

What's the Cost of A Pre-Paid Incentive?

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Summary

- This presentation will examine the overall cost of using a pre-paid incentive for the National Survey of Algebra Teachers (NSAT) (2007).
 - Preliminary analysis of this effort shows the overall effectiveness and benefits of using a larger pre-paid incentive.
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Pre-Paid Incentive Research

- Dillman suggests that a prepaid incentive “produces a sense of reciprocal obligation.”
 - Inclusion of a pre-paid token financial incentive can increase response rates even more so than the promise of a larger payment post completion. (James and Bolstein, 1992; Johnson and McLaughlin, 1990)
 - Research also shows that a small dollar amount (one to five dollars) is usually a sufficient amount, and any amount larger than five does not necessarily garner a higher response rate.
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Benefits of a Larger Pre-Paid Incentive

- Added legitimacy to survey
 - Potential for quicker response
 - Lowered mailout costs
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National Survey of Algebra Teachers

- Funded by The National Math Panel who is focused on improving beginning-level algebra courses as a top priority.
 - Purpose: To capture teachers' detailed observations on student preparation, motivation, work habits, and skills. Also to gather teacher insights on how math is now taught, how earlier math education could be improved to better prepare children to succeed at algebra, and what would help all math teachers do a better job.
 - Sample consists of all Algebra I teacher at each school.
 - PAPI survey of 300 nationally representative schools, consisting of 1,040 Algebra I teachers.
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Prompting Design

- NORC employed key aspects of the Dillman method in its prompting design.
 - Multiple contacts
 - Frequency of prompting (accelerated pace)
 - NORC chose to utilize both traditional (letters, postcards, phone) and more unconventional (e-mail) methods of prompting.
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Prompting Timeline

Task	Date
Teacher Pre-notification letter	April 9, 2007
1 st Quex mailing	April 16, 2007
Postcard mailing	April 23, 2007
2 nd Quex mailing	May 7, 2007
Phone and Email prompting	May 14, 2007-June 30, 2007
3 rd Quex mailing	5/21/2007

Pre-Paid Incentive

- NORC included a \$20 pre-paid incentive check to all teachers in the first questionnaire mailing.
 - Included a sentence in the letter stating “In appreciation of your consideration and help with this study, we have included a check for \$20.”
 - Made mention of \$20 check incentive in later prompts: “Also please do not forget to cash the \$20 token of appreciation which was included with the first copy of the survey.”
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Completes

- Of the 1,040 sample members, 744 completed the survey (71.5%).
 - 14 sample members were ineligible.
 - 2 final refusal sample members.
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Who Cashed the Checks?

- 80.2% of all respondents cashed their check (597 of 744).
 - 19.8% of respondents did not cash their check (147 of 744).
 - 8.1% of non-respondents cashed their check (24 of 296).
 - 91.9% of non-respondents did not cash their check (272 of 296).
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What Does This Mean?

- Using a \$20 pre-incentive check was beneficial to the NSAT.
 - There were more un-cashed respondent checks than cashed non-respondent checks.
 - NSAT saved money by using the large pre-incentive.
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Pros vs. Cons

- Cons
 - Could be costly if people cashed incentive checks and didn't complete the survey.
 - Pros
 - Increased trust/legitimacy in survey.
 - Potentially quicker response.
 - Reduced mailout cost since additional prompts and respondent fee would have had to be mailed post completion.
 - Numerous respondents did not cash check, so no cost was incurred to the project; Received 147 completes with no financial cost to project.
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Limitations and Future Research

- The survey consisted of a very selective population of Algebra I teachers.
 - Comparison of pre vs. post incentive for short data collection period.
 - Comparison of different dollar amount pre-incentives for short data collection period.
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Contact Information

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