

## **A Novel New Way to Survey your Membership**

As with most Clubs, the River Club sends out annual member surveys in an effort to understand what we are doing well and where we need improvement. What started as an easy process of mailing out a written survey with a self-addressed stamped return envelope to 40 members in our start-up operation soon turned out to be a nightmare to manage. Having to tabulate over 100 surveys with 50 responses each meant that we had to individually collect and enter over 5,000 pieces of data, plus collect and analyze the written responses from the free-form questions. This was bordering on insane, not to mention the fact that once all the data was compiled, we then had to put it into a format that was presentable to the Developer, Advisory Board, and members.

We vowed that there had to be an easier, more efficient way. Thus, we set a goal to be able to send the annual survey out to members, have them complete it and return it in a fashion that we could instantly see the results without having to do anything other than log onto a website. In an effort to do this, we enlisted the help of a company called SurveyMonkey which allows you to design any survey you like and then harness the power of cyberspace to email it to your members. They can then, at their leisure, visit the link and take the survey online with just the click of their computer's mouse. Once they are finished, they exit the survey and are taken to the Club's homepage. Filling out the survey online is extremely easy for the member, yet it is even easier to view the results as they are updated and displayed instantly. No pencils, no having to decipher handwriting, and best of all, no US Post Office.

One of the best things about using SurveyMonkey is that it allows you to create test surveys so that you can practice your skills and preview your survey. Thus, you can try out the different options for responses to see which one looks best before 'going live' with the survey. To get started, you simply click on the 'new survey' button and follow the basic directions. You have several options for color schemes plus the options to title each page and/or survey section, upload your club's logo, and select one of the 15 response types.

Don't worry if you do not know which response type you would need as Survey Monkey will give you an example with the click of your mouse. After you set up your survey, preview it and make sure you like the look and feel, you are ready to go live and send out to your members via email. This is also very easy as SurveyMonkey generates a unique link to your survey which you can place on your own web site or email to your members. This gives you the opportunity to personalize the email and adds legitimacy in that the email comes directly from the Club and not an outside source.

Survey responses are posted in real time which allows us to view results instantaneously. Once the survey was closed to new responses, we downloaded the results directly into both Word and Excel. With the help of these two programs, we then were able to easily display the collected result in a format that was presentable to members, the developer and Advisory Board.

SurveyMonkey is a quick and elegant way to run a survey and the site certainly can offer a straightforward, flexible, and easy way to conduct annual member surveys. We are so impressed with the efficiency of the service that we have also created employee surveys, teen surveys, and other exclusive surveys that we can email to a specific group of people seeking valuable input. If you have grown tired of the annual ritual of membership surveys, my advice is to give SurveyMonkey a try. I think you, too, will be very impressed.

*Chris Conner, General Manager, The River Club*