

# SOFTWARE

## SurveyDeck

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Recently, there has been an increasing need to distribute surveys quickly and efficiently, and for those surveys to be portable for use in the field. However, traditional paper-and-pencil survey methods can be cumbersome and, in many cases, may not be practical. This is where electronic survey systems have the edge. In particular, the use of a portable electronic-based system could lift the burden of traditional paper-based surveys and enable researchers to collect data in a way that was not possible in previous years. Research shows that mobile electronic surveys take 30% less time to fill in and reduce analysis time by 70%.

In this article, I review a product called SurveyDeck ([www.surveydeck.com](http://www.surveydeck.com)), an application that was developed to free researchers to collect data practically anywhere.

### Product Overview

SurveyDeck came to my attention while I was searching on my iPhone's App Store for human factors-related products. What drew me to SurveyDeck was its user-friendly features and its easy access from anywhere in the world. SurveyDeck is the brainchild of human factors-engineer Andrew Lilley of Human Factors Solutions ([www.hf.no](http://www.hf.no)), a Norwegian human factors consultancy. SurveyDeck made its debut

on March 24, 2010 as a flexible replacement to traditional paper-based surveys and forms. The company claims that any researcher can use the product and any respondent, even someone who does not use Apple products, can access and complete a survey with little effort (Figure 1).

SurveyDeck's highlighted features include the following:

- The ability to have multiple surveys in your pocket.
- The ability to store multiple responses.
- Offline completion of surveys with no Internet connection required.
- Syncing of surveys and answers at your convenience.
- Support for multiple question types.

Users of SurveyDeck have expressed how they enjoy the ability to take their surveys on the road without having to worry about using the phone carrier's 3G connection. Companies have used this survey system for a variety of tasks, including market research, job interviews, and traffic observation.

### System Requirements

SurveyDeck application version 1.2 runs on either an Apple iPhone or iPod Touch; at present, it is not available for any other smart phone or device. Although the iPhone app does run on the iPad, a

native, enhanced iPad version is being developed and should be available soon. The other system requirements needed refer to the survey creation system itself.

The survey creation and analysis tool, SurveyGizmo, is a Web application that requires an Internet connection to log on to the Web site to create the survey. A visual representation of the interaction between SurveyDeck and SurveyGizmo is shown in Figure 2.

I have used many electronic survey systems in the past and have found this one to be among the best.

When you sync, new surveys are transferred to SurveyDeck and new responses are transferred to the SurveyGizmo database (see Figure 3). For analysis, SurveyGizmo lets you create graphical



Figure 1. An example of a survey question that a participant might encounter.



Figure 2: Visual representation of how SurveyDeck works within the survey manager, SurveyGizmo.

reports, and you can also export the response data in a variety of formats.

#### Cost and Support

The cost associated with using SurveyDeck includes the price of an iPhone or iPod Touch as well as the software and monthly subscription costs. A single-application license for the Apple iPhone or iPad touch costs \$9.99. In addition, the accompanying SurveyGizmo online access can range from a free account to \$139 a month depending on other options and features that you may need. SurveyDeck users can use either the free account or \$19/month option without requiring the features that warrant a higher price, but, again, this depends on your needs. For a detailed description of the differences between account types, go to [www.surveygizmo.com/survey-features/](http://www.surveygizmo.com/survey-features/).



Figure 3: Example of the syncing function, which allows the survey responses that are collected to be uploaded into the main database.

The SurveyGizmo support system was impressive. When you sign up for an account, the company sends e-mails once a day for a week with a tutorial for different components you need to learn. In addition, there are blogs, e-mail support, how-to articles, and weekly Webinars, which are free, as well as phone and priority e-mail support for a small charge. These support options can be accessed on the [surveygizmo.com](http://surveygizmo.com) support page. Efficient, personal support for SurveyDeck is provided by Human Factors Solutions.

#### Summary

SurveyDeck was designed to make survey data collection simpler, faster, and more portable. I have used many electronic survey systems in the past, and I have found this one to be among the best. With its many features and capabilities, as well as support and low cost, SurveyDeck is highly recommended for those who would like to utilize electronic surveys to enhance their experiments.

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