

# *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