of our panelists to ensure they continue to be engaged. In addition, we have live panelist customer service to quickly assuage concerns and obtain actionable feedback.

**20) Explain how people are invited to take part in a survey. What does a typical invitation look like?**

Panelists are invited to participate in a survey only after they have Double Opted-in, completed our standard registration form, and passed our initial Authentic Validation data quality check. Confirmed panelists are sent an e-mail invitation indicating the general survey topic and length, as well as the incentive amount and type. The invitation also details standard feedback loops such as a link to our customer service team and FAQs.

Each invitation is thoroughly reviewed by the client to ensure correct messaging. Under no circumstance do we reveal or hint at any of the screening criteria, even if that characteristic is among the data points we have on file. We encourage all clients to always review the invitation text when working with us or with our competitors as not all firms have such rigorous standards when writing and sending invitations.


MyView Minute

MyView Minute Survey for You

*Earn a sweeps entry and Pre-qualify for an upcoming study!*

Gotta Minute for MyView?

We would like to invite you to participate in this 1 question survey about Activities and Purchases. Your time be rewarded with an entry into our $500 monthly drawing today AND you will be first on our list for an extended follow-up survey coming just around the corner.

Please Click Here To get started

Thank you for your time and input today. Please note that only one survey may be completed per household and per email address.

*** If you have already joined the Portal - thanks! We would like to see you again, so registered members will be asked to log in at the end of the survey and check for any updates that help us invite you to even better surveys!*

The MyView Team
304 Park Avenue South - 7th Floor
New York, NY 10010

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**21) How often are individual members contacted for online surveys within a given time period? Do you keep data on panelist participation history and are limits placed on the frequency that members are contacted and asked to participate in a survey?**

On average, individual panelists are contacted three times a month. At times we may exceed this on an individual project basis if multiple re-contacts are necessary, such as for In Home Usage Tests (IHUT). We also keep a full log of each panelists' participation history and categorize each survey invitation received to manage exclusion and lock-out periods set by our clients without relying on self reported information.

We impose strict limits on the frequency of participation in surveys, and on the total number of invitations that are sent to an individual panelist: we feel that it is the responsibility of panel companies to respect their participants regarding the number of e-mails sent, and we closely monitor our customer service messages to ensure we remain in the good graces of our panelists. Further, as with any sample provider, it is our responsibility to the wider research community to guard against panelist abuse and do everything possible to maintain healthy attitudes towards the research process in general. To that end we turn away business if we deem the length of the interview to be excessive, the mode of contact unreasonable, the content to be offensive, or if we feel the survey will do damage to the long term relationships we maintain with our panelists.

**22) Do you conduct online surveys with children and young people? If so, please describe the process for obtaining permission.**

As with every study, we evaluate the content as it relates to the desired audience to determine whether it is appropriate and ethical and to ensure that the data is being collected in accordance with the guidelines set forth by the major research associations such as ESOMAR. When the survey subject matter is appropriate, we conduct online surveys with young people and, on a case by case basis, with children. In our experience topics typically relate to the video game, telecommunications, entertainment, and CPG industries. In the United States, teenagers thirteen and older are contacted directly and recruited from Web sites geared to that audience (such as social networking sites) and more general Web sites that obtain traffic from a wide audience range.

To reach those under 13 we are fully compliant with the local applicable legislation, such as COPPA in the United States. International rules vary on reaching those 12 and up. As a best practice, we seek parental permission to survey their child. If permission is obtained we request that the parent brings their child to the computer to take the survey. Likewise, for surveys like these, we strongly recommend that the questionnaire is specifically designed for either children or young people to obtain the best quality results and ensure that the audience is engaged throughout the data collection process.

**23) Do you supplement your samples with samples from other providers? How do you select these partners? Is it your policy to notify a client in advance when using a third party provider? Do you de-duplicate the sample when using multiple sample providers?**

If required, and with permission from our client, we will supplement our sample with sample from other providers. This occurs if a study's specifications are too large for any one panel to handle or if, in field, the specifications or quotas significantly affect our feasibility in a previously unforeseen way. In all cases, these providers must pass through our strict Authentic Validation data quality process to remove duplicates, speeders, cheaters, satisfiers, and gamers. All of our partners are thoroughly vetted to ensure they abide by the standards of conduct prescribed by leading research associations and are required to have a clearly articulated privacy policy, a good reputation in the industry, and prescribe to our Service Level Agreement (SLA). All providers are held to the same standards our clients hold us to in terms of data quality.

 

**24) What are likely survey start rates, drop-out and participation rates in connection with a provided sample? How are these computed?**

The formula we use to calculate response rate (sometimes called 'start rate') is: total survey starts divided by total e-mails sent. Response rates vary based on a variety of variables including the survey's length, topic, total time in field, day of week, time of day, and the sample segment. Taking these variables into account we generally see response rates range from 15% to 30% based on a total of five days in field and one reminder message. With recently prescreened participants and in responses to re-contact surveys (such as those necessary in IHUT and Diaries) we see response rates range from 60% to 80%.

Drop-out rates also vary based on these variables, but we typically see a rate of less than 5%. This figure is determined by adding all of the completed interviews, terminations, and over-quota responses. Subtract that total from the survey starts and divide that total by the total survey starts [Total Survey Starts - (Completed Interviews+ Over-quotas + Terminations)] / Total Survey Starts

**25) Do you maintain individual level data such as recent participation history, date of entry, source, etc., on your panelists? Are you able to supply your client with a per job analysis of such individual level data?**

We maintain full participation histories on all participants including the Web site they originated from, the date of their registration, surveys they have been active in, clicks to invitations, and their Authentic Validation data quality history. As a MyView panelist all activity is recorded for behavioral tracking. Although some of this information remains confidential given privacy and trade secret concerns, we can certainly provide some information, upon request.

**26) What information do you provide to debrief your client after the project has finished?**

We believe in constant communication with our clients and have multiple operational staff members available on each and every study. In fact, our client centric, fully customized service operates around the clock —there's never a time when a clients' project and particular needs are unattended or when we can't be reached.

Initially kick-off calls are scheduled to introduce our project team, re-review the specifications of a given study, discuss the timeline, review any soft targets or other ideal situations for the project, and answer any questions the client may have.

Before this call the project manager and field manager review our Knowledge Management System, which has a full summary of the previous interactions, surveys, and preferences of that particular client and individual. For some clients this audit trail spans a number of years and is very helpful for the account management and operations team as it allows us to monitor the ongoing cause and effect of different situations. This tool is used to constantly evaluate ourselves and our level of service, with an eye towards process improvements. We're so focused and driven by service that employee compensation is tied to this and other client satisfaction metrics.

Upon the conclusion of every study we schedule a debriefing call to confirm we met or exceeded all of the study's goals including the timeline, quotas, and other deliverables. We can also provide the client any relevant metrics or fielding information upon request such as start rate, click through rate, sample sends, drop-off rates, etc. Lastly, we send a client satisfaction survey after every project to evaluate and gauge data quality, customer service, responsiveness, and any areas of potential improvement.

**We're happy to discuss any of the above points further, and welcome this initiative by ESOMAR. For more information please contact your Account Representative or call us at 1-888-AR-Panel.**

304 Park Avenue South, 7th Floor | New York, NY 10010 | Phone: 1-888-AR-PANEL | Fax: 212-905-5501
www.authenticresponse.com