ONS business-centred approach to research recruitment methods to understand engagement needs

Challenges and successes

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ONS Business Surveys

- 77 business surveys
- 2.6 million questionnaires per year (85% online)
- 380,000 businesses selected per year

Burden on businesses

Of the 380,000 businesses:
- Most businesses (72%) are only selected for one business survey per year, 1% (38k) receive around 10
- Those that have multiple sampling units receive on average 76 questionnaires
- One business is selected across 240 surveys and receives over 1000 questionnaires per year!
Business Survey Strategy: Underlying principles

Integrated Survey Design

Huge opportunity for radical re-design

Business-centred

Business burden is a growing strategic issue - with high levels of Ministerial focus

Engagement, Understanding and Education

Best practice is building effective relationships based on mutual understanding
BSS Research Strategy: Methods

- Desk review of previous research
- Engagement with topic experts
- Qualitative Interviews
- Feedback from business survey respondents
- Paradata
- Engagement with industry bodies
- Analysis of other NSI approaches
Traditional approach to business survey research

- **Survey by survey** approach to research and data collection
- Sample typically an extract from one ONS database
- Survey specific business contact
- Telephone recruitment

**Challenges**

- Limited engagement from businesses
- Difficulties recruiting via telephone
- **Silo’d** approach to research
Holistic business-centred approach to research

- Business as the **sampling unit**
- Merging several ONS administrative data sets to create a “master sample”
- **Tailored** approach to recruitment
- Coordinated **email campaign** followed by telephone recruitment

**Challenges**

- **Agile** approach to establishing a new process
- Complexity of **merging and cleaning** the sample
- **GDPR** and legal considerations
- Rigorous quality assurance process
Tailored recruitment strategy

Consultation with the Office for National Statistics – Invitation to help with Business Surveys redesign annual surveys

Roarion Gentiana

Good morning,

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) is reviewing how we engage with businesses like yours, to make it easier for you to provide us data and to improve our service and statistics.

We understand that you are the contact at the business for the following surveys: Annual Business Survey (ABS), Annual Survey of International Trade in Services (AITIS), Annual Purchases Survey (APS), Annual Survey of Goods and Services (ASGS), Business Enterprise Research and Development (BERD), Business Register and Employment Survey (BR2S) and Low Carbon and Renewable Energy Survey (LCRES).

How can you help?

We would like to arrange a voluntary consultation meeting with you to help us understand the processes your business goes through to complete these surveys, any challenges you may have and how we might make it easier for your business to provide the data.

The consultation should take no longer than an hour but could be shorter if needed. We appreciate that you may be busy. We will not ask for any figures from you and everything you say will be treated in the strictest of confidence.

Why do we need your help?

The data you provide when answering ONS surveys is used in producing statistics that measure important economic indicators such as inflation and GDP. These statistics are subsequently used to inform important decisions, for example interest rates changes.

This consultation is part of the wider focus on ONS’s ongoing drive towards a more business-centred approach. Better understanding the steps your business takes when completing ONS surveys will help us to minimise the time you spend on ONS surveys, as well as improve our service to better meet your needs and the needs of other businesses like yours. This may also benefit your business, as these ONS surveys are a legal requirement for your business to complete.

Next steps

Please respond to this e-mail confirming if you can help, so we can agree a suitable time. If you are unable to help, please let us know by responding to this e-mail.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards,

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• Email addresses of all survey contacts within a business
• Names of all survey contacts within a business
• List of all annual surveys the business completes

Challenges

• Dependent on sample preparation work
• Time consuming compared to other blanket approaches
Engagement with industry bodies

- Enable access to businesses for research through industry bodies
- Focus groups with businesses at British Chambers of Commerce regular meetings

Challenges
- Time consuming
- Can be difficult to recruit businesses that meet specific sampling criteria
Successes and impact

Marked *increase* in successful recruitment
- Roughly 1 in 10 businesses approached agreed to participate in research

Interviews with *multiple* survey contacts within a business, reducing burden for both the business and ONS researchers

Developing a *new* business-centred recruitment approach which will be adopted wider
Thank you!
Welcome any questions and comments

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