schottler consulting

Insight from complexity

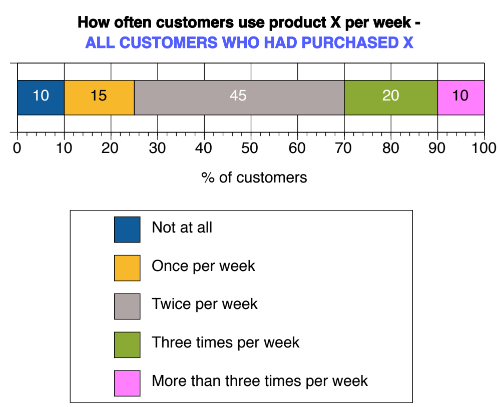
Best practice in graphing survey results

In graphing survey results, it is important to include appropriate labelling and descriptions to ensure that findings are clear and correctly labelled. As a standard for graphicsl results, we typically recommend the following to include on each survey graph:

- Graph title – a clear description of what is being measured including references to time frames where needed
- The sample size – use of N typically denotes the size of the sample
- Use of appropriate value labels – ensuring that relevant labels are included, as used in the survey measures
- Base – this is the group on which the measure is based – for instance, some questions may be asked of all respondents, while others may be asked of just males aged between 18-25 years
- Date of data collection – this is particularly useful so that results can be referred to in the future and it is immediately understood when the data was gathered
- Question – it can also be useful to provide the specific survey question at the bottom of each graph to allow results to be more easily interpreted and understood by readers
- Use of figure titles (eg. Figure 1) – if cross-references are used (as is possible in even Microsoft Word), this also allows automatic generation of a list of figures and helps ensure that figure numbers change if new figures are added
- Placing figures in a table can also assist with their placement in the text and can help keep figure titles with figures

An example of a survey graph with useful labelling is presented for reference below. Table borders are not coloured, but use of a table helps keep the labelling and text together with the figure.

Figure 1. Frequency of customer use of product X (N=400, June 2009)



Base: All customers reporting purchase of product X in the past 12mths.
Question: "How often do you use product X per week"?