

Presto! Data at the Touch of a Screen

by Catherine Dizon

iPads. Everybody's using them these days. Even [orangutans](#) have "gone ape" over the benefits of these handheld devices! You can too with the Tobacco Control Evaluation Center's new lending program, where you can borrow our fleet of iTouches and iPads for your next data collection project.



Using handheld devices can save you time and money on data entry by collecting your data directly onto an electronic device. Goodbye paper surveys, clunky clipboards and tedious data entry. Hello convenience and superfast results!

Before fully launching our new service, we conducted several feasibility studies -- testing a variety of handheld devices as well as survey platforms for data collection. (See the results on our website <http://tobaccoeval.ucdavis.edu/tools.php>.) We found that using iTouches, iPads or Smartphones for data collection improves data accuracy, reduces missing data, and saves time. The biggest obstacle initially was the need of many survey platforms for internet connectivity.

A screenshot of an iPod or iPad screen displaying a survey question. The status bar at the top shows "iPod", signal strength, Wi-Fi, and the time "3:28 PM". The survey question is "Did you observe any of these tobacco products for sale?". Below the question are five radio button options: "Bidis", "Blunt Wrappers", "Electronic Cigarettes", "Hookah Tobacco or Pipes", and "Single Cigarettes". The screen also has "Back" and "Next" buttons.

iPod 3:28 PM

Back Pick at least 1 Next

Did you observe any of these tobacco products for sale?

Bidis

Blunt Wrappers

Electronic Cigarettes

Hookah Tobacco or Pipes

Single Cigarettes

Electronic survey services like SurveyMonkey or LimeSurvey work fine on handheld devices, but they both require a constant internet connection. But when you're out collecting data you may not always have wireless access, even in urban areas. Not to worry! We've found the perfect solution: iSURVEY.

iSURVEY is a program designed for administering surveys without Internet by using a downloadable application or "app" on a Smartphone, iTouch, or iPad. iSURVEY stores the data you collect on your device until you have an internet connection and can upload it to your account. This way, you can administer surveys whether you are in an internet hot zone or not. Simply create your survey in your free iSURVEY account, load it on a handheld device, and you are free to collect data anywhere.



During our demonstration at the recent CTCP/TRDRP conference, participants got the chance to test drive a survey on the devices. After seeing how easy they were to use, Alex Tyannikov, at Breathe California of Sacramento's STAND project, used a bunch of our iPads

for data collection the following week! Alex exclaimed, “It was great to use this new technology which makes it so much easier and more efficient to collect data.”

If you would like to do the same, all you need to do is give us a call to reserve the iTouches or iPads for your next tobacco control survey or observation activity. We’ll help you develop, design, and load your survey or observation form onto the devices. We can also provide technical assistance and/or training on using the devices as well as the iSURVEY program.



If you run into any difficulties along the way, we’re available to help you troubleshoot. We’re here to make it easy for you, regardless of your experience using new technology.

Just ask Ofelia Alvarado, Policy Director of the American Lung Association California, about her experience in borrowing the devices and using our technical assistance support. She was really impressed: “This transformed my life! We had been trying to collect data from people who frequent bars with an online SurveyMonkey link, but the response rate was SOOO slow. But once we got these devices from TCEC, we were able to go into bars and collect the data we needed in no time. This method of collecting survey responses was a life saver for me!”

Still not convinced? Hear what these and other projects have to say about using our lending service in the recording of several recent webinars on the subject. You can also download several [FAQ sheets and Tips & Tools](#) about using handheld devices and the iSurvey platform.

To learn more about how Prop 99-funded projects and their subcontractors can borrow our fleet of iTouches and iPads for tobacco control-related survey or observation activities, contact us at tobaccoeval@ucdavis.edu or call me directly at 530.754.8317.



Photos by: TCEC staff members