

2016 Annual Survey of Entrepreneurs – Cognitive Interview Protocol

Research Questions to Address:

- Are respondents able to answer the questions as intended?
- Are there any items that cause the respondents problems? What can be done to fix those problems?
- Are there any order/context effects?

Materials:

- Copies of questionnaire testing draft
- Recorder, batteries
- Consent form

Procedure:

- Note whether R responded to the 2015 ASE.
- Go through the Introduction and Before the Questionnaire questions.
- Then provide R with the draft questionnaire and ask R to fill it out. Once R completes each question, ask the general probes and any item-specific follow-up probes.
- Note how R navigates the questionnaire and if they appear to be having any difficulty with the questions. If R appears to have any problems (utterances like “Hmm”, confused looks, etc.), probe on this.
- Go through probes about Wrap-up Questions

Introduction:

- Explain purpose of meeting: to understand the process of answering questions, and to evaluate how new questions work or don't work.
- Some questions will seem odd and/or obvious, but I don't want to assume I know what you are thinking.
- Explain that we are *not* testing the respondent – we only want to evaluate the questionnaire
- Structure of meeting: Understand your business and your role in it, then review the questionnaire and ask you questions as you complete it.
- Permission to record discussion? Solely for note-taking purposes. Have R sign consent form.

Before the Questionnaire:

- What types of goods or services does this business provide?
- What is your role in the company? What kind of responsibilities do you have?
- Have you completed other surveys from the Census Bureau or other agencies? If so, which ones?
- *(If previous ASE respondent)* What was your role in the process for responding to this questionnaire? *(Gather data? Enter data? Consult with data providers? Etc.)*

Questionnaire test

Now let's take a look at the draft questions. I would like you to go through and answer the questions as if you were filling out an actual form. If you don't have answers to any particular questions, you can just make a best guess. I will ask you some questions as we go through them.

These questions are intended for [name of business as listed in recruiting file].

General Probes:

- What does this question mean to you?
- How did you go about answering this question?
- Would you be able to answer this question yourself? (*If no*) Who would be the appropriate person to answer it?
- (*If R appears to have problem/confusion*) What are you thinking about?
- *Reflect R's specific answer:* You said _____. Can you tell me more about that?
- *If R notices skip instructions:* The electronic system would skip automatically, but we will go over every question to make sure they are all clear.

Q1 – Type of Ownership

- Are these response options clear or unclear?
- Can you think of any types of ownership that may be missing?

Q2 – Number of Owners

- Who do you consider to be an owner?

Q3 – Business – 10% or More Ownership

- How did you decide which option to select?

Q4 – Percent Ownership

- *For each percentage:* How did you arrive at this figure?
- *If more than one owner:* How did you select the order of Owners you provided?
- How do you feel about providing the Owners' names?

Q5 – Owner 1 - Education

- How would you answer this question?

Q6 – Owner 1 – Field of Degree

- Are these response categories clear?
- Are there any important categories that are missing in your opinion?
- Note how the respondent would respond if they answered < bachelor's degree in Q5

Q7a – One Family Majority Ownership

- How did you decide which option to select?
- *If previous respondent:* Did you notice the addition of “unmarried partners”?
- How does this definition of family match or differ from what you consider to be family?
- Is there anything else you would include or exclude from this definition?

Q7b – Primary Business Operation

- In your opinion, how does operation differ from ownership?

Q7c – Owner 1 or Owner 2 Operation

- Does the order of these questions make sense to you?

Q8 – Business Banking Relationships

- What types of banking relationships did you include in your answer?
- In your own words, how would you describe each response option?

Q9 – Banking Relationship Duration

- In your own words, what is this question asking you?
- What does primary financial institution mean to you?
- Does your business have multiple banking relationships?
 - o *If yes:* How did you determine your primary financial institution?
 - o *If no:* Did you have any previous banking relationships?

Q10 – Outstanding Loans

- Is this information you would have access to in your records?

Q11 – Trade Financing Purchases

- What does the term “trade financing” mean to you?
- Is trade financing a term used by your business?
- *If yes:* Can you give an example of a time your company has used trade financing?
- *If no:* Had you heard them term trade financing before today?

Q12 – Negative Impact on Profitability

- What types of taxes did you consider?
- Can you think of any other negative impacts to profitability your business has experienced? How do they fit into these categories?

Q13 – Types of Regulation

- How did you determine which column to place your answer for each row?
- Are any rows confusing to you?
- Can you give an example of a financial regulation?

Q14 – Time Spent on Regulations

- How would you answer this question given the response options?
- Who would you consider to be senior management for your business?
- What records, if any, would you consult to answer this question?
- Did you find this question easy or difficult to answer?

Q15 – Regulations’ Impact on Growth

- What does this question mean to you?
- What types of regulations came to mind when answering this question?

Q16 – Seeking Advice for the Business

- Did your business seek advice for multiple reasons listed?
 - o *If yes:* How did you pick the primary reason?
- In your own words, what does succession planning and exit strategy mean to you?
- In your opinion, what is the different between “business finances” and “taxes and accounting”?
- Can you think of any other categories that may be missing from this list?
- How would you answer this question if your business sought advice for something not listed in these options?

Q17 – Providers of Advice to Business

- What types of advice or mentoring came to mind?
- Did you answer based on advice sought for the primary reason in Q16 or any advice sought by this business?
- Does your business have a formal advice or mentor seeking process?
- Is there anyone else your business seeks advice from?

Q18 – Impact of Advice Sought

- How would you answer this question?
- Did you answer based on advice sought for the primary reason in Q16 or any advice sought by this business?
- What does “Achieved the outcome expected” mean in the case of the advice sought?

Q19 – Exit Strategy

- Did you have any issues with the response options listed?
- How would you answer if your business had an exit strategy that was not listed?
- Can you think of any other types of exit strategies not included in this list?
- Would your business be comfortable or uncomfortable sharing this information with the Census Bureau?

Wrap-up Questions

- *(If previous R)* About how long did it take you to complete the survey before?
- How long do you think it would take you to complete these questions?
- Any other feedback you would like to give us on these questions or *(If 2015 R)* your experiences with the survey?

Thanks for your time!