

*The OnlineOpinion System:
Different From Other
Feedback Techniques*



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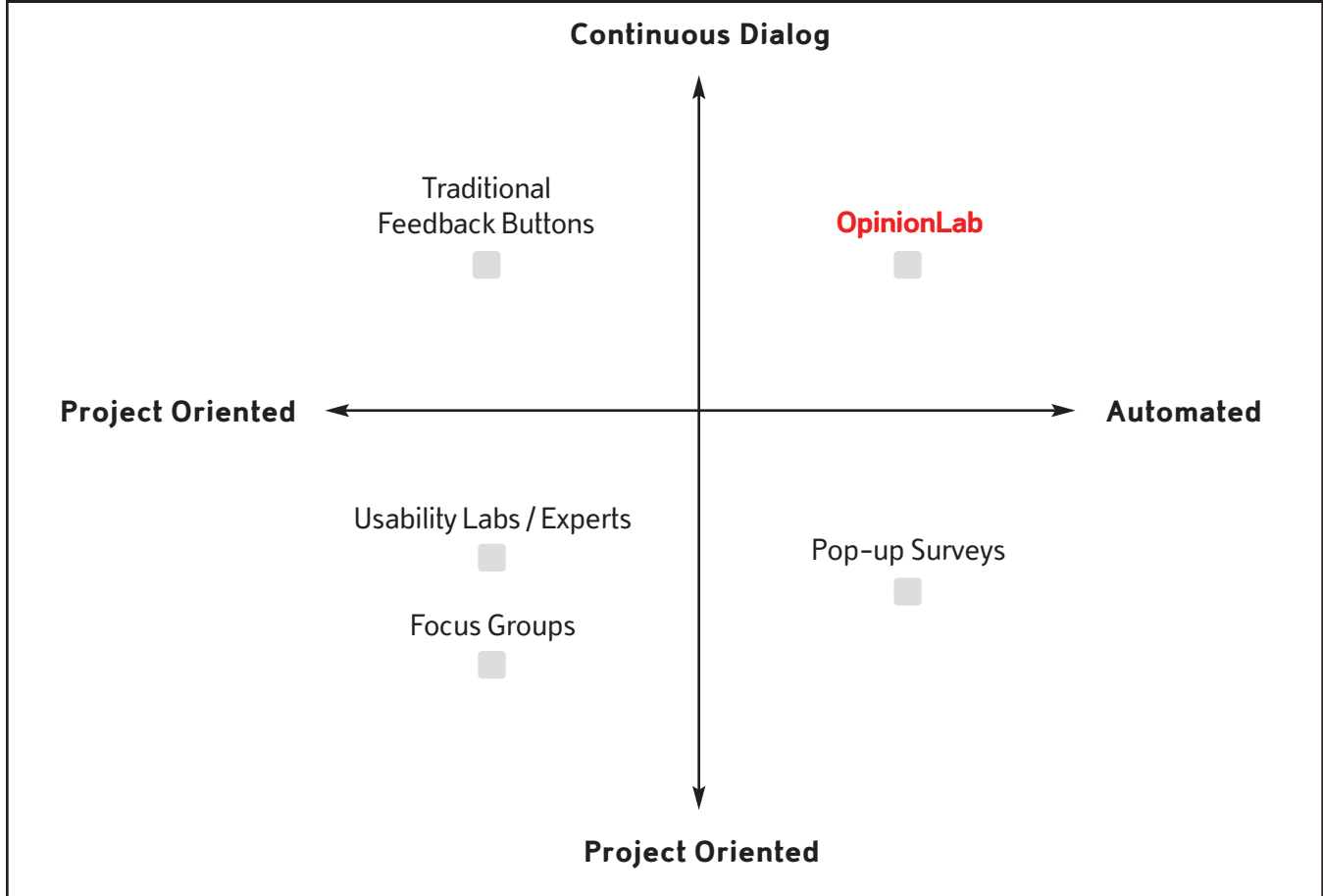
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USER FEEDBACK TECHNIQUES



ONLINEOPINION: CONTINUOUS & AUTOMATED

The OnlineOpinion system provides a service that is always “on” (i.e. continuous and automated) and is unique from other feedback methodologies because:

- The technique meets user requirements for providing feedback. We asked Web users how they wish to dialogue with websites. They told us they want to state their opinions quickly, easily, when they wish, on topics important to them and in their own words. The OnlineOpinion data collection technique meets all these criteria.
- The methodology is available from any Web page, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year for any user who wishes to submit an opinion. Thus, Web users can submit feedback whenever it’s important to them and Web managers can benchmark feedback over time.
- The data collection system is completely voluntary. There are no incentives to provide feedback, and yet, it is not unusual for thousands of users to rate a website per day with no significant drop-off in quantity over time.
- The feedback is contextual, and therefore, actionable. The data collection technique automatically links the user’s opinion to the Web page as well as to the user’s path through the website. OpinionLab’s suite of analysis tools enables the Web professional to identify poorly rated pages and them based on the user’s feedback.
- The technique collects a balance of quantitative and qualitative feedback. Cumbersome techniques tend to collect strongly negative opinions. Conversely, simple, low-burden techniques, like the OnlineOpinion system, collect a representative balance of positive and negative opinions.

TRADITIONAL FEEDBACK BUTTONS: CONTINUOUS & PEOPLE-BASED

One of the most common methods to solicit feedback on a website is to use a feedback link. Feedback links are typically continuously available, but are people intensive, since most homegrown systems do not have automated analysis tools. While this technique is easy to implement, unfortunately it is ineffective for a number of reasons:

- A static feedback link violates many of the best practices on how to collect feedback. For example, a typical feedback link requires the user to leave the page they are visiting. To prove this point, OpinionLab audited the Web's 50 most trafficked websites and learned that 83% of them directed the visitor to a separate feedback page, thereby distracting the user from his/her primary purpose, such as shopping reading, discussing, etc. (To learn more, read our white paper, *The 50 Most Trafficked Websites Need to Improve Their Listening Skills*.)
- Feedback links slash the quantity of opinions collected, when compared to the OnlineOpinion system's technique, by as much as 25 times. One OpinionLab client went from collecting 1,000 ratings and 20 comments using "O" to 40 ratings and 0 comments using a static feedback link.

USABILITY LABS AND FOCUS GROUPS: PROJECT ORIENTED & PEOPLE-BASED

Usability labs and focus groups are excellent techniques to exhaustively address a particular research question. However, there are many drawbacks related to lab-based studies and focus groups:

- A lab study or a focus group typically recruits and pays a panel of participants to represent real website users. This may cause audience selection issues.
- Furthermore, the panel is often asked to react to artificially created scenarios as if the scenarios were real. Conversely, the OnlineOpinion system collects real feedback from real users in real-time.
- Labs and focus groups require significant set-up time, which means the feedback they collect is often untimely.
- Lab-based and focus group research may have an observer bias because of the need for qualitative interpretation.
- Lastly, usability labs and focus groups are expensive relative to the OnlineOpinion system. Whereas our subscribers have told us a single lab-based project or focus group cost ~\$10,000, OpinionLab provides feedback for moderately trafficked websites across all pages of its website for an entire year for ~\$100.

POP-UP SURVEYS: PROJECT ORIENTED & AUTOMATED

Pop-up surveys can typically be implemented automatically using third-party software to run for a defined period of time. The advantage of pop-up surveys is that they are very good at collecting data for questions a website wishes to pose. However, the downsides of pop-up surveys are many:

- The typical pop-up survey violates many customer requirements in terms of soliciting feedback. For example, many pop-up surveys ask for personal information. We've learned that users want to provide feedback anonymously.
- Pop-up surveys typically query only every n^{th} user, and therefore, there may be audience selection issues. Adding to this bias, often survey participants are paid incentives to complete lengthy surveys.
- Pop-up surveys ask what the website researcher wants to ask, which doesn't necessarily equate to the information the user wishes to provide.
- Pop-up surveys capture snapshots in time and therefore are not ideally suited to monitor customer satisfaction continuously, especially on a page-by-page (or section-by-section) basis.
- Most pop-up surveys ask site-wide questions and are evaluative in nature. OpinionLab's system is page-based, and therefore, its data is diagnostic.