

# How to recruit participants for online market research.

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The nuts and bolts of using online audience management & panel services to recruit participants for online market & social research projects.

***One of the most efficient options for recruiting people for online instant communities, discussions, live online focus groups or interviews is by using the services of an online panel or audience management company. These online services manage the profiles and contact details of all kinds of people who have agreed to participate in online market research (or social research) activities.***

There are a growing number of online market research recruitment companies offering automated platforms and services to help you access managed insight audiences. A Google search for a 'market research panel company' in your region of the world will reveal a growing number of options to choose from.

Generally speaking, recruiting for online insight projects through an online panel provider should be more cost effective and efficient than using the traditional methods of telephoning people to initiate contact. When traditional methods are applied to online research processes it often results in higher recruitment costs.



Using online recruitment methods there is no reason why you can't recruit and get your project up and running in a fraction of the time it used to take. With the help of the new DIY (do-it-yourself) panel technologies and our very own (GroupQuality) instant participant engagement technology, what use to take days, or even weeks, can now be completed in a matter of hours!



**Recruitment services for GroupQuality customers**

*With the assistance of our panel partner Cint.com quotes can be requested from within GroupQuality.*

*We can also put you in contact with online panel partners who have recruited for online focus groups, interviews and instant discussions using our proprietary technology and in-built recruitment processes.*





Most reputable online panel and audience providers should have some kind of quality control in place. Look for quality assurance accreditations and memberships to reputable industry organisations.

In Australia this would include organisations like AMSRS and AMSRO as well as being ISO Certified. In each country there will be a similar list of accreditations reputable panel providers will be members of. What you are looking for is how they collect and use personal information. Look closely at how they manage the different audiences, how the information is collected, and how personal contact details are verified.

*But don't only certain kinds of people agree to take part in online research?*

This is a common myth! Yes, there are people who have agreed to participate in online research who are seeking opportunities to earn an extra dollar, but with more people becoming connected online there are a growing number of people panels that include professionals at the highest level. These professionals are members of lists owned by organisations who

have sought permission from their members to make them available for online recruitment for feedback, research and insight projects. These panels include key decision makers as well as the general population.

**The all-in-one Market Research Software**

The self-service toolbox that makes capturing new insight quick, easy and affordable.

**1 SURVEY TOOL**  
Deploy elegant surveys in a matter of minutes, and watch the answers roll-in.

**2 DISCUSSION BOARD TOOL**  
Start a discussion about virtually anything and watch the consumer feedback build over-time.

**3 LIVE FOCUS GROUP TOOL**  
Quickly bring people together in real-time to test websites, validate ideas and capture real opinions.



## How do I recruit from online panels using screening surveys?

If you are recruiting for online focus groups, community discussions or other (qualitative) insight projects, one of the first things a panel provider will want to see is your participant screening survey. A screening survey is what is sent out to a sample of an audience to ask questions to narrow down the selection of people. The survey will qualify them, or disqualify them, based on a specific set of required personal attributes obtained from the question answers. The panel provider may be able to narrow down the selection of participants for you, but you will still need to ask specific screening questions to confirm participants are available and give their consent.

In most cases you will be looking for participants with particular demographics and behavioural profiles (how people approach problems and interact with each other). You create a short screening survey, which includes the project description and a set of questions to help determine if a person is suitable. Once participants have qualified by completing the screening survey you can either recruit them directly into an instant community discussion or online focus group, or choose to assign them to an insight project list. An insight project list is simply a list of people you have created from those who qualified by completing

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### What are some of the things I need to consider when adding questions to a screening survey:

- ◆ Personal demographics, which includes a persons age, income, education.
- ◆ The number of individuals you require.
- ◆ Typical behaviour e.g. do they use a certain type of product.
- ◆ Availability to participate at a time which suits your project.
- ◆ Geographic location of the people you need.
- ◆ First language used by the individuals who will attend the group.
- ◆ Access to a reliable ADSL Internet connection.



your screening survey. Once they are in an insight project list you can invite them to a scheduled online community discussion board, online focus group or online interview at a later date.

Recruitment screening surveys need to be short and under 6 minutes in length. The reason for this is that many panel providers have rules about how long screening surveys can be. Shorter surveys will help you keep your recruitment costs down! A goal should be to get the screening survey down to around five minutes. The panel provider may also want to see what kind of data (answers) you are collecting from panel members. In particular the kind of personal information you require to invite individuals to your online feedback or market research project. You will typically ask for the email address and name, but you may also require mobile phone numbers - particularly if you are using mobile SMS messaging to confirm participation.

When sending out a screening survey it is likely you will be asked by the panel company to add confirmation website links (URLs) for the screening survey 'redirects'. A survey redirect link serves two purposes for the panel provider: It enables them to confirm that a person (participant/ respondent) has either been qualified (completed) or disqualified (screened out of the survey), and it identifies which participants will need to be remunerated. You will be charged (billed) for those individuals who qualified by completing the screening survey based on the question you have specified.

Recruitment screening surveys need to be short and under ten minutes in length. The reason for this is that many participant panel providers have rules about how long screening surveys can be.

### *You may be asked to sign a non-disclosure agreement*

If you are collecting personal information from an external panel you may be required to sign a non-disclosure agreement (NDA). This kind of agreement basically specifies that you can only use the contact details for each participant for the duration of your insights project. Once the project has been completed you will be asked to remove the participant contact details. If you are recruiting from within Australia and using the GroupQuality insight platform, we can help manage this part of your recruitment.

If the audience panel provider you are working with requires the masking of personal email information captured from their panel, we can help with this too. You will need to share with us the panel providers details (we can then confirm what is required) and we can instruct you on how to set up direct recruitment so that the personal email addresses are not visible. You will still be able to communicate with individuals through the GroupQuality platform and send out email notifications, but you will not be able access participant email addresses.



## Panel recruitment options

*Panel recruitment services can be requested from within the GroupQuality survey tool, or we can put you in contact with online panel partners who have worked with some of GroupQuality's customers to recruit for online focus groups, interviews and instant discussions using our proprietary technology and in-built processes.*

*To help with this screening process we have added a number of recruitment survey templates in the GroupQuality survey tool. These templates have been put together based on the knowledge obtained over many successful recruitment projects. They are designed to be compatible with many of the major panel and audience providers.*

## *How many people is enough for my insight project?*

The number of people you recruit will depend on a number of factors including the type of project you are undertaking, the number of people you require, the potential abandonment rate and the duration of the project.

For example, if you need to recruit ten people for an online interview some audience panel providers will advise you recruit two to three times that number. If you are recruiting for an online sixty-minute chat focus group, you might want to recruit double the number of people you need. Alternatively, if you need to recruit thirty people for a seven-day online community discussion you might recruit forty people. The reason you generally over recruit is due to participant dropout, which can occur when people change their minds between the time of agreeing to participate and receiving the invitation to log-in. The closer you can get those two events the greater the participation rate and the lower the participant dropout. This is why it is always a good idea to set things up and recruit participants directly into the online focus group or online community discussion. As soon as people qualify for the project they can register to receive the login details by email and start contributing right away.

For the best results consider participants who contribute openly and constructively, but don't discriminate based on your own preferences. Sometimes people we think may be too opinionated can in fact be the most insightful in a discussion. While we may not always want to hear criticism, outspoken people can be more insightful than those participants who are simply willing to agree. The anonymity of online insight participation means people are more likely to feel they have an equal voice - particularly in an online chat based focus group or online community discussions. It is certainly a lot easier to moderate a discussion when participants feel relaxed, included and listened to.

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## Get your participants ready before you begin

*Make sure the time frame between capturing the person's details and sending out the confirmation emails is as narrow as possible.*

*Keeping the momentum going to maintain a high level of participant enthusiasm for your insights project is paramount at this stage.*

*Don't forget to remind selected participants of the incentive / reward they will receive for sharing their opinions.*

*Nothing comes for free these days, not even an individual's opinion, and remuneration will be top of mind for many of those who have agreed to participate.*

*If you know the participant's mobile phone number send them an SMS message to confirm their acceptance as a participant for your project.*

## Confirming attendance

If you are recruiting participants from an online panel you may be using a screening survey to collect participant details. You may also choose to include direct registration into an online focus group or instant community discussion. After registration the software will send out the email containing the participant's login information. Alternatively it will collect their contact details at registration, so you can send out the invitations when you are ready. If you have decided to recruit participants for your insights project before making a decision about who to invite, make sure your screening survey includes a question to collect the participant's contact details. Even though this may seem like an obvious inclusion, the addition of contact fields in the screening survey is often overlooked.

If you are recruiting for a scheduled project, it is important you make contact with those you have short listed or selected. This will keep the participants engaged in the process. If they remain engaged, you will find there is a higher propensity for participants to login on the day. You would generally make first contact prior to sending out the invitations (username and password). In this contact moment it is important you remind participants what they have signed up for, and reconfirm their willingness to participate. The reason we suggest putting in this additional step is because it provides the opportunity to build trust with participants, ensures you do not waste your time with individuals who have no intention of turning up, and improves overall enthusiasm and active participation.

## Participant rewards and incentives

In exchange for agreeing to participate in a research project participants are generally offered a reward or incentive. This is usually distributed shortly after the research has been concluded. Participants will always expect to be promptly remunerated for their time. For over-time studies such as online community discussion boards you may look at offering a maximum remuneration or (in some instances) a daily remuneration rate for participants that don't attend every day. To minimise drop out, it is important to advise participants before the session starts that full remuneration will be received after the successful completion of all assigned activities and tasks.

## Email example to send to selected participants:



Good afternoon,

Thank you for completing our recent [*name of the survey*] survey, inviting you to participate in our online discussion group.

Congratulations! You have been selected to participate in this exciting project.

My name is [*your name here*] and my company [*company name here*] has been engaged by [*company name here - or remove this section if not required*] to conduct this research / feedback / discussion or others.

We wish to confirm your availability and provide some additional IMPORTANT INFORMATION regarding your participation.

1. Tomorrow (Insert date here) you will receive an email invitation to the group. This will include a link to access the group and your username and password. If you cannot find this email, please check your Junk or Spam folder in your email program.
2. As outlined in the registration survey, your first task will be a [*repeat the first task they will be asked to do*] which will be available when you log in to the group. You will have 4 days to complete this at your leisure.
3. On Wednesday, 9th April we will begin our 5 day discussion of [*Add the project or study name here*] and you will receive an email letting you know when the group is ready for you to access.
4. You can log in to the group any time of the day or night that suits you to complete your daily task/s.
5. You will receive an email notification each time the Moderator posts a new discussion topic or makes a comment on the discussion, so please check your email often.
6. If you are experiencing any difficulties logging in to the group, please contact [*Add your contact details here*].
7. Your incentive [*payment / gift voucher*] to the value of [*\$\$\$*] will be paid on completion of all of the tasks. [*If paying into a Paypal account*] You will be asked to supply these details once the group has concluded.

Your Moderator for this [*group/discussion/forum/community*] will be [*add the moderators name here*].

**IMPORTANT:** To confirm your participation and place in this group, please reply 'YES' to this email by [*add a time frame here -date and time*]. This will ensure you are included.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

Thank you again for your time and we look forward to seeing you online.

Kind regards

[*Add the organisers contact name and contact details again*]



## *Participant rewards and incentives - Continued*

Depending on the nature of the projects and whether the participants have been supplied by you or a recruited panel, the value of the reward will be related to the type of project being undertaken, and the time and effort involved. The more difficult the task for the participants the higher the reward needs to be.

It is important to consider the level of involvement with the subject matter. For subjects where participants are highly engaged you will find that they will go the extra mile to contribute. When participants are engaged with a topic, brand or product the incentive level will generally not need to be as high as a project where the subject matter is unfamiliar, difficult or less interesting. The profile of the participants also needs to be taken into account. If you are seeking the opinion of business professionals, in B2B projects, you will need to incentivise accordingly. Business participants will require a higher incentive value than those participating in consumer related insight projects.

As a guide only: for consumer based projects in either a 60 minute online focus group or online interview the value of the reward is between \$60 and \$100. In a discussion board project participants may be rewarded based on their continued contribution, for example, you might split \$100 over 5 days, with \$20 a day rewarded for a 20 minute daily contribution. Remuneration can be delivered in several ways, a gift voucher, or cash distributed through online payment portals such as PayPal, cheque or bank transfer.

## *Recycling participants*

Using participants for future projects will depend entirely on the way that you have collected their personal details. If you have collected the contact information from a panel or audience provider it is likely you will be restricted to using those personal details for the project you recruited them for. If you collect the participants from social media, emails campaigns, or from your own customer lists, then using them for future projects may be as simple as asking them to agree to receive future participation requests. Permission to invite them to future insight projects can be gained by adding a simple tick box option at the end of your recruitment surveys. An example of a question to ask your customers if they would like to participate in future feedback exercises may look like this:

Every now and then we like to seek feedback from our customers so that we can improve the quality of our service!

Would you like the opportunity to participate in future feedback projects like this one?

Please select 'Yes' if you would like the opportunity to participate (optional)

Yes     No



As you start to accumulate research participants in GroupQuality's Panel Manager, provided they match the profile of people or customers you are looking for, you can start to invite them to take part in online surveys and discussions.

The bigger the list of participants to draw from the better your options. You don't want to lose your most valued participants or customers by inviting them too often. Over researching your participants can lead to research fatigue, which can have a negative effect on overall participation and even your brand. As a general rule of thumb, it is common to wait three to six months between projects before inviting the same person to take part in a completely different feedback or insight project. If they do not respond to one particular project invitation then it is acceptable to invite them shortly after to a new opportunity. It may be that they were just not available at the time of a previous project.

### *Importance of the participant relationship*

It is important to foster a positive relationship with your project participants. This doesn't mean sending chocolates or flowers, but comes down to respecting their opinion and privacy. This will be reflected in the tone you use to communicate with them. After all, people are giving up their thoughts, feelings and opinions to provide you with valuable insights. You will be capturing confidential and potentially sensitive information.

You may think that because you are paying individuals for the privilege of their opinions you have the right to probe as much as you like into their personal lives. Even if you are remunerating them, a courteous and respectful manner should be maintained at all times.

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### *This includes:*

- Sending information about the session with enough time for participants to manage their schedules.
- You need to provide as much information as you can about the purpose of the insight project and what is expected of each person. This will help to eliminate any pre-project apprehensions a person is likely to experience if they haven't participated in anything like your project before.
- Use courteous language and provide some simple dot-point information about what to expect.
- Make sure that you do exactly what you say you are going to do and by the time you said you would do it.
- Keep all group and discussion sessions within the allocated timeframes (overruns may result in participant abandonment).
- Most importantly, send rewards, incentives and payments in reasonable timeframe following completion of the project.

## Capture consumer feedback and Insights faster, easier and for less!

GroupQuality® online market and social research software as a service makes it easy to capture actionable insights, in less time, on smaller budgets and with fewer resources. If you need an easy and powerful online feedback, community engagement, or marketing insights tool to ask an audience questions & capture their answers - then this solution is for you!

We help you implement online customer feedback and insights gathering to inform, educate and action decisions. Using online community discussions, online focus groups and online surveys.



*We welcome any customer feedback which will help us improve the tools, processes, methodologies!*

*Our vision is to empower our customers through the capturing and sharing of knowledge.*

*Our purpose is to create the world's most accessible insights platform.*

*Our Goal is to make you fall in love with GroupQuality®*

## Why choose us?

- ✓ Easy to learn and Easy to use.
- ✓ TRIAL version to try things out first.
- ✓ Save time, money and resources.
- ✓ Unlimited projects & no hidden fees.
- ✓ [Expert insight support services.](#)
- ✓ 24/7 online [Support centre.](#)
- ✓ Stability, reliability and dependability.
- ✓ No software to download or install.
- ✓ Access data anywhere at anytime.
- ✓ Securely Australian & full data backup.

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