



# **White***Paper*<sup>™</sup>

## **Enhancing Your Presentations with the OptionFinder<sup>®</sup> Audience Polling System**

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OptionFinder is a registered trademark of Option Technologies Interactive, LLC.  
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### ***Introduction***

This guide is for speakers who will be using the OptionFinder audience polling system to increase their level of interaction with audiences in their continuing education, training, or large meeting sessions. The OptionFinder System allows you to:

- ask questions of your audience and to immediately project a compilation of their responses on a large public screen
- tap your audience's feelings, opinions, beliefs and knowledge and then engage them in a discussion of the results
- gauge how well your message is being received, as well as stimulate discussions with your audience on the materials you are presenting.

As you prepare the materials for your presentation, please review this guide for helpful hints on effectively integrating the OptionFinder System into your session.

### ***Understanding the Technology***

The OptionFinder System consists of hand-held, wireless electronic keypads that are given to every participant in the audience. Participants respond to queries authored by speakers by pressing a number from 0 to 10. The OptionFinder Software calculates the response totals and instantly presents a response chart or graph for all to see on a large public screen.



This presentation technology provides three benefits to help you be a more effective presenter: anonymity of audience responses, instant feedback to the participants, and fun (the participants enjoy seeing their range of responses). By making creative use of these benefits, you can transform a traditional, often dull, didactic session into an enjoyable, lively, and effective learning experience.

An outstanding feature of the OptionFinder Software is the ability it gives you to adapt the technology to your individual presentation style:

- You can build your questions as part of your slides or presentation software and OptionFinder can display the results on a second screen (there is no need to enter the questions in OptionFinder)
- You can have your questions entered into OptionFinder prior to the meeting...with both questions and graphs of results shown through OptionFinder and independent of your presentation content
- Some questions can be pre-planned and entered into OptionFinder, while other questions can be asked "on-the-fly" as issues arise in the session
- All questions can be asked "on-the-fly"

## ***Designing Effective Questions***

Experience in question design has taught us:

1. The best questions often don't have a right or wrong answer, but illustrate the diversity of opinion that relates to your forthcoming remarks.
2. Simple questions are best. Avoid confusing questions with multiple correct answers (e.g., a choice of 1 & 2 but not 3) and questions with double negatives. A few relevant answers are the best way to avoid an overly busy graph.
3. Questions with multiple, legitimate and controversial answer choices are best for engaging your audience in discussion.
4. A few questions effectively discussed are better than a lot that are glossed over. If you are new to OptionFinder, start with just a few questions.
5. Don't ask a question and then ignore the results. It's better not to ask than to offend your audience by not paying attention to their responses.

Good planning for a session should include anticipating the possible answers you might get to each of your questions, and the steps you will take in response to those answers to help ensure good audience interaction.

### ***Question Timing***

When you ask questions and when you show the responses depends on what you are trying to achieve. The OptionFinder System allows you to:

- ask a question and immediately show the answer
- ask a series of questions and show the answers immediately after all the questions have been asked
- ask one or more questions and delay showing the answers until a later time or never show the answers to the audience (not recommended, unless you are gathering research or evaluation data and have secured the audience's permission to do so)

If the questions are independent of each other then using a question-answer-question-answer sequence usually works best. However, if the results from one question may influence the answers to a subsequent question, then using a question-question-answer-answer sequence is more effective.

There is research to support asking questions (at least) every 10 to 15 minutes. Doing so involves the participants more fully in the session and increases the amount of information that they retain. The interaction keeps the participants alert and focused on the content of the session, maintains their energy and interest, and increases their curiosity.

Base line information can be gathered at the beginning of a meeting and typically includes information that deals with such issues as: who they are (demographics), what they already know about the topic, how interested they are in the subject, what kinds of problems they are currently having and are capable of solving, and/or what difficulties they previously had understanding this session's material. Questions such as these raised at the beginning of the session can provide information that can help you fine tune what you have planned so you are maximally responsive to the group's needs and interests.

## Characteristics of Good Questions

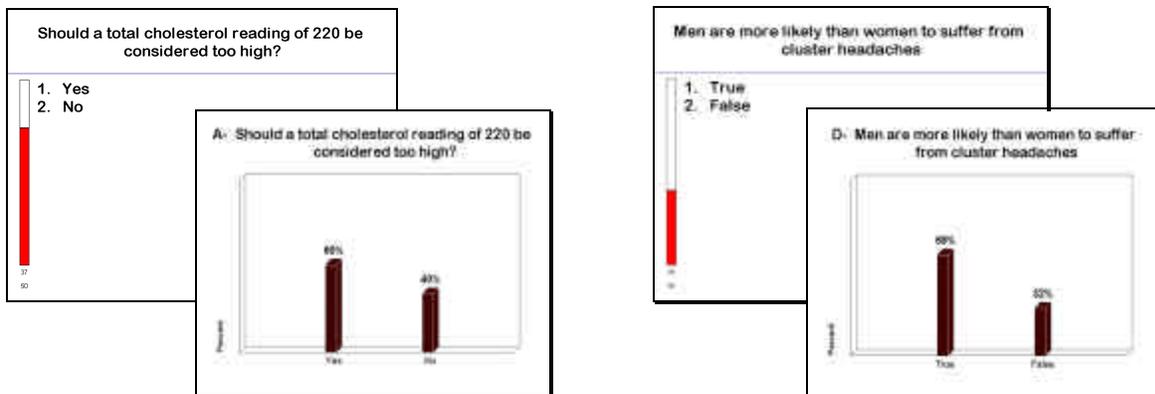
Consider the following when planning and reviewing questions you develop for your presentation. Your questions should have these characteristics:

- **Brief** – In general, questions should be brief so they can be grasped quickly. Many groups have a mild sense of impatience. They don't like reading long questions on a screen or having long questions read to them. Usually, questions should be limited to 1-2 sentences, although they may be linked to a problem or case presented in advance.
- **Worthy** – The questions and their response choices should be regarded by the participants as "real," as worthy of their time and attention. If participants consider questions to be obvious, superficial, or unimportant, they may become restless, disinterested or offended. Worse still, they may play with the answers rather than respond with what they really think.
- **Engaging/intriguing** – People like, and will give their attention to, questions that deal with subjects they consider important and/or interesting. The more that they want to know the correct answer to a question, or the opinions of their colleagues, the more seriously they will take the task and eagerly await the outcome.

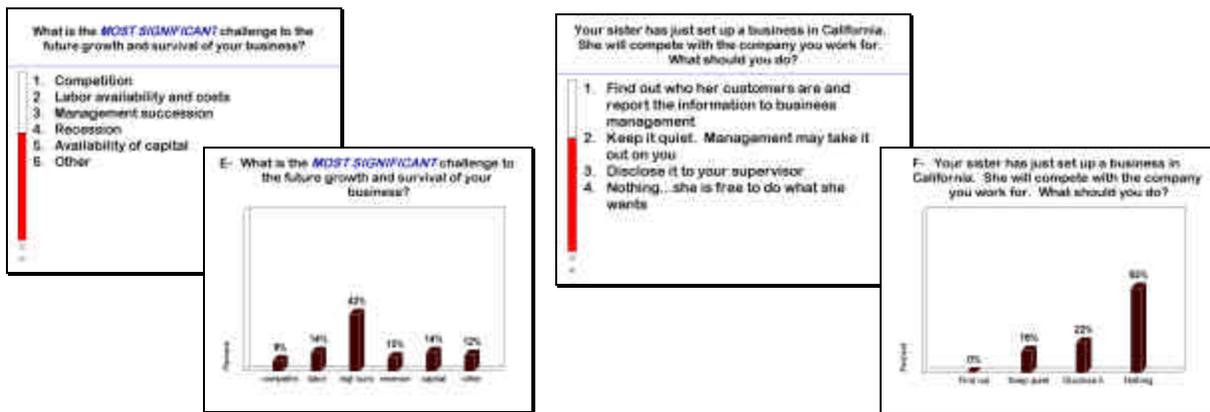
## Formatting the Questions

You can format your questions in a number of ways:

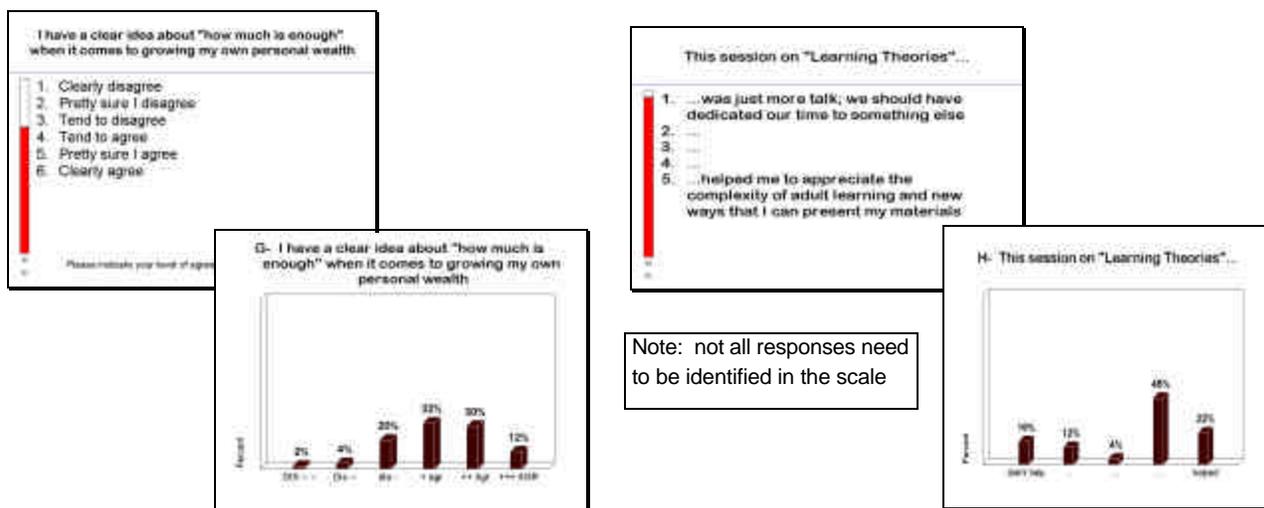
1. **Yes/no and true/false** – these are the most straightforward, two-response type questions. They are useful for quickly checking on a group's opinions or levels of knowledge in simple unambiguous areas. Examples are:



2. **Multiple choice (2-10 choices)** – Typically, such questions have a lead-in statement or question (called the stem) followed by multiple options from which each person selects a single choice. The choices might consist of a right answer and several wrong ones and/or a series of alternatives from which the participants can pick their preferred choice (e.g., most likely, most important). Ways to use the "series of alternatives" format include case studies in which the participants are asked to choose the best diagnosis or solution of the problem, or presentation of a perplexing dilemma or competing choices from which the participants are asked to select the one that they feel is most compelling. Including a question for which none of the responses is correct can have a strikingly positive impact on the energy of the group as they explain to each other and the presenter why none of the answers is correct. Examples of this format are:

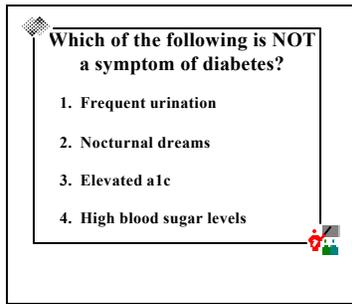


3. **Opinion-scale** – The opinion-scale format, as the name suggests, provides an alternative way to gather group members’ opinions. Such questions often take the form of a statement, with a request for each person’s level of agreement. The response choices are on a continuum in which one end of the scale represents one extreme, such as “clearly disagree” and the other end represents the other extreme, such as “clearly agree.” We have found that even-numbered point scales (e.g., 4, 6 or 8 points), where the participants can’t take a “neutral” position, provide a wider opportunity for discussion of the results. For ease of response and discussion, when using more than one opinion scale question in a session, be consistent in the placement of the “negative” opinion (usually on the left or top). With opinion questions, you are not seeking “correctness” but, rather, insight into the group to help to spark discussions or to shape your instructional efforts. Examples include:

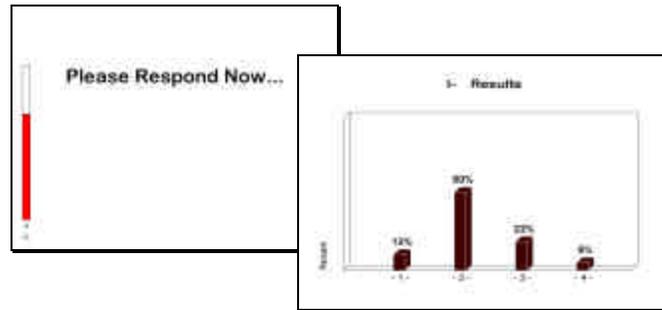


4. **Separation of Questions from OptionFinder System** - If your purpose for asking the questions is to stimulate discussion at that point in your presentation, but not to document the responses for use after the presentation, integration of your questions into your presentation slides or software may be the easiest and most productive. The operator of the OptionFinder System handles this with a special question format called “MaxKey.” In this format, the presenter’s question is projected on one screen in the same way as the rest of the presentation (e.g., a 35mm slide, an overhead transparency, or from a computer with presentation software). On the second screen, the OptionFinder Software asks the group to respond to the question and then shows the results as a bar chart with only numbers

corresponding to the response choices in the question as labels below the bars. An example is shown below:



**Slide Presentation Screen**



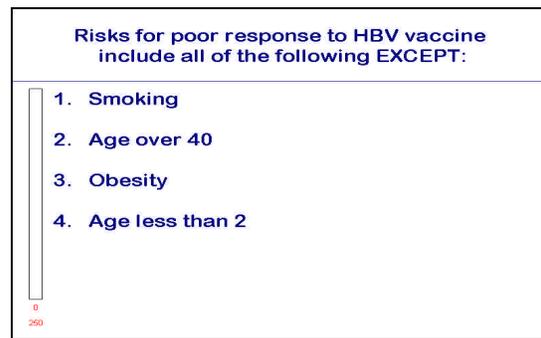
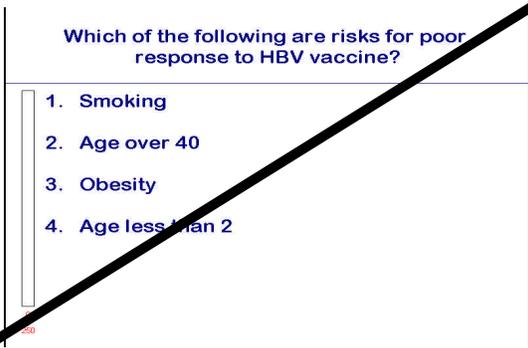
**OptionFinder Screens**

An additional benefit of the “MaxKey” question format is that at anytime during your presentation you can ask an impromptu question of your audience without advanced preparation. All that is required is for you to formulate the question or statement that you want the participants to consider and then tell them how to respond. For example, recently a presenter was running into the time allocated for lunch. The program chair was trying to get him to complete his presentation, so the group could break. To see if the participants wanted him to stop, he asked “Should I continue with the presentation or stop now, so we can go to lunch? Please press a 1 for continue and a 2 for stop now.” In less than 20 seconds, everyone saw that 77% of the participants wanted the speaker to continue with his presentation.

### **Preparing, Asking and Discussing Questions (some suggestions)**

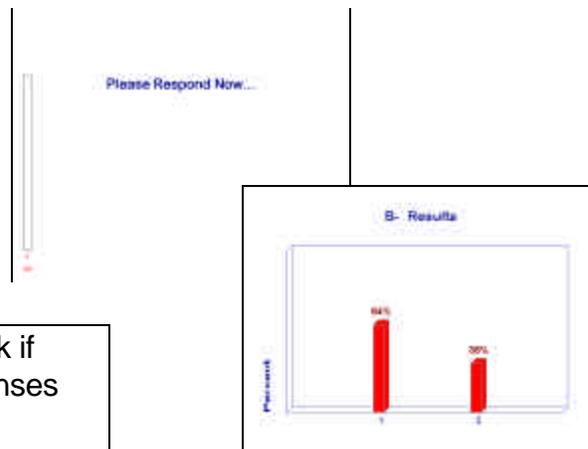
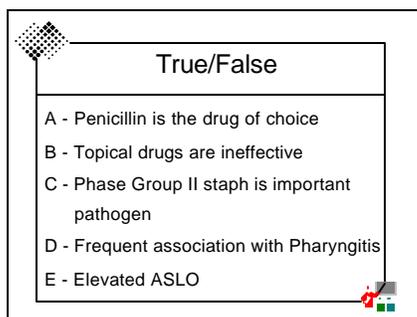
As you are preparing your presentation and the questions that you will ask, you should keep the following in mind:

- Question choices should be numbered (not lettered or bulleted). The response choices can begin with either “0” or “1” and continue up to “10”. However, unless there is a particular reason to begin the choices with “0,” the normal convention is to begin the numbering with “1”. Yes/no questions should follow the convention of “1” for Yes and “2” for No.
- In formulating your questions, you should keep in mind that the participants can only provide one response per question. Therefore, the question stem should not ask for “Which of the following are risks for...?” or “Which of the following organisms commonly cause...?” where the participant might want to respond with more than one of the choices. Instead, the question stem should read, “Risks include all of the following EXCEPT...” or “Which ONE of the following organisms is Most Likely the cause of....?”



Note: participants can only respond with one choice, so format on right is the correct approach

- If you are preparing the questions as part of the slide presentation and the OptionFinder System will be using the MaxKey mode on a second screen, it is possible for you to simply tell the audience how to respond to a particular slide where “1=Yes and 2=No” or “1=True and 2=False.” An example would be a series of statements presented on one slide where the stem or header simply says “True/False”. Here you would go down the series of statements and ask “Is the first (second, third, etc.) statement true or false?...Press 1 for true or 2 for false.” After the participants have responded, the results bar chart can be projected on the screen to show how many pressed 1 and how many pressed 2.

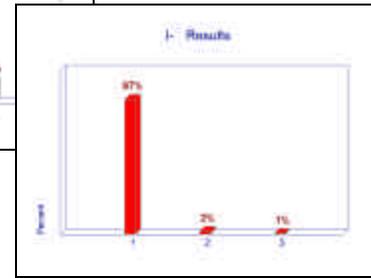
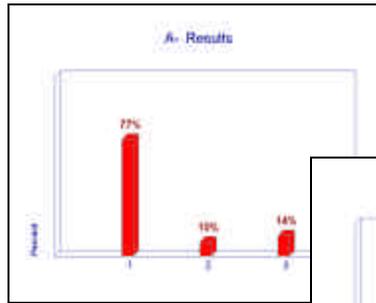


Note: Speaker uses slide to quickly ask if each of the items is true or false; responses are gathered in OptionFinder and then displayed as two bars

- Another approach that you may want to use is to (1) begin the presentation with a series of questions that relate to the content in your presentation, (2) show the answers after each question (but don't discuss the results), (3) make your presentation, and finally (4) ask the same questions again to see what learning occurred. After the question has been asked the second time, the OptionFinder operator can show the results of the second asking of the question and toggle to the results of the first asking for comparison. In a recent event in which this was done, a 20% shift to better understanding of the content was noted across the entire set of questions.

Select the best statement with regard to HIV testing of pregnant women

- 1 - All pregnant women should be counselled and offered HIV testing
- 2 - Testing of all pregnant women is mandated by law
- 3 - Testing should be discussed only when there are obvious HIV risk factors



Note: question in slide on left was asked and answered in the “A-Results” and then after the presentation re-asked and answered in the “I-Results”. Proportion of correct responses increased by 20 percentages points.

- If demographic data has been collected at the beginning of the meeting, at any time you can ask the OptionFinder operator to slice the results based on a particular characteristic (e.g., role, age, etc.)
- The time it takes for the participants to answer a question depends on a number of factors: complexity of the question stem and the response choices; number of participants in the audience; nature of the question (facts vs opinions, for example). In general, most questions can be asked and answered by the participants in 20 to 30 seconds. Obviously, more complex questions (either by length or content) may take longer because of the amount of time it takes to read, comprehend, consider the options, and then make a choice.
- Regardless of the time it takes, it will seem to take more time to the speaker than to the participants, primarily because the participants are actively considering the question and their own responses. Time is also needed for the speaker to engage the participants in a discussion of the answers. The amount will vary considerably by speaker, by the content of the questions, and other factors. In general, it is best to consider allowing an average of 2 minutes for each question that is being asked, and more if the answers raise significant issues that are relevant to the presentation.
- Finally, while it may seem unnecessary to say, you should REMEMBER to ask the questions that you have prepared (for example, you might want to leave an empty slide in your presentation in the place where an OptionFinder question is supposed to be asked).

### ***Looking Forward to Working With You***

Option Technologies welcomes the opportunity to work with you to help make your presentation a success. The OptionFinder consultants are trained to assist you throughout your presentation. They can help you take advantage of any of the question formats described above. However, if you have a preferred way of asking questions that is not discussed in this guide, you may want to contact your OptionFinder consultants or the customer support staff at Option Technologies to see if the software can accommodate your preference.