

## Quantify Survey Research February 2010

### The start of the recovery

One or two government ministers seem to have let slip the date for the general election but it isn't much of a surprise. Unless they are engaged in a campaign of misinformation, it looks as if we can all give our verdict on the current government on 6 May at the same time as most of us will in any case be electing local councillors, so the obvious date to choose.

As a rule, a general election might be seen as an opportunity to vote for a change for the better but I'm not sure that the next election can be seen that way. With a huge deficit to deal with and a full term to serve, at the end of which they hope to be re-elected, any government will surely want to get as much of the pain as possible out of the way during the first three years or so, leaving time to introduce some more voter-friendly policies in the two years before the next election. So I fear that things will be tough after the election, whoever gets in.

Looking on the bright side, this recession hasn't caused as much unemployment as usual, retailers have been doing well and there are even signs of life in the housing market. These signs, together with the news last Tuesday that we have finally just about emerged from recession, show that there is a tentative recovery under way.

To make the most of it, we need to make sure our relationship with our staff and clients is as good as it can be and the best way to do that is to conduct some research to find out what they like and what they don't about the way we currently conduct ourselves. Why not call and find out how easy it can be?



David Lusty  
Principal Consultant  
Quantify London



### We can help with

Consultancy and bureau support for

[Employee Satisfaction Surveys](#)

[Customer Satisfaction Surveys](#)

[Internal Customer Satisfaction Surveys](#)

[Bespoke 360° Management Feedback](#)

[360° Feedback off the shelf](#)

### We also offer:

A comprehensive [Employee Satisfaction Survey Research Kit](#) for those who just can't instruct a consultant to help. It provides everything you need to develop, administer and reports an employee survey in-house.

[Training Seminars](#)

You can access *Quantify Survey Research* for previous months [here](#).

Click [here](#) to see what clients say about us.

### More information

For a free initial consultation, please call David Lusty, Quantify London on 08452 41 41 60 or 020 8704 1296 or click to [email](#).

Or call Sue Alderson, Quantify Yorkshire, on 0845 241 3450 or click to [email](#).



Sue Alderson, Quantify Yorkshire



## Guest Spot

No guest this month, but David riding one of his hobby-horses.

David writes...

### Writing "correct" English

When we write a survey questionnaire, it should not normally contain big sections of text. Whatever it does contain should be as clear as we can make it and its spelling, its punctuation and its grammar should be correct. Otherwise, some people will see it as illiterate and not worthy of attention.

Unfortunately, people disagree on what is correct. Not so much about punctuation or spelling: there is a pretty good consensus on standard British English spelling and even if people don't know where to put punctuation marks, they don't as a rule get upset by punctuation in the right places. But when it comes to grammar, there is no such consensus.

Dead languages like Latin and ancient Greek don't change from one generation to another but living, modern languages constantly evolve as fashions and their users' needs change. Most of us learned about what was right and (more often) what was wrong when we were young, and we tend then to spend the rest of our lives grumbling about declining standards as the language changes and current usage no longer fits the rules we were taught. This arises partly from seeing grammar as a set of rules, prescribing how language should be, rather than as a way of describing the various ways language is actually used. Hence some people will object to a "rule" being broken, while others will call you a dinosaur if you carefully observe it.

### Split infinitives

Your mission is to go where no man has been before. The "to go" bit is an infinitive. That is a form of the verb which hasn't been adapted according to who is doing the going. In English we often don't adapt verbs much anyway but if my sister was going, I would say "she goes", using a special form of the verb appropriate to the so-called third person. But in the mission statement I started with, it wouldn't matter if it was my mission, your mission, her mission, or a whole lot of people's mission, it would still be "to go" and that is what an infinitive looks like in English. To go, to stop, to sit, to run. They are all in the same form; two words, the first of which is always "to". In many languages the infinitive of a verb is one word and Latin is one of those languages. So when it was fashionable for people to try to apply Latin grammar rules to the use of English, they decided if you don't split an infinitive in Latin, then you shouldn't split one in English either.

So if you want to beef up that mission statement by adding the word "boldly", they said, you mustn't separate the two words that make up the infinitive by saying "to boldly go". You must say "Your mission is boldly to go". Hardly anybody these days would choose to do that, least of all Gene Roddenberry.

### Ending a sentence with a preposition

The rule says that we shouldn't ask "Who are you going with?" or "Which paper will you send your article to?" but instead say "With whom are you going" and "To which paper will you send your article".

According to a story that has been going the rounds since the 1950s; when a book editor clumsily rearranged one of Winston Churchill's sentences to avoid ending it in a preposition, Churchill changed it back, adding a note; "This is the sort of bloody nonsense up with which I will not put." Enough said.

### Beginning a sentence with "And" or "But"

If it makes the passage easier to follow, provides emphasis or provides a pause for breath before the extra, or contradictory thought is introduced, why not start a sentence with one of these? Starting a new sentence signals a new thought: the conjunction indicates that the new thought relates to the previous one.

I could go on and list more features of perfectly sound writing which some people would find grating or condemn as wrong. *Hopefully*, *decimate*, *gay* and a host of other words have taken on completely new meanings and we just have to get used to it. Usage changes. It has happened throughout the history of the English language, and it will keep on happening despite any number of letters written to the Times. And yet I know there are some people who will perceive me as less authoritative in everything I write because I constantly start sentences with "and" or "but" and they see that as ignorant and semi-literate.

To avoid turning people off, and reducing response rate, I probably should try to avoid it in a survey questionnaire, or in fact in anything I write. But insofar as I have a style, this practice seems to be part of it. There, I've done it again.

One of the courses David leads is a one day session entitled [Writing Plain English; Effective writing for Reports, letters memos etc.](#)

## The QUANTIFY sample Web Survey

You can visit our sample web survey [here](#). This imaginary employee survey demonstrates the speed and flexibility of our web system and describes the many aspects which can be configured to suit your preference. It incorporates a quick tour of the various Quantify services you may choose to use, including links to selected outputs illustrations .

If you know anyone who is considering a survey, please forward this email to them and suggest they have a poke around in our sample survey.

## Refer a Friend?

Would you please forward this email to anyone you know who might be interested in any of our services? Or if they prefer, pass us their details, and we'll get in touch directly.

## Quantify Press Releases

[April 2008 Quantify launches Employee Satisfaction Survey Research Kit](#)

[January 2008 Quantify launches web-based 360 degree Feedback systems \(off the shelf\)](#)

[November 2007 British Medical Journal seeks second opinion](#)

[September 2007 Gold award to Quantify Principal Consultant for 50 blood donations.](#)

[September 2007 Harrow Council consults about the Way Ahead](#)

[June 2007 Quantify Principal Consultant enrolls as Blood Platelet Donor](#)

[April 2007 Quantify's unique presentation of employee survey results helps prevent a waste of resources](#)

[April 2007 Identifying room for business and individual improvement](#)

[April 2007 Quantify illumines Cara Irish Housing Association's room for improvement](#)

[April 2007 Quantify launches a bespoke 360° feedback system](#)

## Blood Doning

I have been readmitted to the fold but without notable success. On my first new attempt on 7 January, the machine couldn't get the blood out of me so they gave it up. We're going to try a different vein next time.

David

P.S. If you aren't already a blood donor, click the logo below to visit the National Blood Service site to find out more about why it is so important and how easy it is.

Do something amazing today

Save a life

Give blood



David is the proud possessor of a Gold Award for 50 donations (illustrated on the left), and these days, he is a [blood platelet donor](#).

The process involves being connected for an hour or more to a machine which draws out blood, separates the platelets, and returns the rest of the blood.

Because most of the blood is returned to the donor, platelet donors can donate every four weeks. "Normal" whole blood donors give only three donations a year. The procedure is much simpler and their donation is limited to ten minutes.

## Quantify in the Media

Date	Publication	Item	Link
July 2009	Human Resource Management International Digest Vol 17 No 4	Article by David Lusty "Find out what your people really think: How to maximise response rates to employee satisfaction surveys". (Only slightly mangled by sub-editors!)	<a href="#">Link</a>
March 2009	Training Journal	Article by David Lusty "Maximise the Response Rate to your Employee Survey". This is a digest version of a more detailed article. The full article is <a href="#">here</a> .	<a href="#">Link</a>
November 2007	Human Resource Management International Digest Vol 15 No 7	Article by David Lusty "Debunking the Benchmarking Myth".	<a href="#">Link</a>
September 2007	Human Resource Management International Digest Vol 15 No 6	Article by David Lusty "How to avoid the pitfalls of employee satisfaction surveys".	<a href="#">Link</a>
September / October 2007	Human Capital Management	Article by David Lusty "Answers Before Questions"; 12 key points to get useful information from an Employee Satisfaction Survey	<a href="#">Link</a>
12 June	Personnel Today	Article by Kirstie Redford on 360 Feedback with a case study and expert comment from Azure Consulting (Quantify Yorkshire)	NA
May / June 2007	Human Capital Management	Article by David Lusty "Debunking the Benchmarking Myth" pointing out the risks associated with benchmarking comparisons.	<a href="#">Link</a>
May 2007	Training & Coaching Today	"Digest" version of the HCM article above	<a href="#">Link</a>
May 2007	Training Journal On Line	Announcement of bespoke 360 Feedback capability on the web, inventory based on client competencies framework	<a href="#">Link</a>
March 2007	Training Journal On Line	Release of latest Subset Tabulation report providing significance indicators for differences between subset results for individual items, and for clusters of items	<a href="#">Link</a>

## Free "How to" guides

- **Your Customer Satisfaction Survey**
- **Your Employee Satisfaction Survey**
- **Your Internal Customer Satisfaction Survey**
- **Your Management Feedback System (360 Feedback)**

These e-books are full of practical advice and checklists for planning every stage of the project. Most people will find something useful in them. To request your FREE copy, please [click here](#).

## Survey of the month

**The survey of the month is not one of ours.** It might not always be particularly topical, or very important or even serious, but we hope you will find it interesting.

**OUR surveys are more than just interesting.** They provide **management information** about how people **feel** doing business with you or working in your organisation. This allows you to manage your relationship with clients and employees, to retain clients and employees better, to reduce costs, improve customer satisfaction and to compete more successfully.

### Conservative supporters outnumber Labour's

Preliminary results from this year's [British Social Attitudes survey](#) by [NatCen](#) show that for the first time in almost 20 years Britain has more Conservative supporters than Labour.

The survey also shows only 36% of people thought sexual relations between two adults of the same sex were "always or mostly" wrong, down from 62% in 1983. While older people may be less accepting than younger ones, the trends showed that all age groups had become more liberal in their outlook towards same-sex relationships.

The British public is more satisfied with the National Health Service now than at any time since 1984.

The Guardian has some of the survey data, going back over time, including comparisons with European surveys.

More detail [here](#).

## Questionnaire authors' Top Tips

These tips are drawn from our popular and successful one-day seminar, *Developing, Authoring and Designing Survey Questionnaires*.

2009 open course dates are on the [web page](#).

We also offer a seminar about analysing and interpreting the results of surveys.

### The way you put the question affects the answers you get.

The survey results you get depend on the wording of the question, or the responses you invite people to choose from. This means that the results from a question you wrote don't mean anything in absolute terms and you might be accused of deliberately writing it to get the answers you wanted. It is very misleading to claim that 90% of people agree with my idea, say, just because 90% answered a survey question the way I hoped they would.

A particularly good (or perhaps I mean bad) example occurred in a survey published by Siobhain McDonagh, MP (Lab, Mitcham and Morden) a few years back. She was seeking public opinion on the proposed academy status for two local schools. The options offered were

- **Yes**, I am in favour of raising standards at Mitcham Vale and Tamworth Manor High Schools by getting Academy status
- **No**, I am against these changes to Mitcham Vale and Tamworth Manor High Schools designed to improve exam Results.

Not much doubt there about which box she wants us to tick. Somebody else could have conducted a survey, apparently measuring support for a different point of view, and concluded that 75% were in favour of that. It just depends on how the question was written.

Nobody can dispute the validity of any **differences** you find between the responses to the **same** question from one group of people and another, though, or between now and some earlier occasion. Provided you can show that the difference exceeds sampling error, you can say for sure that one group is happier than another about the issue, or that people have become more, or less happy about it since the last time we asked.



David Lusty, Quantify London

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**QUANTIFY**<sup>®</sup>  
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