



Measuring Intentions

What kind of question can I use to measure a change in INTENTIONS as a result of my program?

Benefit of an Intention Question:

Measuring participants' intentions as a result of a program provides important impact data. This information can contribute to improving your program and marketing it in the future.

Educators have long held that a change in attitude as a result of a program can lead to a change in behavior. Modern psychological theory suggests however, that knowing participants' intentions is a good predictor of behavior. If participants don't have an intention to change, they are not likely to change (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975).

To measure intentions before and after a program:

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Don't simply ask participants if they plan to do something you recommended in the program, for example, in a new nutrient management program:

Do you plan to soil test phosphorus? (circle number)

1. NO
2. YES

Such a question sounds like a police interrogation. It puts participants on the spot. The question is threatening.

Also, many participants are kind and don't want to admit they don't plan to do something you just worked hard to convince them to do! Thus, your data will very likely be skewed if you use such a question, leading to disappointment when you measure practice change down the road.

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You are trying to do two things in an intention question:

- Find out the range of acceptance to a recommendation.
- Make participants feel comfortable admitting they don't plan to do something so you know the truth.

Thus, use a question that asks participants the extent to which they are willing to do something within some timeframe and give them an array of answer categories such as:

As a result of this program, how willing are you to soil test for phosphorous this coming season. (circle number)

1. NOT WILLING
2. SOMEWHAT WILLING
3. MODERATELY WILLING
4. VERY WILLING

As a result of this program, how likely are you to soil test for phosphorous this coming season (circle number)

1. DEFINITELY NOT
2. POSSIBLY NOT
3. POSSIBLY YES
4. DEFINITELY YES

Advantages

- In this question, people will find it easier to tell the truth.
- For your own interpretation you can code the first two categories as "no" and the last two as "yes." You can see how valuable these data are for improving the program in the future.

For more information, see: Fishbein, M. & Ajzen, I. (1975). *Belief, attitude, intention and behavior*. Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley Pub. Company.

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