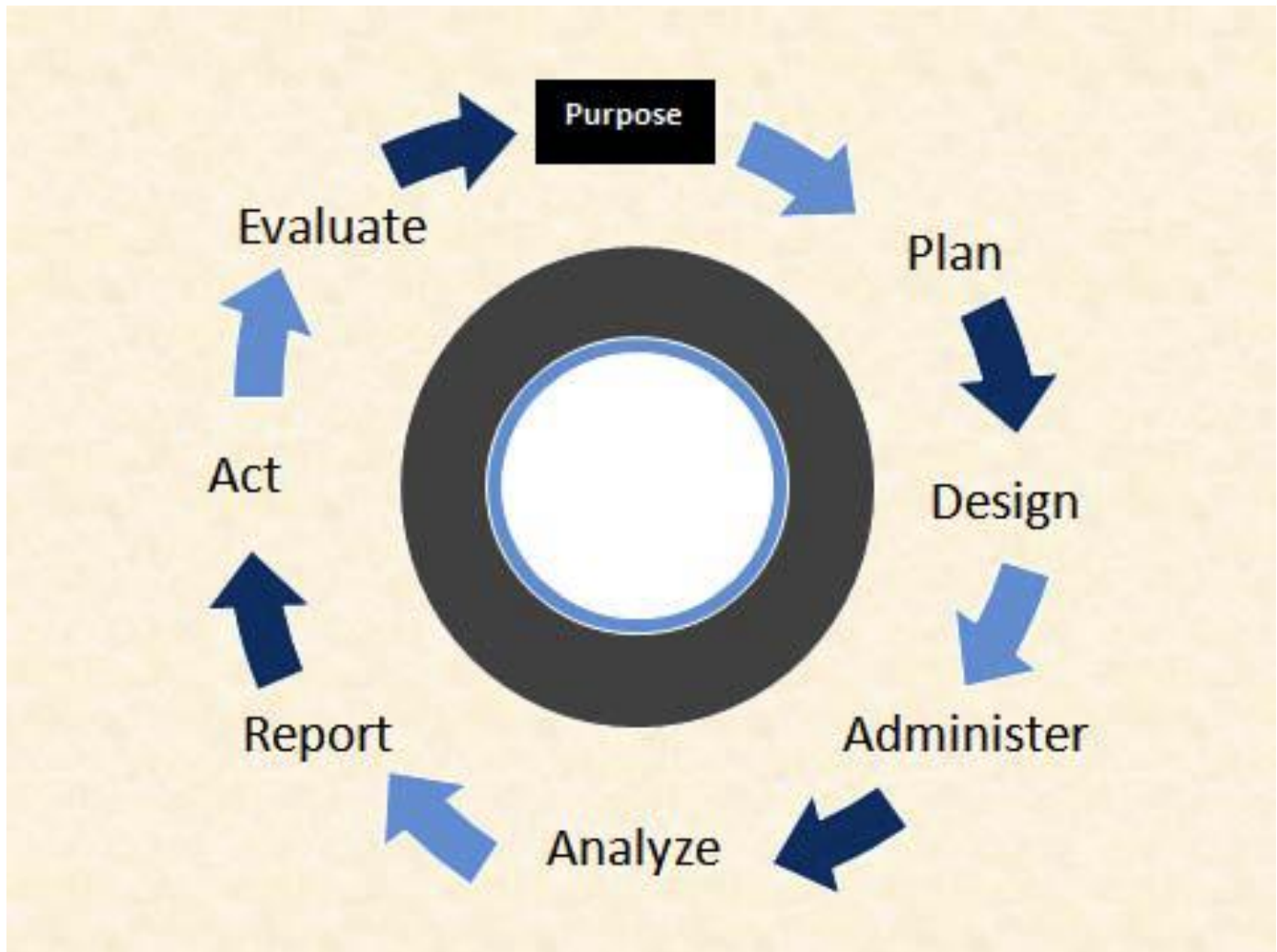


6 How to Increase Your Survey's Effectiveness

Approaching your survey as a ***process*** rather than as a task or an event can make the difference between success and failure. By “success” I mean you obtain actionable information that enables you to address the purpose of the survey effectively.

Pictured below are the major elements of the survey process, followed by a brief explanation of each one.



Purpose: Develop a clear statement of the issue to be addressed or the question to be answered. Use this statement as the touchstone for every decision you make about the survey.

Plan: Think through the entire survey process. A survey plan is like the foundation for a house: if it is missing or flawed, the end result will not be what you expected.

Design: Develop the survey instrument. The quality of the questions will determine the usefulness of the results.

Administer: Manage the logistics of distributing the survey and receiving the results. Make it as easy as possible for people to participate.

Analyze: Discover what your respondents had to say. Basic data analysis techniques often are all that's required to get the information you need.

Report: Share what you have learned with the appropriate stakeholders. Tell them only what they need to know, not everything you know, in a format and context they understand.

Act: Take the appropriate actions based on the results. In both the short-term and the long-term, let respondents know what has changed as a result of their input.

Evaluate: Re-visit the purpose of the survey and determine whether the results allow you to address it fully. If not, review your survey process and identify what you must do differently to ensure it is successful the next time.

Following the above process will dramatically increase the effectiveness of your surveys. If you're going to devote the resources to conducting a survey, why not ensure you can obtain data you can use?

More about Dr. Pat Lynch

Pat Lynch, Ph.D. enables first responders to elevate the level of public safety in their communities and to keep their personnel safe. She is the primary author of *Every Fire-Rescue Professional is a Leader: A Practical Guide to Individual, Team, and Organization Development*.