



Crafting Good Questions:
Collecting Useful Information from Campers,
Staff, and Parents

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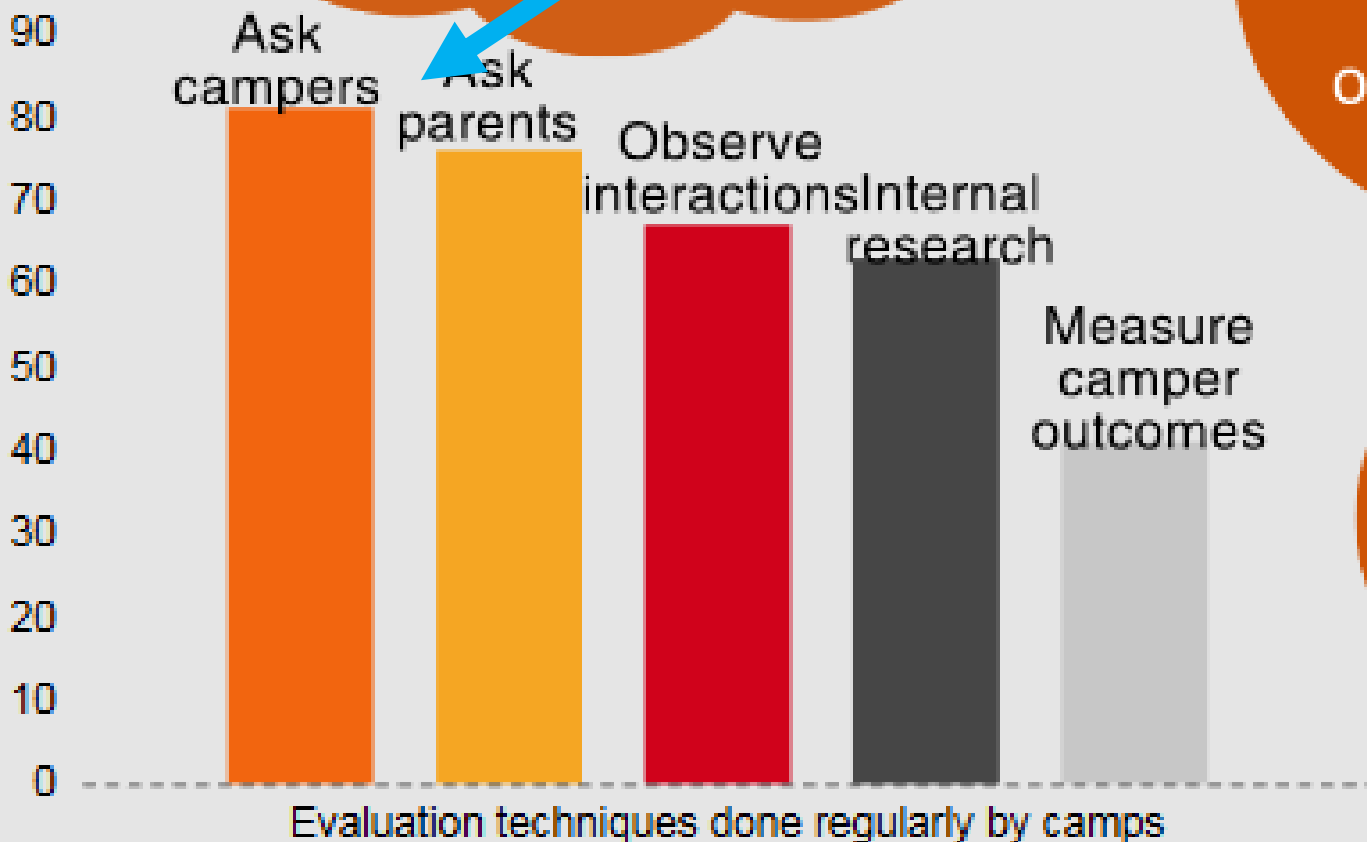
"IF YOU CAN'T MEASURE SOMETHING, YOU CAN'T UNDERSTAND IT. IF YOU CAN'T UNDERSTAND IT, YOU CAN'T CONTROL IT. IF YOU CAN'T CONTROL IT, YOU CAN'T IMPROVE IT."

(DR. H. JAMES HARRINGTON)

What helps support your camp's evaluation efforts?

Asking questions to camp stakeholders is a primary evaluation approach used by camps

obs paper surveys (67%) when evaluating their programs



56%

Supportive organizational culture

43%

Knowing how to use the results

40%

Knowing how to conduct evaluations

36%

Finding time to collect data

Where do we begin?



Writing Good Questions



Building Question Sets



Other Tips for Asking Questions



Writing Good Questions



What are characteristics of good questions?

First....consider the **relevance** of your questions



- What questions are most important to your stakeholders?
- What story do you want to be able to tell with data from your questions?
- Who's asking for the data from your questions, and how will the data be used?
- What actions might result from the questions you ask?

Please rate your satisfaction with the following elements of the camp program?

	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Neutral	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
Registration process	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Check in / Check out	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Cabins	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Food	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Counselors	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Buildings and grounds	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Activities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

What's problematic about these questions?

Please rate your satisfaction with the following elements

	Very satisfied	Satisfied	Satisfied	Satisfied	Satisfied	Satisfied	Very satisfied
Registration process	<input type="radio"/>						<input type="radio"/>
Check in / Check out	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>					<input type="radio"/>
Cabins	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Food	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Counselors	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Buildings and grounds	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>					<input type="radio"/>
Activities	<input type="radio"/>						<input type="radio"/>

“Double-barreled” question asks about satisfaction with “check in” as well as “check out”

If a respondent rates food or cabins or buildings/grounds negatively, can or will we make changes in these areas?

What’s problematic about these questions?

What's problematic about this question?

Did you like your cabin counselors?

☐ Yes

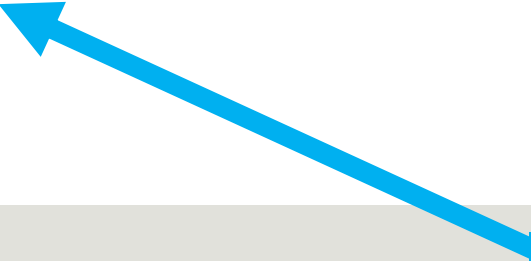
☐ No

What's problematic about this question?

Did you like your cabin counselors?

☐ Yes

☐ No



Yes/no questions provide limited information when compared to open-ended approaches

A better approach

How were you treated by your cabin counselors?

How could this question be improved?

Most campers tell us they really love camp. Why do you love camp?



How could this ques


Leading question (you “lead” them into responding in a particular way)

Most campers tell us they really love camp. Why do you love camp?

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for a user's response to the question above it.

How could this ques


Leading question (you “lead” them into responding in a particular way)



Most campers tell us they really love camp. Why do you love camp?



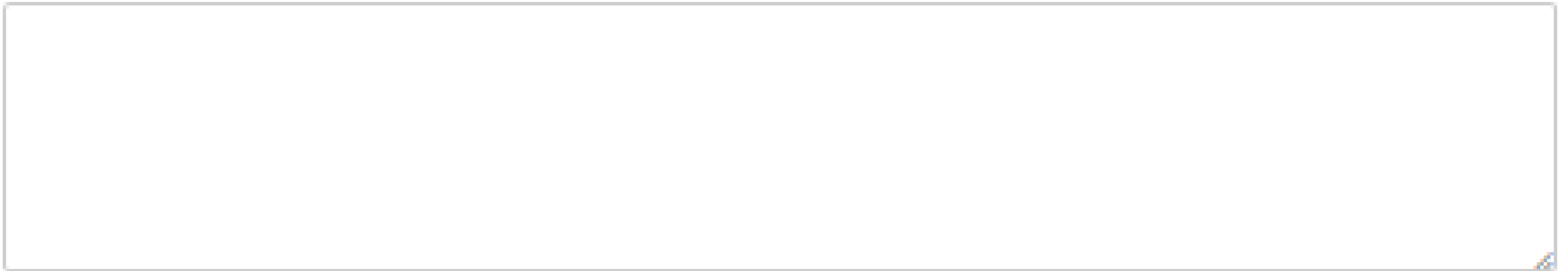
Here's another example of a leading question



How much did you like the activity? a) Loved it b) Really liked it c) Liked it a lot d) liked it e) Didn't really like it

A better approach

Some campers tell us they enjoy camp, and others say they don't really like camp. How would you describe your feelings about camp?

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin gray border, intended for a response. The box is positioned below the question text and occupies a significant portion of the lower half of the slide. In the bottom right corner of the box, there is a small, faint icon of a pencil, suggesting it is a text input field.

How could this question be improved?

What ethnic group does your child belong to?

- ☐ Black (African-American)
- ☐ White (European Origin)
- ☐ Hispanic or Latino Origin
- ☐ Asian Origin
- ☐ Asian (Indian or Arabic Origin)
- ☐ American Indian (Native American)
- ☐ Multiple Race

**Responses listed based on the most common groups served by the camp
(or in a random order)**

What ethnic group does your child belong to?

- ☐ Black (African-American)
- ☐ White (European Origin)
- ☐ Hispanic or Latino Origin
- ☐ Asian Origin
- ☐ Asian (Indian or Arabic Origin)
- ☐ American Indian (Native American)
- ☐ Multiple Race

**Responses listed in alphabetical order
(avoids primacy effect)**

What ethnic group does your child belong to?

- ☐ American Indian (Native American)
- ☐ Asian Origin
- ☐ Asian (Indian or Arabic Origin)
- ☐ Black (African-American)
- ☐ Hispanic or Latino Origin
- ☐ Multiple Race
- ☐ White (European Origin)
- ☐ Please Fill-In If Preferred

**Opportunity to fill in a
different response
(avoids assumptions)**

How could this question be improved?

Please rate your satisfaction with snacks and meals?

Very Unsatisfied

Unsatisfied

Neither unsatisfied nor satisfied

Satisfied

Very Satisfied

How could this question

Another “double-barreled” question that asks about satisfaction with snacks as well as meals.

Please rate your satisfaction with snacks and meals?

Very Unsatisfied

Unsatisfied

Neither unsatisfied nor satisfied

Satisfied

Very Satisfied

Is your mission to satisfy or is it something else?

5 response options is narrow and provides little variance in responses (We want variance!!)

Please rate the following statements from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. **Because of Camp** my child...

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
...asks questions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...takes responsibility for their own actions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...takes care of their own things	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

A better approach

Items aren't double-barreled

**Items focus on camper outcomes,
consistent with the camp's mission**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
...asks questions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...takes responsibility for their own actions	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
...takes care of their own things	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

A better approach

**7 response options provide more
variance in the responses**

Likert-Type Scale Response Anchors

Citation:

Vagias, Wade M. (2006). *Likert-type scale response anchors*. Clemson International Institute for Tourism & Research Development, Department of Parks, Recreation and Tourism Management. Clemson University.

Level of Acceptability

- 1 – Totally unacceptable
- 2 – Unacceptable
- 3 – Slightly unacceptable
- 4 – Neutral
- 5 – Slightly acceptable
- 6 – Acceptable
- 7 – Perfectly Acceptable

Level of Appropriateness

- 1 – Absolutely inappropriate
- 2 – Inappropriate
- 3 – Slightly inappropriate
- 4 – Neutral
- 5 – Slightly appropriate
- 6 – Appropriate
- 7 – Absolutely appropriate

Level of Importance

- 1 – Not at all important
- 2 – Low importance
- 3 – Slightly important
- 4 – Neutral
- 5 – Moderately important
- 6 – Very important
- 7 – Extremely important

My beliefs

- 1 – Very untrue of what I believe
- 2 – Untrue of what I believe
- 3 – Somewhat untrue of what I believe
- 4 – Neutral
- 5 – Somewhat true of what I believe
- 6 – True of what I believe
- 7 – Very true of what I believe

Priority:

- 1 – Not a priority
- 2 – Low priority
- 3 – Somewhat priority
- 4 – Neutral
- 5 – Moderate Priority
- 6 – High priority
- 7 – Essential priority

Level of Concern

- 1 – not at all concerned
- 2 – Slightly concerned
- 3 – Somewhat concerned
- 4 – Moderately concerned
- 5 – Extremely concerned

Level of Support/Opposition

- 1 – Strongly oppose
- 2 – Somewhat oppose
- 3 – neutral
- 4 – Somewhat favor
- 5 – Strongly favor

Level of Probability

- 1 – Not probable
- 2 – Somewhat improbable
- 3 – Neutral
- 4 – Somewhat probable
- 5 – Very probable

Level of Agreement

- 1 – Strongly disagree
- 2 – Disagree
- 3 – Neither agree or disagree
- 4 – Agree
- 5 – Strongly agree

Level of Desirability

- 1 – Very undesirable
- 2 – Undesirable
- 3 – neutral
- 4 – Desirable
- 5 – Very desirable

Do you own a library card?

☐ Yes

☐ No

What is your annual household income in dollars per year?

0-12,500
12,501-25,000
25,001-35,000
35,001-50,000
50,001-75,000
75,001-100,000
100,001-150,000
150,001-200,000

What's problematic about these questions?

What's problematic about this question?

What was your child's grade at the end of the most recent semester they completed?


☐ A

☐ B

☐ C

☐ D

☐ F



This question might also encourage a social desirability bias. How can we reduce the likelihood that this bias will impact how someone responds?

Importance of “Other”

How did you learn about the overnight camp your child is attending?

- ☐ I or a family member attended this camp
- ☐ Word of mouth from friends or other parents
- ☐ Web Search
- ☐ Camp Advertisement
- ☐ American Camp Association
- ☐ My church, school, or community center
- ☐ Other (Please Fill-In)

Importance of “Other”

Here’s an example of an “Other” option? Why is this option important for this question?

How did you learn about the overnight camp your child is attending?

- ☐ I or a family member attended this camp
- ☐ Word of mouth from friends or other parents
- ☐ Web Search
- ☐ Camp Advertisement
- ☐ American Camp Association
- ☐ My church, school, or community center

☐ Other (Please Fill-In)

Begin With Good Constructs...then Questions

- **Program questions**

- What are my top 3 programs, and which programs underperform?
- What trends can we identify in our programs and services?

- **Camper questions**

- How do we make youth better? Are there times when we make them worse?
- When we impact camper growth and development, how long do those impacts last?

- **Staff questions**

- How can I better prepare my staff for their roles and responsibilities?
- What staff characteristics are most related to positive outcomes in campers?

- **Parent questions**

- Of all the things we do, what do parents care about most?
- What can we do to improve our parent engagement efforts?



Summary: Common Problems w/Crafting Questions

- Questions that lack relevance
- Leading questions
- Closed vs. open-ended questions
- Double-barreled questions
- Narrow scale ranges (3 options, 5 options)
- Response options listed in the order you think people are likely to respond



Building Question Sets

When you build sets of questions, how do you determine what comes first, what comes next, and what comes last?

Consider question order (flow) carefully

What questions are most important?
(don't put those at the end)

Can you obtain info from other sources rather than asking for it again?

How could these questions be improved?

[illegible]

**Here the items are listed high to low
("strongly agree" to "strongly
disagree")**

In the next question items are listed low to high (“strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”)

[illegible]

Capture numbers and words

Using numeric questions (Likert-type scales) as well as open-ended questions can help you understand stakeholder perspectives in different ways.

Capturing numbers and words will help you tell a more compelling story.

Consider your capacity to collect and analyze the data, and then collect what you can manage.

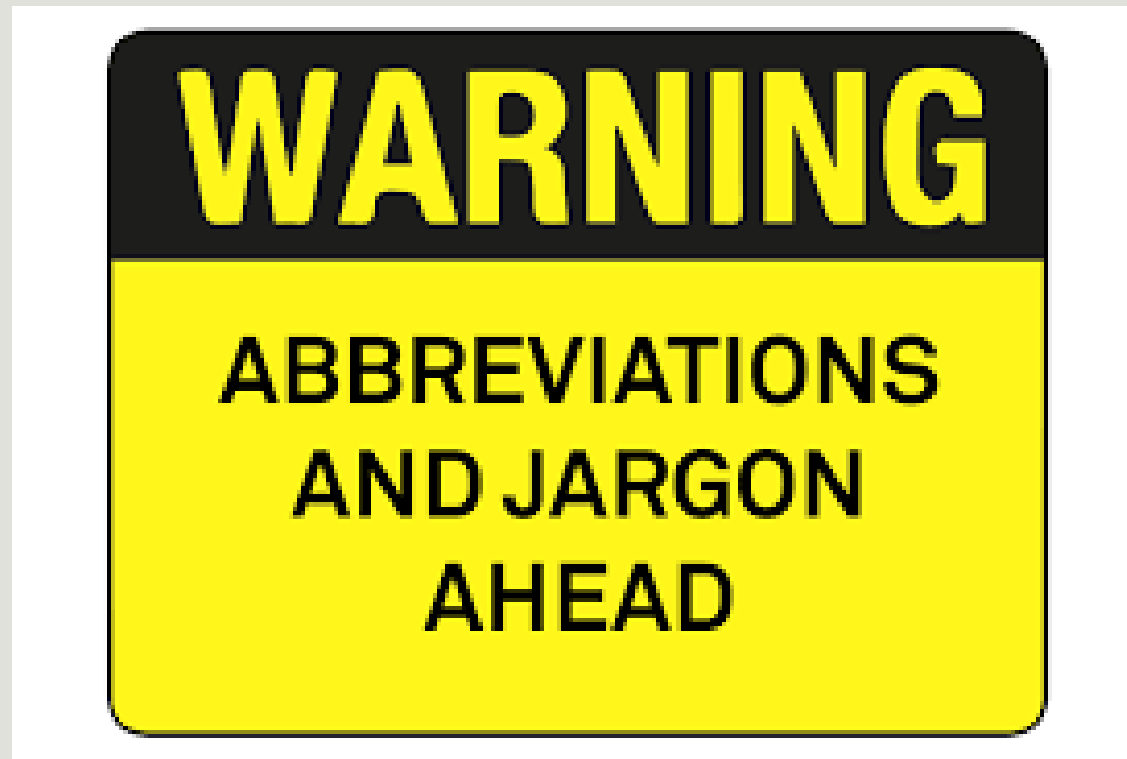
As a result of attending camp..

	Very untrue for me	Untrue for me	Somewhat untrue for me	Neutral	Somewhat true for me	True for me	Very true for me
I am interested in taking courses that help me learn more about SCIENCE	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am interested in working in a career that allows me to use SCIENCE-related skills or knowledge	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would like to learn SCIENCE-related knowledge and skills because they can be useful to help me be prepared for college	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I want to attend a college that will help me obtain a position in a SCIENCE-related field	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

These questions reflect two ways similar data might be collected.

How did your camp experience influence your interest in a science-related career or college major?

Don't Assume Prior Knowledge

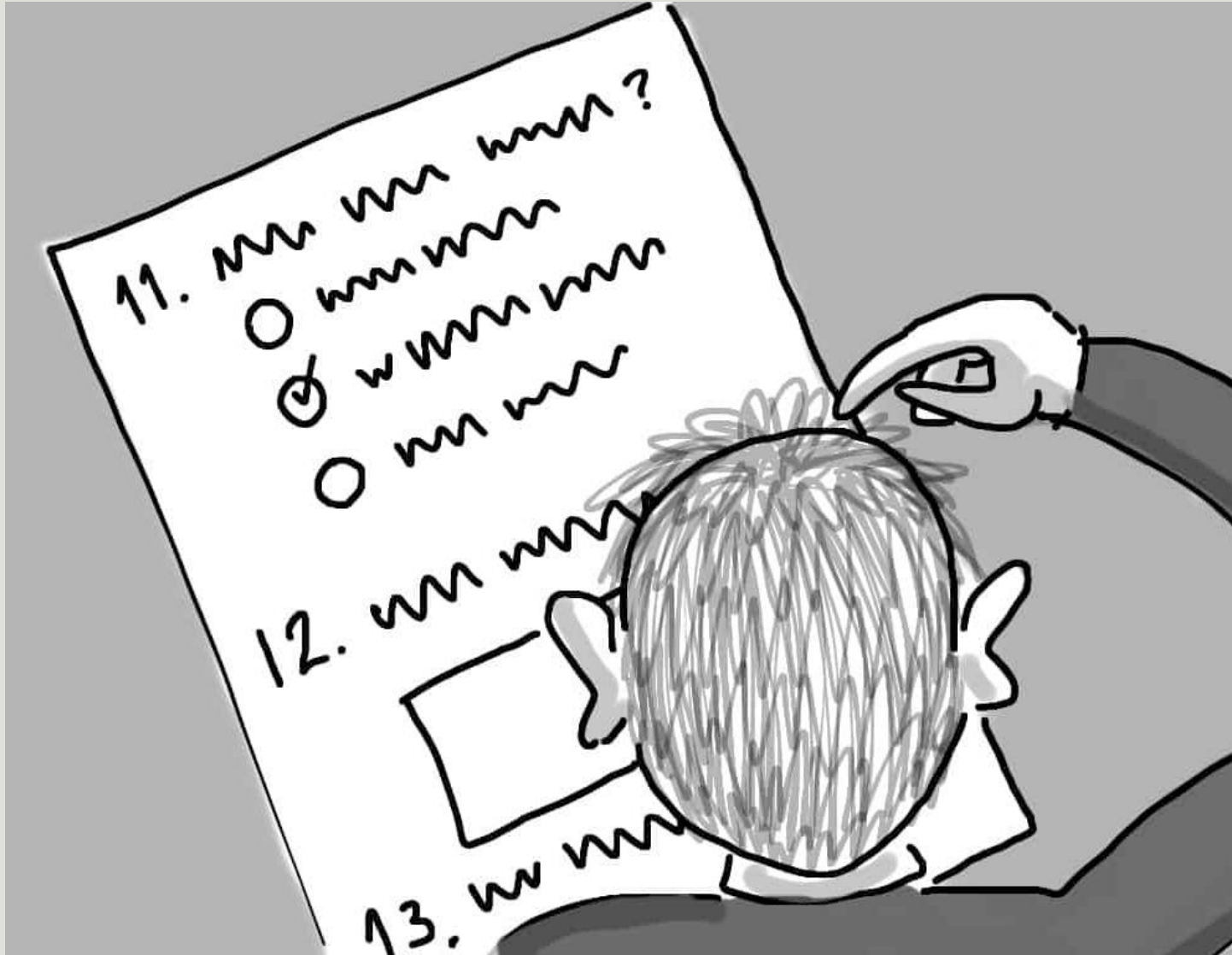


Don't Assume Prior Knowledge

What are examples of acronyms and jargon you try to avoid when asking questions?

WARNING

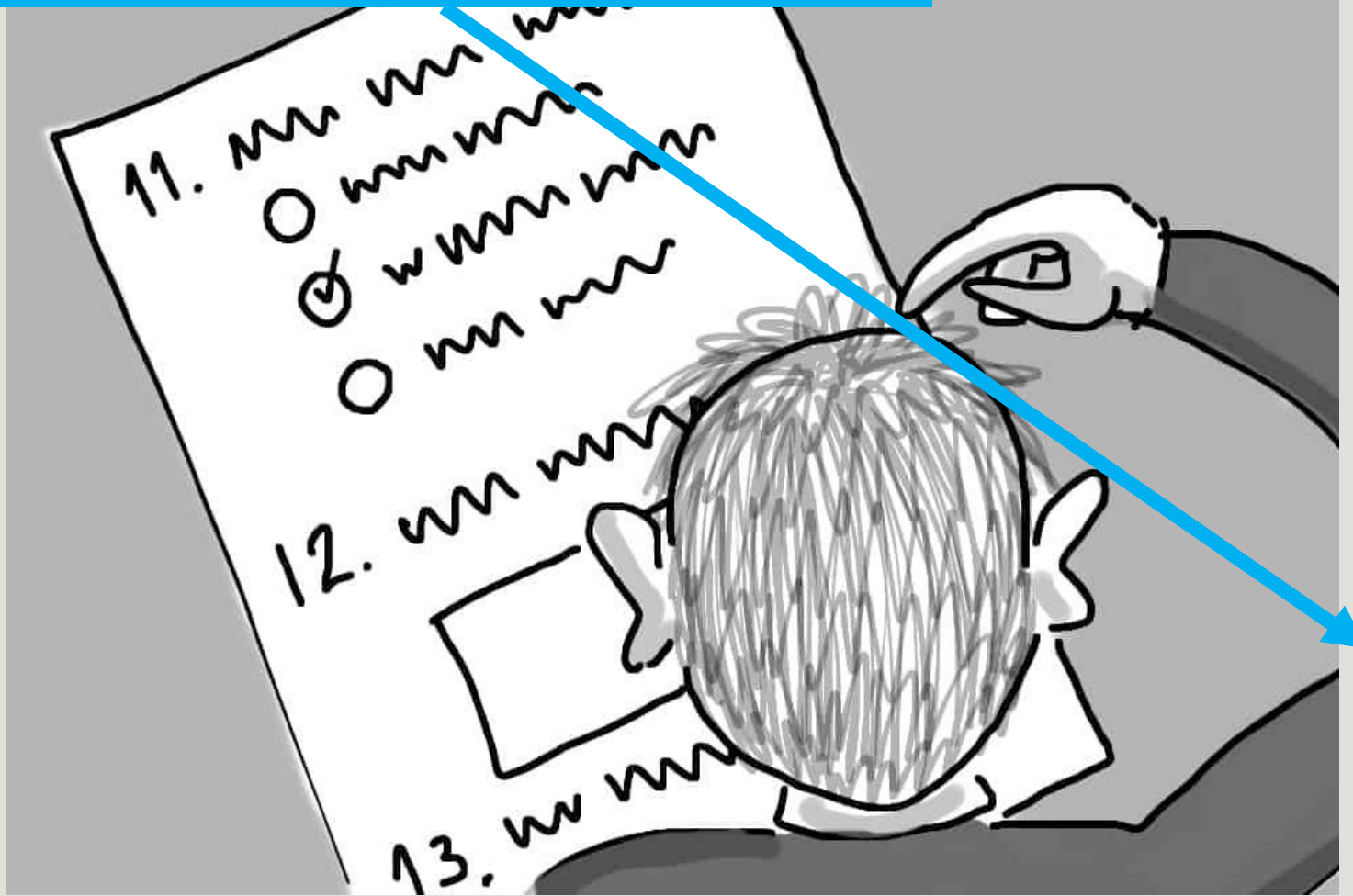
**ABBREVIATIONS
AND JARGON
AHEAD**



Test your survey or question set

- Terms or questions that stakeholders don't understand
- Questions that participants view as irrelevant or unnecessary
- How long did it take stakeholders to complete the survey or question set?

Surveys that require 13 or more minutes can cause high levels of “leaving” your survey



Test your survey or question set

- Terms or questions that stakeholders don't understand
- Questions that participants view as irrelevant or unnecessary
- How long did it take stakeholders to complete the survey or question set?

Summary: Common Problems w/Building Questions Sets



Poor flow



Questions in the same survey with a different “direction”



Inconsistent response scales (ex: alternating between 1-5 and 1-7)



Questions that assume prior knowledge without explanation or without building on a prior question



Question sets that are too long



Question sets that haven't been tested / piloted



Other Tips for Asking Questions



Engage Your Stakeholders

- Tell them why it matters! How will camp be better because of stakeholder feedback?
- Clearly identify roles and responsibilities
- Assign a camp staff who can be a “champion” of the evaluation process
- Give staff recognition for their contributions to the process
- Provide incentives to encourage quality completion
- Have follow-up processes to give people additional opps to respond

#7 ISSUE FOR CAMPS

EVALUATION OF CAMPER OUTCOMES

About 87% of camps said evaluation is very important or critical to their camp

Finding Time to Do Evaluations

Many camps (65%) said a major challenge they face when conducting evaluations is finding the time to collect, analyze, and disseminate data.



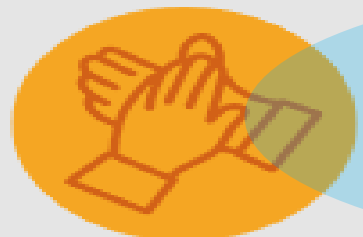
How to Use Evaluation Results

About 40% of camps indicated they weren't sure how to use evaluation results for positive change.



Dealing with Negative Results

What if we find out something bad about our camp? Camps (28%) were worried how to deal with negative results from evaluations.



Buy-In From Front-Line Staff

One in four camps struggle with getting front-line staff to help facilitate evaluations.

Resources to check out:

"Why Evaluations Are Awesome: Cool Tips for Using Camp Evaluations to Make the Good Better and the Better Best"

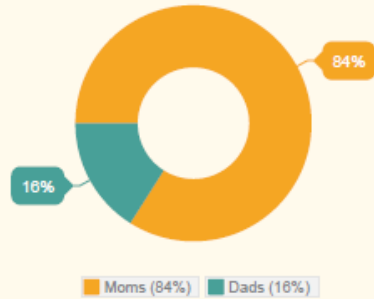
"ACA Youth Outcomes Battery"

"Research 360"



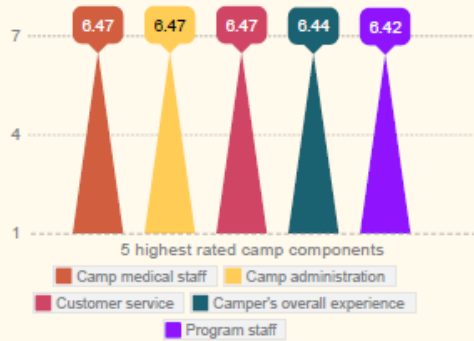
2017 Parent and Camper Evaluation Highlights

Parent Snapshot



Parent respondents tended to be female (84%), between the ages of 40-49 years old (47%), and White (39%) or Latino (13%). Most respondents (53%) never attended camp as a child.

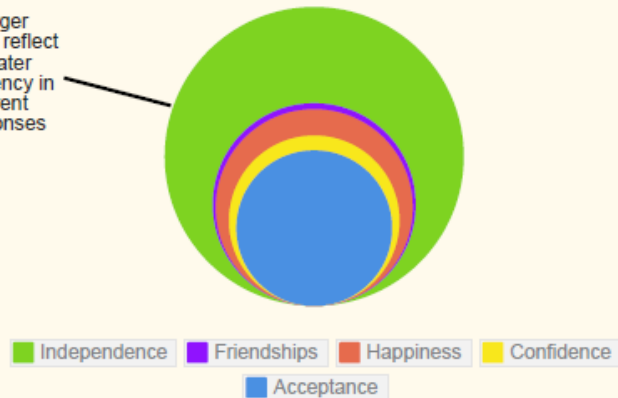
Parent Satisfaction



Parents rated camp components on a 1-7 scale where 1= poor and 7= excellent. The top 5 components were rated 6.4 or higher.

Changes Parents Observed in their Child

Larger circles reflect greater frequency in parent responses



"...all of the [staff] went above and beyond to make each individual child feel like they are super and special in every way. The amount of positive encouragement... was almost contagious."

Parents were asked if anything was different about their child because of TLC. Parents identified changes in their child's level of independence, ability to make friends, happiness, confidence, and personal acceptance.

Visualize

- Graphically represent your results to your stakeholders
- Integrate findings with other organizational info: context, history, activities, performance
- Highlight key findings; Identify future directions
- Train AND re(Train) yourself: YouTube, Google

Expect (and prepared for) the Unexpected

Which gender does your child identify with?

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male
- ☐ Non-Binary
- ☐ Please Fill-In If Preferred

- Asking questions of your stakeholders may provoke new and unplanned reactions
- For online approaches, some communications with stakeholders may be directed to Spam, Junk, or “Clutter” folders
- Surveys might not be printed correctly
- Procedures might be forgotten or overlooked



Resource Your Data Collection Efforts

- Organizations **fund what they value** and **value what they fund**
- Treat evaluation like a “program area” that receives appropriate resources and staff attention
- Identify your needs well in advance; Begin with the end in mind



Focus on a Small Set of Outcomes

- Don't try to target too many outcomes in one summer. Don't collect data you're not going to use.
- Consider your mission as a starting point. What outcomes are most central to your mission? (For example...is satisfaction part of your mission?)
- As you think about outcomes, consider the relationship between what staff do and the result for youth participants (i.e., "If staff do this, then campers will....")



Establish Benchmarks

- Identify benchmarks for the evaluation plan (for your org's evaluation process; for your targeted outcomes)
- High-quality camps benchmark their programs with comparable (often exemplary) camps
- Create a shared understanding of what you want to accomplish. Staff benefit from goals and tangible metrics



What other “pain points” have you experienced when collecting data from (i.e., asking questions of) camp stakeholders?



Use Existing Questions Sets

- Whenever possible use existing, previously tested and validated questions, measures, scales, instruments (avoid “redoing the wheel”)
- Be careful with customization

Example: Parent Perceptions of Developmental Outcomes (PPDO)

- Validated measure of parents' perceptions of their child's social-emotional development resulting from camp participation in five outcomes (Garst & Gagnon, 2016)

- Communication
- Responsibility
- Self-regulation
- Attitude
- Exploration



Here's an example of a validated measure of parents' perceptions of their child's development

Focus, Simplify, Shorten

Shorten your questions sets as much as possible. Remove questions that aren't relevant or won't result in specific action.



ac·tion·a·ble

/ˈakSH(ə)nəb(ə)l/

adjective

1. **LAW**
giving sufficient reason to take legal action.
"slandorous remarks are actionable"
2. **able to be done or acted on; having practical value.**
"insightful and actionable information on the effect advertising is having on your brand"



Making a Plan



What actions could you take in the next 30 days using what you learned today?



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