



Rapid Assessment

Brief Description

Rapid Assessment is a brief, topic-specific collection of data. It is a method known from the fields of international development (Rapid [Rural] Appraisal or Rapid Assessment) and market research. Such a survey can be conducted verbally or in written form. In the form proposed here it should take 10 minutes or less to complete.

The strength of Rapid Assessment is that it can be integrated into practical outreach work because of its small scope. This way it can reach many people who do not normally respond to surveys.

Prerequisites

- A concrete, clearly defined issue
- Personnel trained in conducting a survey

Applications

- Target group needs assessment
- Pre-testing the concept for a project
- Developing new ideas for project work
- Checking service acceptance
- Checking the impact of a service

Process Overview

- Determining the survey topic
- Developing the survey questions
- Determining the survey method
- Training personnel in conducting the survey
- Analysing the results

Resources Required

Time:

The preparation time for a Rapid Assessment can vary (Working Steps 1-3). Personnel can be trained in conducting the survey as part of a team meeting. Interviewing takes at most 10 minutes per individual respondent. The time required for analysis depends on the questions and the expectations of the service organisation.

Personnel:

A team member can develop the survey. It is recommended to consult those workers who



are in direct contact with the target group on the content and type of survey in order to check in advance that it is user-friendly and suitable for practice. How many workers will contribute to conducting the Rapid Assessment depends on where it is applied.

Materials:

All personnel conducting the survey should have access to the survey questions in written form. Where the target group is asked to fill in printed questionnaires, the required number of sheets must be provided.

Other Costs:

None.

Detailed Working Steps

1. Determining the Survey Topic

What - Who - Where - How?

A clearly defined topic is an important prerequisite for a successful Rapid Assessment. The topic should be able to be summarised in one main research question that is easy to understand.

2. Developing the Survey Questions

The survey questions should serve to answer the main research question. They should be clearly worded and quick to answer. They must be adapted to the language used by the target group, unambiguous and understandable. A decision must be made whether to use pre-worded, multiple choice options or ask respondents to answer in their own words.

3. Determining the Survey Method

The survey should be conducted in a way that maximises the number of target group members reached. This requires creativity and an understanding of the target group. It is possible to integrate the questions of brief surveys into a variety of current working procedures (see "Further Advice" below).

4. Training Personnel in Conducting the Survey

All personnel contributing to the survey should participate in the training. The training will explain where and how the survey will be conducted, how the responses will be recorded and how its reach into the target group can be maximised.

5. Analysing the Results

The analysis depends on the type of questions used. Simple questions (e.g. closed questions that can be answered "yes" or "no") can produce unambiguous results if they simply aim to determine the majority view. In many cases however, surveys are based on the service organisation's interest in more complex information, creating many uncertainties in the analysis, especially about how answers to individual questions relate to each other. In such cases it may be advisable to call on a person with a scientific background as well as experience in the analysis of questionnaires for assistance.



Please Note:

- A Rapid Assessment can, due to its restricted scope, only provide information on a limited number of questions. If several topics are to be dealt with, a series of Rapid Assessments may be conducted, taking care to space them comfortably, from the target group's point of view.
- The first two working steps are the most difficult for many service organisations. To define a specific topic and to formulate appropriate questions can often be a great challenge. It is therefore advisable to allocate sufficient time to these steps.

Further Advice

- The simplicity of Rapid Assessment makes it possible to integrate its questions into conversations with the target group that are part of ordinary service provision without compromising the interaction. The beginning or the end of such a conversation is often the most appropriate time for asking survey questions.
- Rapid Assessment can be successfully integrated into public relations or awareness-raising activities, e.g. at an exhibition stall, in bars or shopping centres.
- Rapid Assessment is also well suited for use on websites because of its small size and short completion time.
- As applies to all surveys, it is useful to conduct a test run. This means asking members of the target group the questions and then collecting their feedback and suggestions on the questions as well as on the survey process.
- An open question, e.g. "What else would you like us to know?" can be revealing as a supplement to pre-worded, multiple-choice answers.
- Wordings for the questions, the contributing personnel, the locations for conducting the survey and the form of the responses (written or verbal) should be selected in a way that maximises target group participation. Acceptance by the target group should be paramount.
- Collecting some demographic data important to the service organisation allows a more differentiated analysis, e.g. one according to gender, age or ethnic background.
- Willingness to participate in the survey can be increased if representatives of the target group conduct the Rapid Assessment themselves. Members of the target group have direct access to places that are important in their lives and are not perceived there as "intruders". For this to occur, representatives of the target group must be recruited and trained in conducting the survey.

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Further Reading and Links

On Rapid Appraisal:

Beebe, J. (1995). Basic Concepts and Techniques of Rapid Appraisal. Human Organization, Vol. 54, No. 1, pp.42-51.

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO):

<http://www.fao.org/docrep/W3241E/w3241e09.htm>

Anschauliche Präsentation von D. Sarrazin (2004) über Rapid Assessment and Response:

http://www.lwl.org/ks-download/downloads/searchII/Doris%20Sarrazin_RAR.pdf

(Illustrative presentation by D. Sarrazin (2004) on Rapid Assessment and Response:

http://www.lwl.org/ks-download/downloads/searchII/Doris%20Sarrazin_RAR.pdf *(In German)*

Ressourcen zur Fragebogenentwicklung und Auswertung:

Kostenlose Software zur Erstellung und Auswertung von Fragebögen: www.grafstat.de

(Resources for the development of questionnaires and their analysis: Free software for designing and analysing questionnaires: www.grafstat.de (In German)

Statistiklabor der Freien Universität Berlin: <http://www.e-learning.fu-berlin.de/werkzeuge/lernsoftware/statistiklabor/index.html>

(Laboratory for Statistics of the Free University Berlin: <http://www.e-learning.fu-berlin.de/werkzeuge/lernsoftware/statistiklabor/index.html> (In German))

Fragebogen: http://www.quint-essenz.ch/de/files/Fragebogen_20.pdf

(Questionnaires: http://www.quint-essenz.ch/de/files/Fragebogen_20.pdf (In German)

Moser, H (2003). Instrumentenkoffer für den Praxisforscher. Freiburg: Lambertus.

(Moser, H (2003). Toolkit for Research Practitioners). Freiburg: Lambertus (In German)