

*turning knowledge into practice*

# **Using Standardized Interviewing Principles to Improve a Telephone Interviewer Monitoring Protocol**

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# Research Overview

- Improve a monitoring protocol based using standardized interviewing principles to guide revisions.
- Understand the main challenges of implementing effective monitoring protocols.
- Develop a monitoring protocol that overcomes limitations of traditional monitoring protocols.
- Examine data to assess the effectiveness of the revised protocol.
- Identify additional ways to systematize monitoring procedures.

# Standardized Interviewing

## Standardized interviewing procedures:

- Read questions exactly as written.
- Probe inadequate answers non-directively
- Record answers without discretion.
- Be interpersonally nonjudgmental regarding the substance of answers.

# Challenges to Effective Monitoring Protocols

1. Monitoring protocols should include the use of forms to collect objective data on interviewer behavior.
2. Monitoring protocols should ideally record interviewer behaviors at the question level (using objective measures).
3. Monitoring protocols should facilitate quick, easy recording of interviewer behaviors (using question numbers).

# Goals for Revised Monitoring Protocol

Systematize our monitoring protocol focusing on the development of a form that facilitates:

1. objectively recording interviewer behaviors relevant to standardized interviewing procedures,
2. accurately recording specific survey questions when relevant interviewer behaviors are observed, and
3. providing precise, constructive feedback to interviewers based on accurate, objective data.

# Procedures for Developing the Form

- Development of the format and content for the revised form
- Group discussions with monitors, supervisors, and interviewers
- Usability testing of a draft version of the form
- Revisions of the form based on monitors' input and testing
- Training monitors on using the new form
- Follow-up with call center staff on the implementation

# Sections of the New Monitoring Form

1. Call Management Skills
2. Introduction / Obtaining Cooperation
- 3. Interviewing Skills**
4. Presentation Skills
5. Monitor Notes and Comments
6. Overall Score

# Interviewing Skill Areas

- Speech Characteristics
- Reading Skills
- Probing Skills
- Professional Handling of Interview Situation
- CATI Skills

# Key Features of the Interviewing Section

- Spaces to record multiple incidences of each specific interviewer behavior; where any question number/label is counted as 1 incidence (A16, BXTTFF, or sex)
- Entries produce information on number and type of interviewing behaviors and summary rating for each interviewing skill area.
- Form highlights “critical” non-standardized behaviors that interviewers must avoid in order to obtain a passing score for the monitoring session.

# Evaluating the Revised Monitoring Protocol

1. Determine the overall trend in instances of non-standardized interviewing behaviors over the first year of implementation of the revised protocol.
2. Sample monitoring forms across the multiple studies conducted each quarter, and then sample forms across all interviewers on each study.
3. Calculate the quarterly averages of non-standardized behaviors observed for each interviewing skill item monitored.

# Data from the Revised Monitoring Protocol

- Quarterly averages calculated as:

*total behaviors observed / number of forms*

- Limited sample of forms with interviewing data:

Q1 = 33

Q2 = 49

Q3 = 45

Q4 = 51

# Results 1:

## Speech Characteristics and Reading Skills

Interviewing Skills	Q1 2005	Q2 2005	Q3 2005	Q4 2005
<b>Speech Characteristics</b>				
Did not articulate words clearly	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Incorrectly pronounced a <u>major</u> word	0.00	0.00	0.02	0.00
<b>Reading Skills</b>				
Added unscripted words to the question text	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
<b>Omitted major word (such as noun or verb)</b>	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Omitted minor word (such as "the, of, a, and")	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.04
Read response categories incorrectly / read uppercase text	0.15	0.04	0.00	0.00
<b>Failed to read an entire question or instruction</b>	0.09	0.06	0.02	0.00

# Results 2:

## Probing Skills and Professional Handling

<b>Interviewing Skills</b>	<b>Q1 2005</b>	<b>Q2 2005</b>	<b>Q3 2005</b>	<b>Q4 2005</b>
<b>Probing Skills</b>				
Ignored unclear responses	0.06	0.02	0.04	0.00
Provided clarification inconsistent with project-specific instructions	0.00	0.00	0.02	0.02
Did not probe "don't know" or "refused" answer	0.00	0.04	0.00	0.00
Used a leading probe	0.06	0.00	0.04	0.00
<b>Professional Handling of Interview Situation</b>				
Used non-neutral recognition (e.g., "I hear ya")	0.15	0.00	0.04	0.04
Provided incorrect response to project question	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Allowed respondent to stray from task	0.12	0.00	0.00	0.00

# Results 3: CATI Skills

Interviewing Skills	Q1 2005	Q2 2005	Q3 2005	Q4 2005
<b>CATI Skills</b>				
<i>Coded responses incorrectly</i>	0.00	0.04	0.00	0.00
Did not spell verbatim answers correctly	0.00	0.02	0.00	0.00
Did not fully key verbatim answers	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.02
<i>Did not verify spelling of contact information</i>	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
<b>Number of Monitoring Forms</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>51</b>

# Summary of Results

1. Incidences of non-standardized behaviors were relatively rare overall, making it difficult to discern significant trends in interviewer behavior.
2. The limited patterns observed suggested decreases over the year in a few interviewer behaviors, including (1) *reading response categories incorrectly*, (2) *failing to read an entire survey item*, and (3) *using non-neutral recognition*.
3. None of the non-standardized interviewer behaviors monitored showed a clear increase over the year.

# Comparisons with Couper, et al 1992

- Couper, et al (1992) found relatively low incidences for most monitored behaviors, including 0 instances for some, but ...
- Overall, Couper, et al (1992) reported somewhat higher incidences of most monitored behaviors.
- Couper, et al (1992) observed greater incidences of *minor wording changes* than our study.
- The two studies observed similar incidences of *inappropriate probing, directive/leading probing, and failing to probe*.

# Concluding Thoughts

1. Devising effective protocols for how interviewers are *sampled* for monitoring sessions.
2. Using monitoring data to identify specific types of questions that cause the most difficulty for interviewers to administer in a standardized way.
3. Continuing to focus research efforts on understanding how non-standardized behaviors affect survey data, and how these behaviors can be addressed.

# Further Information

Paper:

[www.rti.org/tsm2](http://www.rti.org/tsm2)

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