

"Why You Need to Post-Code Your Survey To Get Maximum Conversion Leverage"

(One of Several Audios In Your Series of FREE Marketing Research Trainings from Drs. Glenn & Sharon Livingston)

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Dr. Sharon Livingston: Hi sweetheart, what are we talking about today?

Dr. Glenn Livingston: We're talking about whatever you want to talk about.

Dr. Sharon Livingston: Well, you told me a very interesting story this morning that had to do with coding. I think that our audience would be very excited to hear about it.

Dr. Glenn Livingston: I definitely wanted to get that on tape. It's a perspective that I think that most researchers aren't aware of. Most people kind of take for granted, if they do a survey they know exactly how they are supposed to do the survey and they are getting all the information they can out of the survey. There are really only five or six principles that I want to go over in the long run, which dramatically increase the quality and quantity of the information that you can pull out of a survey. But I think of all of them, this is probably the most important, even though, it's also perhaps the most simple.

Dr. Sharon Livingston: Well, that's really interesting. You mean that people don't code their surveys when they do surveys?

Dr. Glenn Livingston: Most people don't code their surveys, outside of the marketing research industry, when I look at regular small business clients, peers, or entrepreneurs who are doing surveys. They are asking these very short set of questions, which is ok.

Dr. Sharon Livingston: Are they like with close-ended questions and multiple choices or what?

Dr. Glenn Livingston: I suppose the lower end of the spectrum would be people that are asking all closed ended questions and for those of you who might not recognize the word. A closed ended question is something that you determine the answers before hand. Like...

Dr. Sharon Livingston: Yes or no.

Dr. Glenn Livingston: Yes or no or what did you have for dinner last night, spaghetti, pizza or chocolate bars?

Dr. Sharon Livingston: Well, you know what I wish I had.

Dr. Glenn Livingston: I do know. {laughter} An open-ended question would just be what did you have for dinner last night.

Dr. Sharon Livingston: Allowing for any response.

Dr. Glenn Livingston: Mmhmm. The critical difference is, if I say; what did you have for dinner last night, spaghetti, chocolate bars or pizza? Obviously, I'm imposing a predefined set of conditions that may or may not exist in the real world and there are lots of things that you might have had for dinner last night that aren't on my list. There are lots of ways that you might want to tell me about it. There are lots of words that you might want to use in describing what you had for dinner. Which if I was running around stores trying to create a menu to entice you, I really need that language. So, obviously open-ended questions are much more important. But there is something way beyond this. There is something much more that you can do with the open-ended question. To get at that, I kind of want to go back to mother hood. When I was in graduate school, I was very interested in attachment and the different types of attachment you could observe between mothers and their children.

Dr. Sharon Livingston: By attachment, you mean degrees of the relationship.

Dr. Glenn Livingston: Yeah, if you look at children. Anybody that's had any exposure to kids can kind of see that there's these different types of attachment that a kid gets to their mother. Some of them are very securely attached and they seem to be confident. They can walk away and come back and they know that mom is going to be there. There is like calmness about it. Other kids are what they call anxiously attached, when they walk away, they get very anxious, they run, and they cling. Then there are kids that are just not attached at all. They don't really want all that much to do with their mothers.

Dr. Sharon Livingston: Then there are kids that cry and just don't leave at all.

Dr. Glenn Livingston: Yeah {chuckle} that's true.

Dr. Sharon Livingston: That was me, when I was a kid.

Dr. Glenn Livingston: Yeah. When I went to school as a clinical psychologist, I was very involved with the, I guess you would call the right brain of clinical psychology, as opposed to the left-brain. Meaning that, I really thought that the gist of clinical psychology was sitting in a room with people and having an experience with them where you kind of merge with their feeling and thoughts.

Dr. Sharon Livingston: Intuitive.

Dr. Glenn Livingston: An intuitive artistic feeling experience. I was really shocked

when I got to graduate school to see how the researchers were like breaking it down in a laboratory. I have to tell you, my first response to that was this is a human relationship; you'll never break that down in a laboratory. I thought that they were dead wrong with what they were trying to do. But, here's where I learned something different. They had graduate students observing mothers and their children and they just had them sitting there with a stopwatch and a grid on a piece of paper and coding for different behaviors at different times. So, if the mother was looking at the baby in the eye at three minutes and two seconds after the hour, you would check a little box that said that mother is looking in the eye. If they mother was....

Dr. Sharon Livingston: They would record the time.

Dr. Glenn Livingston: They would record the time.

Dr. Sharon Livingston: They would record the length of the gaze.

Dr. Glenn Livingston: The length of the gaze and the behaviors and so every minute they would check with them by looking at them. What was the baby doing?

Dr. Sharon Livingston: Were they touching the baby?

Dr. Glenn Livingston: Were they touching the baby? Was the baby crying? Was the baby trying to stand up? Was it sitting?

Dr. Sharon Livingston: Smiling.

Dr. Glenn Livingston: Smiling.

Dr. Sharon Livingston: Whatever.

Dr. Glenn Livingston: Juggling. I'm just kidding.

Dr. Sharon Livingston: That was you, Glenn juggles.

Dr. Glenn Livingston: It seemed like an exercise in mental masturbation to me on the first thought and I was really against it.

Dr. Sharon Livingston: You have to understand that Glenn was brought up by two right brained clinical psychologists who were all about emotion.

Dr. Glenn Livingston: Yeah, I was brought up by two humanistic psychologists that you would be surprised but if you looked at *Dharma and Greg*. I was brought up by *Dharma's* parents...

Dr. Sharon Livingston: Right.

Dr. Glenn Livingston: Minus the drugs, kind of.

Dr. Sharon Livingston: Right.

Dr. Glenn Livingston: So, I was going against all of this coding and I felt like it took the soul out of the research.

Dr. Sharon Livingston: It didn't make sense to you, right.

Dr. Glenn Livingston: But then when I looked at the numbers and you could see that there was a strong relationship between when the mother was looking at the baby and how long she looked at the baby and when the baby cried. More than that, they had follow up data to show how the children did in school and how they did in social interactions and how they did on intelligence tests. I think that the studies have actually been followed up into work and it was incredibly significant, those pieces and parts. If you look back at what happened, you probably could have just had someone behind the mirror saying is this mother attached to her baby or not.

Dr. Sharon Livingston: Is she warm? Is she caring?

Dr. Glenn Livingston: Yeah, like you could..

Dr. Sharon Livingston: How loving is she?

Dr. Glenn Livingston: You probably could have crumpled up the piece of grid paper and listen to what the researcher thought and you would have gotten at the essence of the relationship. You could have gotten off the diagnosis of it. Is this an empathic mother or is this a strong attachment, a weak attachment, anxious attachment, or a secure attachment? But what you didn't get at was how do you make it better? What particular elements of the attachment created that perception of strength or weakness or anxiety or confidence? It was then, very particular elements of the attachment that would correlate with the school performance, social anxiety or a lot of the problems that are really facing us as adults in life. We learn a tremendous amount by the set of studies by *Beatrice Bebe* and *Margaret Mowen*. So I am going back to all of this, did you want to say something?

Dr. Sharon Livingston: It just reminded me of that psychologist out on the west coast, I think in Portland or Seattle.

Dr. Glenn Livingston: Oh yeah, *Dr. Guttman*?

Dr. Sharon Livingston: Yeah, who brought couples in and he used graduate students, he tracked people over time. He would set up an environment where he could test there GSR, Galvanic Skin Response with electrodes and he would have them have conversations and he'd have different graduate students monitoring different aspects of behaviors and physical responses and then he predicted whether or not there were going to stay together as a couple.

Dr. Glenn Livingston: Right, it was something like 98% accuracy.

Dr. Sharon Livingston: It was scary.

Dr. Glenn Livingston: It was really amazing, yeah.

Dr. Sharon Livingston: I remember thinking, oh, do we want to go see him or not?

Dr. Glenn Livingston: But here's the point, if you can predict how people are going to do in life, whether they are going to stay together as a couple. Don't you think that the same type of coding, if you code natural behavior like conversation? Don't you think that with that same type of coding, you should be able to predict whether or not people are going to buy?

Dr. Sharon Livingston: Yes.

Dr. Glenn Livingston: And why they are going to buy.

Dr. Sharon Livingston: You can establish the kinds of communications that will improve.

Dr. Glenn Livingston: Absolutely. You can zero in on the aspect of the conversation in your prospects head that's most particularly motivating and most directly matched with the purchase of your product. That's why I'm so jazzed about all of this.

Dr. Sharon Livingston: Right and just like Dr. Guttman, wasn't just doing it to show how smart he was in predicting whether or not a couple was going to stay together, but it gave him tools for counseling. Saying, look these are the kinds of behaviors where couples stay together, here are the kinds where they don't and you have choice. You have a choice to change things.

Dr. Glenn Livingston: I think the major factor was the presence of contempt.

Dr. Sharon Livingston: Right.

Dr. Glenn Livingston: One partner was demonstrating, the rolling of the eyes, looking away, or the dismissal of the other person's important communications. That was ridiculously predictive of the marriage breaking up.

Dr. Sharon Livingston: Good memory.

Dr. Glenn Livingston: Yeah, so when I try to help people to conduct more powerful surveys, one of the first things that I do is I say; okay, you don't want to pre-code or force people into these categories, you want to post code. You want to ask the type of open-ended questions that you might ask in a conversation and allow them to say whatever the

heck they want to say and then you want to create a coding scheme so that you can observe patterns in their coding.

Dr. Sharon Livingston: The more specific you can get, like for example; what brought you here today? What brought you to this site? What were you looking for? Tell me more about that. The more specific you can get, the better you understand that prospect and the more you are able to tell them the kinds of things they need to hear if appropriate to what you are selling.

Dr. Glenn Livingston: Yep. Absolutely. So, most people when they ask those open-ended questions, they don't post code them.

Dr. Sharon Livingston: Right.

Dr. Glenn Livingston: When you do post code them, you cannot only get a sense of the relative frequency with which each concern or desire occurs, which really corresponds to the size of an opportunity or problem in the market.

Dr. Sharon Livingston: Mhmm.

Dr. Glenn Livingston: But you can also get a sense of, if you look at the relationship of that code to other variables in your survey, you can get a sense of whether a particular concern occurs more among men than women. Does it occur more among older people than younger people. Is there a particular concern that tends to be expressed with a longer answer than other concerns? Is there a concern that's associated with people being willing to leave their phone number, looking for more of a relationship? You get a lot of this incredibly rich data that most people don't get. So, I am very, very much in favor of post coding.

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