

Pointers For Parents

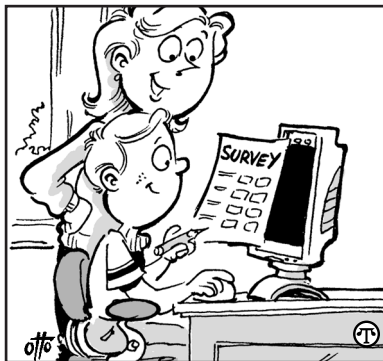
Minors and Online Surveys

(NAPSA)—While it's widely known adults serve as an important source of information to marketing research companies seeking data to help companies formulate promotional strategies for their products or services, what many people don't realize is that children, age 12 and younger, offer marketers an abundance of useful information. Consequently, sampling suppliers tend to pursue today's computer-savvy youngsters via the Internet to obtain the survey data they need.

"This is legitimate and completely legal," says Peter Milla, chief information officer at Survey Sampling International (SSI). "But at SSI, we work to ensure that it's completely safe, since all such surveys must follow strict protocols established by the Federal Trade Commission under its Children's Online Privacy Protection Act or COPPA." Milla further advises that parents should be aware of potential emotional pitfalls associated with online sampling and the interventional role they can play to ensure their child's survey experience is a positive one.

Milla offers several examples of best practices parents should expect to encounter in a bona fide professional online survey, as well as suggestions for ways they can enrich their child's survey participation and make his or her experience fun and successful. He notes the process begins with an e-mail arriving in the parent's in-box inviting the child to participate in the survey.

"A research company concerned with best practices will send an e-mail when the child is likely to be



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home and available; in other words, not during school hours, early morning or late evening," advises Jackie Lorch, vice president of global knowledge management at SSI.

Sending the survey invitation directly to the child's parents addresses several primary issues, according to Lorch. It lets parents:

- Determine whether they wish their child to participate. A link to COPPA guidelines should be included, as should a parental consent form. A parent should thoroughly understand the rules and regulations protecting the child's privacy and safety online prior to allowing the child to participate.
- Determine whether the child is eligible to participate by screening for age or gender. Children may be frustrated and disappointed if they don't qualify.
- Plan a convenient time/times to complete the survey. Children, especially young children, have a short

attention span and may need more than one sitting.

In addition, says Lorch, the parent portion of the survey should clearly explain what's expected of the child. The parent should then share that information with the child, using simple language.

"It's very important for the parent to remain with the child for the duration of the survey," she says. "Children often need to clarify points during the survey and the parent will know how to properly phrase the questions and access the e-mail address provided by the research company. Plus, most children appreciate the moral support."

Lorch concludes, "It's a better survey experience for everyone when the parent qualifies the child as much as possible before inviting him or her to the computer."

Survey Sampling International is the premier global provider of sampling solutions for survey research. SSI offers access to consumer and business-to-business respondents via Internet, telephone, and mobile. Additional services include survey programming and hosting, data processing, random digit dialing, and sampling consultation. SSI serves more than 1,800 marketing research clients, including nearly three-quarters of the top researchers worldwide.

SSI provides access to over 3.5 million research respondents in more than 70 countries via proprietary communities and managed affiliate relationships.

Anyone interested in becoming a survey respondent can visit www.surveyspot.com.