

Cognitive Interviewing Protocol

Small Business Pulse Survey – Phase 4

1.5.21 v.3

Interviewer notes are in red.

Research Questions to Address

- Are respondents able to answer the questions as intended?
- Are there any items that cause respondents problems?
 - What can be done to fix those problems?
- Estimate of average time to complete?

Introduction

- Hello. Thank you for your time today. We are looking to obtain feedback on a revised version of a short survey that has been designed to learn more about the effects of the Coronavirus pandemic on small businesses.
- Our purpose for speaking with you today is to see how respondents answer the survey questions, to evaluate how the questions work or don't work.
- We are *not* testing you- we only want to evaluate the questionnaire.
- Today, we will have you complete the short questionnaire, then we will review some of the questions with you to get your feedback.
- **Email link to Business Pulse survey to respondent.**
- I just sent you an email. Can you please click on the link to the Qualtrics survey (or open the pdf) and read over the first page? This study is being conducted under the authority of Title 13 USC. We plan to use your feedback to improve the survey questions and make sure they make sense to respondents like you. Do you agree to participate? Thank you. Please click on the checkbox at the bottom of the screen, but do not advance the screen just yet.

Before the Questionnaire

- Before we begin, could you tell me a little bit about your business -- what types of goods or services does this business provide?
- Thank you. And what is your role in the business? (What kind of responsibilities do you have?)

Have Respondent Complete the Questionnaire

Now I'd like for you to go through the survey question by question. Please tell me your answer to each question as you go along. After you are done, we will go back and discuss some of the questions in more detail.

Document responses to each question and the time respondent took to complete survey.

___ minutes

Review the Questionnaire

Thank you for completing the survey. On your screen should be a summary of your responses. You can use this as we talk a little bit more about some of the questions you have just answered.

First, what is your overall impression of this survey?

Item 7 (Negative COVID-19 test)

Ok, now let's look back at Item 7.

Q7. In the last week, did this business require employees to test negative for COVID-19 prior to working onsite?

Select only one:

- Yes
 - No
 - Not applicable, this business did not have employees onsite in the last week.
-
- Please tell me in your own words what this question is asking.
 - How did you come up with your answer to this question?
 - What does "prior to working onsite" mean to you?
 - What does the word 'prior' mean to you in the context of this question? What time frame did you consider here?
 - How recent would a test have to be to 'count'?

- How easy or difficult was this question to answer? (If difficult, why?)
- Do you have any suggestions on how to improve this question?
- How do you think others in your industry might interpret this question?

Item 8 (Proof of COVID-19 vaccination)

Next let's look at Item 8.

Q8. In the last week, did this business require employees to have proof of vaccination for COVID-19 prior to working onsite?

Select only one:

- Yes
 - No
 - Not applicable, this business did not have employees onsite in the last week.
-
- Please tell me in your own words what this question is asking.
 - How did you come up with your answer to this question?
 - What does "proof of vaccination" mean to you?
 - How easy or difficult was this question to answer? (If difficult, why?)
 - Do you have any suggestions on how to improve this question?
 - How do you think others in your industry might interpret this question?

Item 10 (Operating capacity)

Let's look at Item 10.

10. In the last week, was this business's operating capacity affected by any of the following?

Note: Operating capacity is the maximum amount of activity this business could conduct under realistic operating conditions.

Select all that apply:

- Ability to re-hire furloughed or laid off employees and/or hire new employees
- Availability of employees to work

- Ability of employees to work remotely
 - Availability of COVID-19 tests for employees
 - Availability of COVID-19 vaccine for employees
 - Physical distancing of employees
 - Physical distancing of customers and/or limits on the number of concurrent customers
 - Availability of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and/or related equipment or supplies
 - Availability of other supplies or inputs used to provide good or services
 - None of the above
-
- Please tell me in your own words what this question is asking.
 - How did you come up with your answer to this question? Would you consult any records, or would you estimate? Would you need to reach out to anyone else in your firm to answer this question?
 - What does “operating capacity” mean to you?
 - Do the answer categories seem appropriate?
 - What does “Availability of COVID-19 tests for employees” mean to you?
 - What does “Availability of COVID-19 vaccine for employees” mean to you?
 - Do you have any suggestions on how to improve this question?

Item 12 (Square footage leased/rented)

Now on to Item 12.

Q12. The White House declared a national emergency because of the Coronavirus pandemic on March 13, 2020.

Since March 13, 2020, did this business decrease the amount of square footage leased/rented for operations?

Select only one:

- Yes
- No
- Not applicable, this business does not lease/rent space.

- Please tell me in your own words what this question is asking.
- How did you come up with your answers to this question?
- What does “amount of square footage leased/rented for operations” mean to you?
- Is “amount of square footage” the same as “amount of space” to you?
- What time period were you thinking about? What does “Since March 13” mean to you?
 - How well do you remember this time (March, 2020)?
 - Do you consider that date the start of the Coronavirus pandemic, or do you think of some other date or other time frame when thinking about the beginning of the pandemic?
- How easy or difficult was this question to answer? (If difficult, why?)

Item 13 (Permanently add pickup/carryout/delivery)

Next let’s look at Item 13.

Q13. Since March 13, 2020, did this business permanently add pickup/carryout/delivery as a means of providing goods/services to its customers?

Select only one:

- Yes
 - No
 - This business already used pickup/carryout/delivery as a means of providing goods/services to its customers prior to March 13, 2020.
-
- Please tell me in your own words what this question is asking.
 - How did you come up with your answer to this question?
 - How would you answer if you were not sure if it will be temporary or permanent?
 - How easy or difficult was this question to answer? (If difficult, why?)
 - Do you have any suggestions on how to improve this question?

Item 14 (Changes to capital expenditures)

Next let's look at Item 14.

Q14. Since March 13, 2020, what changes did this business make to its budgeted capital expenditures for 2020?

Select all that apply:

- Canceled budgeted capital expenditures
 - Postponed budgeted capital expenditures
 - Decreased budgeted capital expenditures
 - Increased budgeted capital expenditures
 - Introduced new unbudgeted capital expenditures
 - This business had no changes to budgeted capital expenditures for 2020.
-
- Please tell me in your own words what this question is asking.
 - How did you come up with your answers to this question?
 - What does "budgeted capital expenditures for 2020" mean to you? Would "planned capital expenditures for 2020" be more or less clear?
 - What would you include and what would you exclude when answering this question?
 - Do the answer categories seem appropriate?
 - What time period were you thinking about? What does "Since March 13" mean to you?
 - How easy or difficult was this question to answer? (If difficult, why?)
 - Do you have any suggestions on how to improve this question?

Item 15 (Emergency Paid sick leave)

Now Item 15.

Q15. The Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) went into effect on April 1, 2020.

Since April 1, 2020, did any of this business's employees use COVID-19 related emergency paid sick leave as offered through provided by the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA)?

Select only one:

- Yes
- No, no eligible employees requested or had a qualifying reason for FFCRA emergency paid sick leave
- No, all of this business's employees were exempted as health care providers or emergency responders
- No, this business used the small business exemption (for employers below 50 employees where providing paid leave would have jeopardized the viability of the business as a going concern).

- Please tell me in your own words what this question is asking.
- How did you come up with your answer to this question?
 - Would you need to consult with anyone else at your business to answer this question? Who?
- Were you familiar with the Families First Coronavirus Response Act? Did you think of other sick or family friendly leave policies your business might have put into place in response to the pandemic?
 - Has your business advertised or otherwise informed workers that this paid sick leave or family friendly leave is available?
- How confident are you in your answer? (If not confident, why?)
- How easy or difficult was this question to answer? (If difficult, why?)
- Do you have any suggestions on how to improve this question?

Item 16 (FFCRA family and medical leave)

Now let's look at Item 16.

Q16. Since April 1, 2020, did any of this business's employees use COVID-19 related expanded family and medical leave provided by the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA)?

Select only one:

- Yes
- No, no eligible employees requested or had a qualifying reason for FFCRA expanded family and medical leave
- No, all of this business's employees were exempted as health care providers or emergency responders

- No, this business used the small business exemption (for employers below 50 employees where providing paid leave would have jeopardized the viability of the business as a going concern).

- What is this question asking you, in your own words?
- How is this question different from Item 15, if at all?
 - o Who would you include for this question? Exclude?
- How did you answer this question?
 - o Would you have to look at your company's records?
 - o Would you have to talk to anyone else at your firm?
- How easy or difficult was it to answer this question?

Item 17 (Requested financial assistance)

Let's skip ahead to Item 17 now.

Q17. On December 27, 2020, the Consolidated Appropriations Act 2021 was enacted providing additional Coronavirus pandemic relief.

Since December 27, 2020, has this business requested financial assistance from any of the following sources?

Select all that apply:

- Paycheck Protection Program (PPP)
- Economic Injury Disaster Loans (EIDL)
- Small Business Administration (SBA) Loan Forgiveness
- Main Street Lending Program
- Deferral of Federal Employment Tax Deposits and Payments
- COVID-19 Related Federal Paid Sick and Expanded Family and Medical Leave Tax Credits
- Federal Employee Retention and Rehiring Tax Credit
- Other Federal programs
- State or local government programs
- Banks or other financial institutions
- Owner(s)
- Family or friends
- Other sources
- This business has not requested financial assistance from any source since December 27, 2020.

- Please tell me in your own words what this question is asking.
- How did you come up with your answers to this question?
- What time period were you thinking about when answering this question?
 - Did you notice that this question is asking about the most recent Coronavirus relief legislation?
 - Would your answer be different if we did not put that date there, or if we asked this question based on a different date?
- What does the category “Owner(s)” mean here?
 - What does this include? Exclude?
 - What did you think of when you read the word ‘Owner(s)’ as a response category here?
- How easy or difficult was this question to answer? (If difficult, why?)
- Do you have any suggestions on how to improve this question?
- How do you think others in your industry might interpret this question?

Item 18 (Received financial assistance)

Now Item 18.

Q18. Since December 27, 2020, has this business received financial assistance from any of the following sources?

Select all that apply:

- Paycheck Protection Program (PPP)
- Economic Injury Disaster Loans (EIDL)
- SBA Loan Forgiveness
- Main Street Lending Program
- Deferral of Federal Employment Tax Deposits and Payments
- COVID-19 Related Federal Paid Sick and Expanded Family and Medical Leave Tax Credits
- Federal Employee Retention and Rehiring Tax Credit
- Other Federal programs
- State or local government programs
- Banks or other financial institutions
- Owner(s)
- Family or friends

- Other sources
- This business has not received financial assistance from any source since December 27, 2020.

- Please tell me in your own words what this question is asking.
- How did you come up with your answers to this question?
- How easy or difficult was this question to answer? (If difficult, why?)
- Do you have any suggestions on how to improve this question?

Item 19 (Business travel expenditures)

Now Item 19.

19. In the next 6 months, do you think this business will have business travel expenditures for air, rail, car rental, or lodging?

Select only one:

- Yes
 - No
 - Not applicable, this business does not usually have business travel expenditures.
-
- Please tell me in your own words what this question is asking.
 - How did you come up with your answers to this question?
 - What does “business travel expenditures” mean to you?
 - What would you include when answering this question? Exclude?
 - Are there things other than air, rail, car rental or lodging you would want to include?
 - What time period were you thinking about when answering this question? What does “In the next 6 months” mean to you?
 - How easy or difficult was this question to answer? (If difficult, why?)
 - Do you have any suggestions on how to improve this question?

Item 20 (Six months, business needs)

Finally, let's look at Item 20.

20. In the next 6 months, do you think this business will need to do any of the following?

Select all that apply:

- Obtain financial assistance or additional capital
 - Identify new supply chain options
 - Develop online sales or websites
 - Increase marketing or sales
 - Learn how to better provide for the safety of customers and employees
 - Identify and hire new employees
 - Make a capital expenditure
 - Cancel or postpone a budgeted capital expenditure
 - Permanently close this business
 - None of the above
-
- Please tell me in your own words what this question is asking.
 - How did you come up with your answers to this question?
 - What does "Make a capital expenditure" mean to you? Is there another way to word that?
 - What does "Cancel or postpone a budgeted capital expenditure" mean to you? Is there another way to word that?
 - Think about the list as a whole – how easy or difficult was it for you to read through this list?
 - Do the categories make sense? Are any of them unclear?
 - What about the order of the categories? Do they make sense as is, or do you think they should be reordered? In what way?
 - Do you have any suggestions on how to improve this question?

Other Items

Are there any other questions you would like to go back and talk about?

(Review other items that raised concerns during survey completion.)

Wrap Up

We are almost done. I just have a few more questions.

- Overall, how easy or difficult was it to answer these questions?
- Do you have any suggestions for other issues related to the Coronavirus pandemic's effect on small businesses?

That is all the questions I have for you today. Thank you very much for your time today. We really appreciate your help.

Document length of cognitive interview.

___ minutes