"SURVEYS ARE DEAD" IS LAZY THINKING — HERE'S WHY THAT'S A PROBLEM

Authored by Ed Murphy; published June 20, 2025

You've probably seen the posts:

- "Surveys are dead."

- "Nobody wants to answer surveys anymore."

- "AI is the new voice of the customer."

Bold claims. Big likes. And mostly… **nonsense**

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Let's Be Clear. Surveys aren't dead. **Bad surveys are dead.** Lazy surveys. Bloated surveys. Generic, transactional, "check-the-box" surveys that were never built to provide insight in the first place.

But to lump all surveys into the grave because of poor design or overuse? That's not just short-sighted — it's dangerous if you care about truly understanding your customers.

Most People Yelling "Surveys Are Dead" Aren't Trained in Research

And it shows.

- They equate surveys with "voice of customer."

- They assume survey fatigue means surveys no longer work.

- They believe AI text analytics or social listening somehow replace structured, representative data.

These are not insight professionals. They're often technologists, marketers, or CX folks with a tool to sell or a POV to hype.

If you've ever:

- Balanced a sample

- Designed a conjoint

- Weighed data to remove non-response bias

- Run a longitudinal brand tracker

…then you know: **good surveys are still the backbone of real consumer understanding.**

Surveys Aren't the Problem. Shiny Object Syndrome Is.

There's a difference between evolving our methods and throwing out the fundamentals.

Yes, the game is changing:

- Text and video feedback are rising

- Sentiment analysis is improving

- Customers are leaving signals all over the place — unstructured, unsolicited, unfiltered

That's fantastic. And we should be using all of it.

But here's the truth that makes some people squirm: None of that replaces a well-designed, purpose-driven survey.

- You can't A/B test a concept idea with TikTok comments.

- You can't segment a market using call transcripts.

- You can't size demand curves or test pricing with chat logs.

Unstructured data is a goldmine — but structured surveys are still the blueprint.

And the data backs this up: According to the 2024 GreenBook GRIT Insights Practice Report, 82% of major organizations—including Fortune 500 companies—still rely on structured surveys as a primary method for segmentation, brand tracking, and concept testing. If surveys were truly 'dead,' the world's most successful companies wouldn't be investing in them year after year.

If Surveys Are Dead, Why Are Research Firms Still Thriving?

Let's get real: I'm not just defending surveys because I like a good Likert scale.

I've spent nearly two decades inside two of the most respected insight and experience firms in the world:

- **Material (via Strativity Group):** 9 years building a research department, using behavioral science and thoughtful survey design to transform businesses from the inside out.

- **Ipsos (via Synovate):** 16 years combining methodological rigor with real-world business application.

These weren't "legacy" firms clinging to outdated methods — they were, and still are, evolving the craft of insight. Innovating. Leading.

And they're not alone. Companies like Kantar and NielsenIQ are still driving the industry forward — blending structured surveys with neuro, behavioral, and AI-driven data to get to real understanding.

If surveys were really dead, these giants wouldn't be thriving. But they are — because what's dead isn't the method. It's the thoughtless, templated way some have been using it.

What Should Be Dead?

Let's call it out:

❌ Boring post-call surveys that ask "How did we do today?" and never do anything with the data.

❌ 40-question transactional surveys sent 10 minutes after every minor interaction.

❌ "DIY survey platforms" that pump out templated surveys with zero consideration for design, sampling, or analysis.

❌ NPS on everything, everywhere, all the time — with no context, no action, and no point.

Those should be dead. They were never alive to begin with. But they're not representative of what insightful survey design looks like.

What the Best Are Doing Right Now

If you think surveys are dead, you're not looking at how the best are doing it. Today's top insight teams are:

✅ Designing short, intentional surveys tied to real business questions

✅ Combining structured surveys with unstructured listening (reviews, social, call logs)

✅ Using advanced analytics to find meaning beyond scores

✅ Automating low-value feedback and doubling down on high-value insight

✅ Linking survey feedback to behavior and outcomes (not vanity dashboards)

Surveys are becoming smarter, faster, more adaptive, and more integrated. **This is not the death of surveys — it's a rebirth.**

The Real Fight Isn't Surveys vs. AI — It's Signal vs. Noise

We don't need to kill surveys. We need to kill bad data habits.

Here's the real question: Are we getting closer to the truth of what customers feel, want, and need — or are we just piling on more noise?

Surveys, when designed well, cut through the noise. They provide clarity. Comparability. Scale. Representativeness. Intent.

Use AI. Use social listening. Use every signal available. But don't throw out your compass because you bought a drone.

A Challenge to the "Surveys Are Dead" Crowd

If you're ready to bury surveys, answer this:

- How do you size markets?

- How do you track shifts in perception over time?

- How do you segment customers into needs-based profiles?

- How do you test concepts before launch?

- How do you measure causal relationships?

If your answer to all of that is "AI will figure it out," I've got bad news for you: That's not insight. That's guessing in a trench coat.

My Take

Surveys aren't dying. They're evolving.

The insight professionals who know how to design, analyze, and interpret them are more valuable than ever — especially in a world drowning in unsolicited noise.

So next time you see someone post "Surveys are dead," ask yourself:

👉 Do they know what they're talking about?

👉 Or are they just trying to sell you something shiny?

I'll take structured insight and a sharp research brain over AI-generated spaghetti any day.

Want to Talk About What Good Looks Like?

If you're tired of shallow metrics and noise disguised as insight, let's talk.

I help organizations design surveys that actually work — the kind that uncover truth, align teams, improve customer experience, and drive real business outcomes.

If you're ready to move beyond the buzzwords and back to strategic, actionable insight, schedule time to talk. Happy to show you how real customer experience research can unlock value and growth in your business.🟠

About the Author

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Ed has achieved a very successful career by building relationships and providing innovative solutions to meet clients' needs. With over thirty years as a global researcher, management consultant, and business leader, Ed brings his experience, expertise, and passion to every consulting assignment.

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ImprintCX is a modern marketing and customer experience services company that seamlessly combines insights, consulting and activation into one integrated offering. The company is powered by sophisticated analytics, deep human understanding and design thinking to help organizations develop and deploy retention and lifetime value strategies for their high impact customers. Collectively, the ImprintCX team has developed and lead hundreds of customer experience transformations for Fortune 500 companies such as Mercedes Benz, Honeywell, Pizza Hut and Walmart.com.