Agency Surveys
What Does it Take?

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Find a Firm

- Good research firms do not need to reach out to you
- Hire a firm with a history working with special districts, water, wastewater, recycled water
- Hire a firm that has the “big contracts” — Gubernatorial/Federal/Senate elected races, City/County controversial ordinances, rate/sales tax increase surveys
- Hire a firm that knows your area
- Hire a California-based firm
Costs

- Phone Surveys: $20-$30K
  - *Example*: 18 minutes, 30 questions, 400 interviews, 4.9% margin of error
  - Agency size and population does not increase or decrease costs

- Focus Group: $9K
  - *Example*: 8-10 participants, in-person interviews, 2 hours
  - Additional groups will be $9K each

- Online Discussion Boards: $30K
  - *Example*: 30 participants over 3 days (equivalent to 4 Focus Groups)
Develop a Questionnaire

- What do you want to accomplish?
- What can we afford? Frequency of surveys?
- Start with general questions, then move to specifics
- Standard questions / special topics
- Flow is key
- Never let fear determine your questions
Develop a Questionnaire – Customer Satisfaction

Next, I am going to ask you about a variety of services you receive from local government. After I read each one, please tell me whether you are generally satisfied or dissatisfied with that service. *(IF SATISFIED/DISSATISFIED, ASK: Is that very SATISFIED/DISSATISFIED or just somewhat?)* *(RANDOMIZE)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>VERY SATISFIED</th>
<th>SMWT. SATISFIED</th>
<th>SMWT. DISSAT.</th>
<th>VERY DISSAT.</th>
<th>(DK/NO OPIN.)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Garbage collection</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Street maintenance and repair</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wastewater treatment system, including the sewer pipes</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Park and recreation services</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drinking water treatment and service</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Develop a Questionnaire – Name Recognition

NOW I’D LIKE TO ASK YOU A FEW QUESTIONS ABOUT WASTEWATER, WHICH IS SOMETIMES REFERRED TO AS SEWAGE.

(ASK SPLIT SAMPLE A ONLY)
2. (T) Next, do you know the name of the agency responsible for collecting and treating wastewater in your area? (OPEN-END, RECORD VERBATIM RESPONSE)

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

(ASK SPLIT SAMPLE B ONLY)
3. (T) Now I’d like to ask you about an agency that serves your community, Central San or the Central Contra Costa Sanitary District. As far as you know, what services do they provide? (OPEN-END, RECORD VERBATIM RESPONSE)
(T) Now let me ask you about a different subject. How much do you pay per year for sewer service on your property tax bill?

( RECORD EXACT DOLLAR AMOUNT, THEN CODE )

(T*) Residential customers pay approximately one dollar and fifty-five cents per day or 47 dollars per month to repair and replace facilities and have their wastewater from toilets, bathtubs, sinks, and washing machines collected through pipes and cleaned at a treatment plant. This rate also provides funding for a household hazardous waste collection facility, unwanted medication collection and disposal sites, and residential and commercial recycled water fill stations. Do you think this is a fair price for the services provided? ( IF YES/NO, ASK: Would you say it is very FAIR/UNFAIR or just somewhat? )

Very fair ------------------------------- 1
Somewhat fair -------------------------- 2
Somewhat unfair ------------------------ 3
Very unfair ----------------------------- 4
(DON'T READ) DK/NA -------------------- 5

(T*) Next, residents pay 567 dollars per year for wastewater collection and cleaning, household hazardous waste collection and pharmaceutical and unwanted medications collection. In order to continue providing these high-quality services, to prepare for the future, and to maintain Central San’s infrastructure in good condition, over the next four fiscal years Central San is considering increasing:

(SPLIT SAMPLE C ONLY: monthly rates by approximately $31 per year)
(SPLIT SAMPLE D ONLY: rates by approximately five percent each year)
Develop a Questionnaire – Special Projects

Next, are you aware that when certain wipes are flushed down the toilet, they can clog pipes and cause a sewage overflow in your home, street, or local waterway?

Yes ------------------------------- 1
No ---------------------------------- 2
(DON’T READ) DK/NA------------------ 3

Next, California legislators are considering a bill in the State Legislature that would require that all household wet wipes, like personal wipes and facial wipes containing specific artificial chemicals and materials that do not break down or decompose in the average sewer system be labeled “non-flushable.”

Does this bill sound like something you would support or oppose? (IF SUPPORT/OPPOSE, ASK: “Is that strongly SUPPORT/OPPOSE or somewhat?”)

Strongly support---------------------- 1
Somewhat support--------------------- 2
Somewhat oppose---------------------- 3
Strongly oppose----------------------- 4
(DON’T READ) DK/NA------------------- 5
Share Results

- Always interpret the results with headers / single statements
- Use graphics and charts
- It is what it is
- Now what?
  Create paths forward to address vulnerabilities/weaknesses
Nearly nine in ten are satisfied with Central San and a majority are very satisfied

How satisfied would you say that you are with the services provided by the Central San?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2019</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>87%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Customers are most satisfied with reliability and protecting public health and environment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Description</th>
<th>Mean Score</th>
<th>5 (Very Satisfied)</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3 (Neutral)</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1 (Not at All Satisfied)</th>
<th>DK/NA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ensuring safe and reliable collection and cleaning of wastewater</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preventing sewer overflows</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protecting public health and the environment</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protecting water quality in the Bay</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distributing recycled water to schools, parks, and businesses</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing a place to safely drop off household hazardous wastes</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing recycled water for residential uses</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning for future environmental regulations</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping residents learn how to reduce water pollution</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing bins for proper collection and disposal of unwanted medication</td>
<td>3.0</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Create Baselines

- Standardized questions and annual surveys show progress
- Think like a customer — cost, service levels, value, needs
- Three surveys are a good place to start
- Always test communication effectiveness
Maximize The Survey

- It does not pay to be cheap
- Share your results – positive and negative – far and wide
- Use the results to refocus strategic messaging and communication channels
- Ask your board, leadership, peers, and employees what they would like to ask customers
- Partner with others, if possible
- Spend 95% of your time preparing your questionnaire
Other Options

- **Easy and cost-effective**
  - Survey employees
  - Survey customers through newsletters/social media and after customer engagement
  - Survey employees’ families for message testing
  - Survey employees’ children on student education programs

- **Moderate and cost-effective**
  - Conduct a focus group in-house with employees
  - Conduct a focus group in-house with customers
  - Survey all your customer-facing programs
“It is a capital mistake to theorize before one has data.”

-Arthur Conan Doyle (writing as Sherlock Holmes)