

# Premium Beats ‘Freemium’: Beyond Web-Based Survey Tools

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In an increasingly competitive market, deepening engagement with valued clients has become a core driver of bottom-line performance. The big challenge is how to effectively survey stakeholder groups to gather meaningful feedback needed to improve satisfaction levels, track attitudes, and build stronger relationships.

For some organizations, the answer appears simple: they choose one of the many high-profile ‘freemium’ web-based survey solutions on the market. While alternatives like SurveyMonkey and Zoomerang offer a range of web-based survey functions that can help organizations quickly take the pulse of small groups, they are rapidly being outstripped by the demands of large, complex organizations with more ambitious survey agendas.

As many organizations are now discovering, the freemium model can be an attractive entry point, but its limitations can work against long-term client insight and satisfaction objectives. For large enterprises managing hundreds or thousands of survey respondents over the course of years, choosing a more robust survey tracking solution quickly becomes a top priority. It’s the only way to gather the type of granular, targeted feedback they need to build deeper and more intimate experiences with their clients and stakeholders. That’s why many enterprises are now advancing beyond freemium providers with cookie-cutter packages and limited capabilities, and investing in more flexible and feature-rich premium survey software solutions like Scantron’s SurveyTracker Plus.

Why does premium beat freemium every time? Let’s have a look at four reasons why SurveyTracker Plus is increasingly becoming the solution of choice.

## **1** Distribution Flexibility Drives Engagement & Better Results

While web-based survey tools are convenient and capable of driving rapid results with small audiences, they just aren’t geared to the range of audiences and behaviors that many large organizations routinely manage. For example, in sectors like Health Care and Education, organizations are interacting with a broad range of socio-economic groups and a complex network of participants: clients, patients, students, administrators, educators, practitioners, and so on. As such, a single distribution method like web may not be enough to capture a critical mass of respondents with disparate engagement preferences. And while web-based surveys might be suitable in more affluent, connected populations, providing paper-based surveys continues to be a major requirement in less affluent communities with restricted access to the Internet.

In addition to socio-economic considerations, the type of service experience also drives the choice of survey distribution method. At the point of service (after an outpatient medical procedure, for example), there is often a very short window to

capture feedback and measure satisfaction. Following up days or weeks later with a web-based survey after the patient returns home can lose the critical momentum that paper-based surveys can offer. This can result in poor response rates that deliver smaller and less reliable data samples, ultimately making it much harder for providers to accurately gauge satisfaction levels.

#### Why SurveyTracker Plus is the Better Choice:

- ✓ SurveyTracker Plus's support for multiple distribution methods (scannable form-based paper surveys, email/web, kiosk or disk) ensures that organizations can tailor their survey approach to reach more of their target audience members and drive higher response rates
- ✓ Scannable paper surveys used with Scantron scanners provide automated survey data collection that eliminates manual data entry and makes results available almost immediately
- ✓ Survey data collected by all distribution methods is stored in a single database to drive centralized analysis and reporting

## Better Data Collection & Reporting Drives Deeper Insight & Smarter Decisions

One of the biggest limitations of freemium web-based survey tools is the lack of reporting depth and customization, especially at the 'free' end of the service spectrum. While canned reports can provide a snapshot of stakeholder sentiment, they can be highly restrictive for enterprises with more complex data collection and reporting requirements. These organizations must be able to collect survey data not only from a range of distribution methods (scannable paper surveys, web, etc.), but also analyze and filter survey data in any manner they choose to identify key insights. For example, a large corporation may want to segment its survey audience by asset size, revenue, type of product or service, and industry type, then filter survey results to produce highly targeted reports that reveal key performance insights. These insights drive more informed decisions, such as targeting at-risk customer segments with lower satisfaction levels or poor cross-sell performance.

Another key reporting limitation of freemium survey tools? While they offer some custom reporting at the high end of the scale, they struggle to meet the needs of organizations that want to build a robust report library to support future survey efforts and perform longitudinal analysis that tracks attitudes and satisfaction levels over time.

**Why SurveyTracker Plus is the Better Choice:**

- ✓ SurveyTracker Plus captures virtually unlimited demographic information and offers unlimited data collection and filtering to produce any type of on-demand custom report
- ✓ Organizations can use a wide range of pre-defined report templates and can also create an extensive library of custom reports for use in future surveys
- ✓ Survey data from multiple distribution methods and external sources can be easily centralized in a single database for comprehensive analysis, filtering and reporting

## **3 Demographic Tracking Builds Deep, Long-Lasting Engagement with Survey Audiences**

Another major limitation of freemium web-based survey tools is their lack of audience demographic tracking and analysis. While they support basic customer email lists with a handful of audience fields, this provides a very high-level view of survey respondents and what makes them unique. That might be suitable for a one-off survey or meet the needs of a smaller organization, but larger enterprises recognize that their community of clients and stakeholders is demographically diverse. Gathering meaningful feedback on satisfaction levels or attitudes requires a much more granular understanding of audience characteristics and behaviors.

Freemium survey tools typically support four audience fields, a limitation that often requires asking survey recipients for the same demographic information repeatedly. For organizations attempting to track client experiences or satisfaction levels over time, this makes surveys unnecessarily long and increases the likelihood of non-completes. This contributes to incomplete survey data and less reliable insight into audience feedback. It also risks alienating core clients and stakeholders, preventing organizations from building more intimate, one-to-one relationships. Enterprises that are more serious about deepening client relationships are beginning to recognize that much more robust support for audience demographics is the only way they can consistently meet—and exceed—client expectations.

**Why SurveyTracker Plus is the Better Choice:**

- ✓ SurveyTracker Plus provides support for up to 200 audience fields, enabling organizations to capture deep demographic data and build more intimate relationships with survey respondents and stakeholders
- ✓ Leveraging existing audience demographics helps to reduce the number of demographic survey questions, ultimately promoting better response rates, more complete data, and virtually unlimited data filtering and reporting flexibility
- ✓ Organizations can create fully branded surveys and reports to ensure that key brand attributes and values are reinforced throughout the survey process

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## **Survey & Question Libraries Provide Increased Deployment Flexibility, Control, & Timeliness**

When it comes to surveying large audiences, organizations require a high level of flexibility and control, yet also want to take advantage of deployment short cuts that can help accelerate survey design and distribution. While freemium survey tools provide certain time-to-market benefits—including survey templates, canned questions and creation wizards—these benefits are usually basic and can often introduce risk. For example, without an extensive library of tested survey types and questions, organizations can very easily launch surveys that fail to capture the desired audience feedback or introduce bias (leading questions, for example) that affects the integrity of survey data. Another time-to-market demand that freemium tools can't accommodate is sampling smaller groups of respondents (whether random, clustered, stratified, etc.) to accelerate the feedback process yet still produce statistically valid results.

A major consideration for large organizations in sectors like Government and Health Care is data privacy and confidentiality. While smaller organizations are often comfortable with web-based survey tools that host surveys and data on their behalf, larger organizations sometimes contend with more stringent data privacy controls. In these cases, enterprises may prefer to host surveys and store data within their own IT environment, rather than entrusting it to a third party. For some large organizations, however, hosted solutions provide an attractive alternative that doesn't further burden strapped IT departments.

### Why SurveyTracker Plus is the Better Choice:

- ✓ With a wide selection of survey templates and an extensive library of validated questions, SurveyTracker Plus helps to ensure that organizations deploy the right type of survey and capture unbiased, objective feedback
- ✓ Unlike freemium survey tools, SurveyTracker Plus provides the flexibility to host surveys within an organization's IT environment, while also providing an auto-host option for organizations that don't want to further burden their IT department with additional software and data storage requirements
- ✓ SurveyTracker Plus's extensive survey sampling capabilities help enterprises with very large distribution audiences accelerate the feedback process, while also ensuring statistically accurate results
- ✓ In addition to extensive question, survey, style, image and message libraries to speed survey creation, SurveyTracker Plus also provides a WYSIWYG interface with drag-and-drop capability for even faster survey design

Freemium survey tools and services will continue to satisfy the more limited demands of smaller organizations that want to take a point-in-time snapshot of client and stakeholder engagement. But for larger enterprises now focused on building valued, long-term relationships with large and diverse audiences, Scantron's SurveyTracker Plus provides a cost-effective premium solution that delivers proven competitive advantages.

### How Can Scantron Help?

Scantron has more than 40 years of experience in building solutions that allow companies to measure various areas of their organizations—customer satisfaction, employee training and enrollment, and quality initiatives. We can provide all of the pieces of your program, using one of our flexible survey applications: SurveyTracker Plus.

To be successful, you must consider and manage the distinct aspects and phases of a survey:



#### ✓ Design

An intuitive and effectively designed survey is a critical building block for success. Well-designed surveys, regardless of format, help increase response rates, minimize survey costs and improve data accuracy. You can design

surveys for the web with e-mail invitations, on scannable forms and as kiosk campaigns. The goal is to ensure that, regardless of collection method, you can consolidate the responses into a common database.

✓ **Administration**

When administering a survey, flexibility is key to that survey's effectiveness and efficiency. Surveys are most effective when they're administered using multiple distribution methods. In other words, there's no single delivery method that serves as a magic bullet to produce high response rates. For real data with real meaning, a survey must reach the audience in a format that is both convenient to your responders and cost-intelligent to your company.

✓ **Data Collection**

Data collection is one of the most complex aspects of survey administration. Gathering responses from survey participants can appear daunting to even the most seasoned professionals. Participants may be responding by paper, kiosk, disc or web. All of this data has to be collected—quickly and accurately—into a common database for reporting and analysis. Scantron recognizes this challenge, and offers the tools necessary to make the data collection phase as straightforward and reliable as possible, while saving time and money otherwise spent on data entry personnel.

✓ **Reporting & Analysis**

Surveys are conducted for the response data. If you're like most survey professionals, you inevitably want to look at data from several angles. Being able to filter the data, then display it in a variety of clear and informative reports allows for more thorough analysis. Scantron understands that the more quickly you can put reports in the hands of an organization's influencers and decision makers, the more quickly change can be effected.

With Scantron, you can choose exactly the package of software, hardware, services and forms to give you a total survey solution. We provide you with powerful functionality, depth, and breadth—notable attributes in the survey industry.

Contact us today to find out how SurveyTracker Plus can help!

**Contact Us:**

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