Golden Rules for Designing Effective Surveys

I. Remember a survey is like a conversation
   - It is communication with a purpose
   - It begins with an introduction
   - It needs to capture respondent’s interest
   - It starts with easy-to-answer issues, builds towards depth and substance
   - It follows a logical order; transitions signal change of topic
   - It uses lead-in or follow-up questions to get more detail
   - It finds a delicate way to raise sensitive issues
   - It winds down with less consequential topics
   - It signs off to indicate the end

II. The first step of developing a survey is end-use strategizing
   - Start with the end and work backwards to ensure that your survey collects the data you want to end up with.
   - First identify purpose of the survey activity, how the information will be used, who it should inform or persuade, what level and amount of data will be convincing to them.
   - Then figure out what specific pieces of information you want to know and the best way to measure and capture it.
   - Lastly, think about the sources of the information – who they are and how much time they are likely to spend on the survey.
   - Only then are you ready to start developing survey questions.

III. The aim of survey design is to reduce measurement and non-response error

Use Dillman’s principles of good survey design to ensure that:
   - respondents read every word on the survey
   - they understand what the question is asking and what they are supposed to do to answer it
   - they maintain enough cognitive energy to provide accurate answers throughout the survey
   - respondents will be motivated to finish the survey