

Eight Attributes of a Good Survey Researcher

By Alec Gallup and George Gallup, Jr.

One should possess a[n]...

- 1. Commitment** to high standards and objectivity in all phases of survey research—from questionnaire development to the presentation of findings.
- 2. Curiosity** about the human condition, and an appreciation of survey research as a way to make new and important discoveries.
- 3. Dedication** to reporting survey findings to the reading and viewing public that offer an in-depth and complete picture of opinion on an issue, separating informed from uninformed opinion.
- 4. Awareness** of the influence of public opinion, and a recognition that surveys can be a powerful change agent as data are turned into intelligence. Indeed, new societal concepts or programs are not likely to take hold unless they are embraced by an enlightened populace. “With public opinion on its side,” Abraham Lincoln once said, “nothing can fail.”
- 5. Respect** for the rights of survey respondents in the interviewing process; asking appropriate questions in a reasonable time period.
- 6. Solid understanding** of the techniques of survey research and a dedication to their further development; a willingness to go into the field and conduct one’s own interviews in order to become more sensitive to the topic at hand and to the sensibilities of survey respondents.
- 7. Ability** to present survey findings in a compelling way. One who strives to be a clear and lively writer. (So much good research fails to get the attention it deserves because the presentation is murky or ponderous.)
- 8. Perspective** that includes not only a focus on the means of survey research—that is to say, the techniques—but also on the ends. Survey research should be driven by a strong inner desire to serve others and society. We should not be so consumed by techniques and data that we do not see the ultimate ends of survey research—to help create a better world by informing and energizing people toward some positive result. In this sense, we could say that we are all guilty of “advocacy research.”



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