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# The Effect of Telephone Prenotification on the Response Rate in an Industrial Mail Survey

There are many important phenomena in society that only business people can provide information about. One way to get access to this information is to undertake mail surveys. If the quality of such a survey is to be satisfactory it is important that the respondents designated to a sample actually take part in the study. If the response rate of a study is small, this may give reason to doubt that the findings of the study are representative of the perceptions of business people.

Research suggests that studies of business people have lower response rates than studies of the general public. If the response rates of industrial surveys can be increased, mail surveys can be developed to an even more important tool for researching the perceptions of business people.

The use of telephone prenotification may be an efficient and relatively non-expensive way to increase response rates in mail surveys of

business populations. This study, therefore, investigates the research question: What is the relationship between a telephone prenotification and response rate in an industrial mail survey? The findings indicate that the response rate is improved in a statistically significant way when a telephone prenotification is administered. The main reason is probably that the telephone prenotification introduces the researcher and the research problem to the respondent. It helps create a personal relationship between the researcher and the respondent and also makes clear that the researcher is willing to go through the extra trouble and expense of calling. This may increase the perceived importance of the research, and hence make the respondents more likely to participate.

This study suggests that telephone prenotification is a viable strategy to increase response rates in mail surveys of industrial populations. This strategy may be very useful for research of populations where it is particularly important to get high response rates. ■