Data-Gathering Project Plan

Need to plan:

Once your form is live on the web changes are very difficult or practically impossible, because the consistency or completeness of your data is jeopardized.

What should the end product of the project be? From whom, and why do you plan to collect data?

- Begin with the end in mind: decide exactly what data you wish to collect, and in what form. You should seek this, and no more.
- Consider a few demographics - age, academic class, etc - to get a sense of how different groups respond. This provides social context for your data.
- But avoid too many questions - ask only what’s useful to your purposes.
- Clear (piloted) questions help avoid ambiguity, and are essential for getting good data.
- Learn to use conditional logic to avoid asking irrelevant questions.
- Multiple choice questions supply the best data for math calculations. But be careful that your answer choices encompass all that’s appropriate and not redundant.
- How motivated will respondents be to fill out your form? Do you have an incentive plan?

How will form reach respondents?

- How will respondents get to or receive access to your form?
- How strict are your anonymity requirements?
- Do you want to send follow-up communication, or at least track participation?
- How many respondents do you seek or anticipate? What distribution regime can you realistically manage?

Budget time to learn tools for all stages/steps. Learn them before making survey form available to respondents.

- Learn all features of your survey tool that you’ll need.
- Learn to use software (and math functions) outside the survey application, which you need for calculations and reporting.

Pilot!

- Have sample similar to respondents provide feedback on form experience: accessing form, form UX, question clarity and appropriateness.
- Use dummy data to work through all calculations and reporting.
- Generate a mock product before the real product.
- Then you know what to do with the real data and more importantly, that you’re collecting the correct data for your purposes.

Responsibilities

- What full-time employee(s) will be employed on the project?
- Keep a journal or documentation for the project.