

KEY SURVEY HELPS FARM JOURNAL FINE-TUNE ITS DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Farm Journal Media is the largest agricultural-media company in America. Alongside TV shows, live events, newsletters and multiple subscription websites, the company produces four magazines, including its flagship Farm Journal – which alone has almost a million readers, a number comparable with the New York Times and the Wall Street Journal.

Unlike the NYT and the WSJ, however, the Farm Journal isn't available in news stands – you can only get it by subscription. This is because of the degree to which Farm Journal fine-tunes its advertising, based on detailed reader demographic information. A farmer in Nebraska who grows only wheat, for example, isn't going to be interested in ads relating to cattle products, or for equipment dealerships in Maine or Arizona – it's a waste of money for Farm Journal to show him those ads, and they don't. Every issue is customized to the individual reader, based on detailed and specific demographic data – which, increasingly, Farm Journal has been using Key Survey to gather.

“Key Survey is a flexible, powerful electronic survey tool.

“Our whole company spins off demographics,” said Kandy Herzog, Marketing Intelligence Manager. “We have database management, direct mail lists, and phone centers. We'll get a million reader demographic updates in a year.”

Farm Journal's primary source for this information is through a subscriber renewal questionnaire. As well as the basic occupational-specialty, age, and address questions, they ask detailed questions about crops; how many acres of 25 different crops they grow, how many heads of ten different livestock categories they own, technology questions, and questions about their plans; whether they expect to expand or contract their crops and livestock in the next five years.

“Online surveying is the most cost-effective method of gathering information out there.

Getting this information can be expensive. Before they started with Key Survey, Farm Journal got it entirely from cover wraps, printed surveys that the respondent would mail back. If a reader missed a question that applied to them, or was one of the 97% to not mail back the cover survey, they had to be followed up on.

“We have telephone centers to do a lot of that research,” Herzog said. “For completed data, phone demographics are about \$4 to \$5 per person.”

“You can deploy Key Survey rapidly. And it's fully customizable.

Farm Journal began using Key Survey when they decided to gather some of this information online – it was easier and faster than designing their own software.

“When I started, my first reaction was that it was really kind of cool – I couldn’t believe you can get this so fast, but I could get answers in an hour,” Herzog said. “And it wasn’t at all hard to use; I was amazed. As I used it more, it became more complex.”

“ The learning curve is short. Be productive in minutes!

Farm Journal emails the surveys to its subscribers; in the email is an embedded link taking them to the survey. The questions themselves take advantage of Key Survey’s branching capabilities; for example, if a farmer says that his only livestock is cattle, he won’t be asked about pigs or chickens. And Key Survey can ensure that the respondent doesn’t miss a relevant question.

“ Features like branching let you ask only the questions that count.

“We have a response rate of about 33%,” Herzog said. “That’s pretty damn good - cover wraps give us 3%. And 95% of our respondents completed our online survey to 100%, requiring no further follow-up, no additional phone calls. Key Survey is 25c – 25c as opposed to \$4 or \$5. It’s amazing.”