Evolution of COFHE Surveys

Jag Patel, May 2015
Historians say we once spoke to each other to gather data, in “conversations”.
The next great leap was sending dried sheets of wood pulp with questions to be answered.
This method has some flaws.

NAME  JOHN SMITH
SUBJECT  HIST 1000  DATE 11/11/2011
STUDENT NUMBER  123456789

xkcd.com/499/

Okay, class, I've turned in your exams for grading. Now—

Miss Lenhart?

I used a #3 pencil instead of a #2. Will that mess anything up?

Aieee!

Blam

Oh god!

I've never seen so much blood!

You what?

Oh god!
Move to web surveys (2001): “set up a meeting...to talk about using an MIT server for the COFHE Senior Survey.” I sent potential meeting times and a survey.

- What is the schedule for the survey? Are there school-specific time lines?
- How many schools & students are expected to participate in this survey?
- Is a draft of the main survey available?
- Will each school provide custom questions? How many?
- What else does each school expect to customize per survey?
- Would you like students who revisit to change their answers while it is open?
- We might require schools to notify their own students by email or letter - acceptable?
- We would likely require a single point of contact for each school to answer support questions raised by the survey. Is a person from each school easily identified?
- We will need to talk about an authentication method for this survey - are there existing expectations?
- Are students rewarded by schools for participating? What would we need to track for schools to help with the reward?
- What type of service did schools receive in the past? What was the customary charge?
Web Survey Service won Excellence Award for “Working Smarter/Getting Results”.

Nomination claimed we were "able to reduce the number of surveys, eliminate surveys that have similar questions, and increase the availability and utilization of existing data."

Meet Jeff Schiller and Jag Patel. They won an MIT Excellence Award last year, and they’re still smiling about it.

Meet Lydia Snover and Kathy Bowman. They nominated Jeff and Jag for the MIT Excellence Award last year, and they’re still smiling about it.

WOULDN’T YOU LIKE TO BE SMILING, TOO?
We hosted 384 surveys for COFHE schools and guests in our first 10 years.
Reached a steady state with some changes and upgrades; completely manual coding.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2002-2007</th>
<th>2008-2010</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Committee creates core</td>
<td>Minimal input on web survey appearance</td>
<td>Static mockups toward end of development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mockup survey</td>
<td>Jag, using Dreamweaver, HTML editor</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Add local questions</td>
<td>25 closed, 5 points + 5 open ended, at the end.</td>
<td>More local Qs. Optional items &amp; local insertions in code by 2010.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Host survey on secure site</td>
<td>Jeff’s code on websurvey.mit.edu</td>
<td>Jeff’s code on mitsurveys.net in Amazon cloud (AWS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Send personalized emails</td>
<td>Jeff, later Jag using Word &amp; Eudora, sometimes school</td>
<td>School or Jag, using eCampaign</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deliver data files to COFHE</td>
<td>Jeff sends fixed length files to COFHE</td>
<td>Jag sends CSV to COFHE, local schools send to COFHE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pull together norm and trend</td>
<td>COFHE: Tony, Kathy or Steve</td>
<td>Steve: More options, some local hosting = more variability</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

COFHE: Tony, Kathy or Steve
We needed a sustainable and scalable solution, without single (human) points of failure.
It felt a little like this.
Qualtrics had answers for my many questions, and answered correctly.

- Qualtrics doesn’t need our email addresses to generate unique links.
- They don’t limit scales to 10 points and have a large variety of question types.
- The cost isn’t outrageous for a single user or department license.
- We can collaborate on the same survey with people inside and outside MIT.
- We can see data reports live, and the data is “clean”.

**Most of what we did manually could be done (mostly better!) with features available in Qualtrics.**
We hosted 384 surveys for COFHE in our first 10 years and 254 in the last 4 years with Qualtrics.
The counts do not include some of our proposed guest schools.
Test all components of your survey. Your survey is more than the questions.
The survey “visual” is meta data: zoom out to see density.
Test multiple operating systems, browsers, and screen sizes.

ESS 2015 Operating Systems by “Finished” Flag in Qualtrics

- Macintosh (50%): 82% Finished, 18% Not Finished
- Windows (25%): 84% Finished, 16% Not Finished
- iPhone (14%): 58% Finished, 42% Not Finished
- Other (11%): 47% Finished, 53% Not Finished
- Total: 75% Finished, 25% Not Finished

ESS 2015 Screen Size by Class Year

- Y1: 23% tiny, 33% small, 36% medium, 7% large
- Y2: 19% tiny, 32% small, 39% medium, 9% large
- Y3: 17% tiny, 33% small, 39% medium, 11% large
- Y4: 15% tiny, 34% small, 38% medium, 13% large
- Total: 19% tiny, 33% small, 38% medium, 10% large
Respondents filling out the ESS on an iPhone varied from 6%-29%; less usage in PM.

ESS 2015 Operating System = iPhone by School and “Finished” Flag in Qualtrics

[Diagram showing percentage of respondents using iPhones by school, with bars for iPhone finished and iPhone didn't finish.

Jag Patel, May 2015]
Use a Qualtrics skin with a fluid layout to change the display on small screens.

Progress bar can’t be text; takes up too much real estate.

If the header is an image, it will shrink better on small screens.

Newer skins with fluid layouts will turn matrices into vertical single response questions on small screens.
Test (and vary!) senders and subject lines. Try to personalize the emails.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>From line</th>
<th>Invited</th>
<th>Opened</th>
<th>Finished</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MIT Innovation Initiative***</td>
<td>11,449</td>
<td>31.0%</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professor Vladimir Bulović and Professor Fiona Murray</td>
<td>11,093</td>
<td>38.3%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vladimir Bulović and Fiona Murray</td>
<td>11,281</td>
<td>37.6%</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professor Fiona Murray and Professor Vladimir Bulović</td>
<td>11,207</td>
<td>37.9%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fiona Murray and Vladimir Bulović</td>
<td>11,427</td>
<td>36.8%</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>56,457</td>
<td>36.3%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject line</th>
<th>Invited</th>
<th>Opened</th>
<th>Finished</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MIT Alumni Survey</td>
<td>11,029</td>
<td>34.1%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIT Alumni Study***</td>
<td>11,459</td>
<td>37.6%</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience of MIT [SCHOOL] Alumni</td>
<td>10,457</td>
<td>33.7%</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience of MIT [DEPT] Alumni***</td>
<td>11,313</td>
<td>37.6%</td>
<td>4.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact through Innovation</td>
<td>11,302</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>55,560</td>
<td>36.1%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Greeting in email</th>
<th>Invited</th>
<th>Started</th>
<th>Finished</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Salutation + Last Name</td>
<td>28,397</td>
<td>***0.8%</td>
<td>***4.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIT alumni</td>
<td>28,060</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>56,457</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>3.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Promote policies to help collect better data, and make it last longer by sharing it.

**Proposed Commandments**

*Thou shalt not run surveys without:*
- Senior officer approval
- Checking for recent question overlap
- Thorough review of questions & survey administration
- A data terms of use
- Answering the survey yourself
- A plan for analysis, dissemination, and archiving

**Social Survey Contract**

- Survey questions will be public before launch
- Overall frequencies will be public after close
- Senior leaders will be given reports and analyses for their areas
- Optional Rider: Incentives are tied to community response
Thank you!
http://j.mp/askjag
jag@mit.edu