

Why You Shouldn't Believe What People Tell You They Want

When we ask others about their preferences on everything from restaurant food to church service times, it's important to understand the impact of response bias.

If we were to ask about adding healthy food to a menu, restaurateurs would be encouraged to add many healthy alternatives.

The problem is people talk lean but eat fat. Remember the Krispy Kreme donut bookends with a triple cheeseburger in between the donuts? If food research is accurate, we would have a healthy fast food joint on every corner.

Opinion polling is a service that gets away with charging for information that reveals margin of error. The science of opinion research is limited because the subjects can rarely answer questions about their behavior. Many times, respondents simply provide an answer to comply with some social norm, or the answers are opposite of true feelings.

Many larger churches send questionnaires to their congregation in an effort to determine preferences and opinions on various topics. The leadership team receives counsel from the surveys and makes decisions based on the data. Often, leaders receive pushback on a decision made based on survey research. Adopting research as guidance for decision-making is dangerous.

Most of the time, answers lie in plain sight. "... the thing that fundamentally changes the way all of us think of something or use something—is so stunningly obvious that we don't even notice it. It's like ET in the closet full of toys—clearly different, yet somehow blending in." — *Clotaire*

Rapaille

Rapaille provides further insight, "I don't believe what people say. Why? Because what people say they want and what they really want are often two very different things. I just think they are genuinely unaware of what's important to them at the deepest level."

Leaders must always be aware of what moves them. Since graduate school was one protracted experience with marketing research for me, I have had a tendency to believe well-designed opinion research.

I repent.

No amount of research or bulky sample size can ever give us guidance as wise as that provided by the Holy Spirit.

When leaders begin to search for answers from within their base of followers, true chaos can set in.

Spiritual decision-making is not a function of determining the opinion of the masses. Though Moses had an abundance of straw available, he didn't use it for polling. He followed the leadership of God.

"Ask the audience," may be fine in a game show, but it is rarely useful in spiritual leadership.

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Today's Scripture

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your paths" (Prov. 3:5-6).

Platform Tip No. 74

Think of your message, delivered through any platform, as a series of deposits. The frequency of your deposits will determine the breadth and depth of your message bank.

Our message bank builds through time.

Withdrawals from the bank are made anytime we drift into delivering words that are off message.

Bakers attract an audience who want to learn baking skills.

What attracts people to your platform?

Keep making deposits.

Do you want to learn more about developing your personal platform?

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