

Keypad Polling

What it is

Keypad polling is an electronic polling technology that allows participants at various public meetings or other events to provide input on topics that a hosting agency wants feedback on. Questions are presented in a survey format to an audience (usually a large one) via an electronic projector or through the Internet. The audience members press the numbers or letters on their keypad that correspond with their personal opinions. Some technologies allow cell phones to take the place of the keypads so that participants can provide more detailed and individualized responses. The data is collected and analyzed immediately, and is usually displayed before the audience in real time (although this is optional – an agency may elect to keep the responses private and for their own research).

TurningPoint Technologies is just one of many companies that offer complete packages for keypad polling that include keypads for participants and software that can collect, analyze, and display response data almost instantaneously.



Why it Works

Demonstrating how an agency's program or a particular topic an agency wants to address affects the lives of real people provides a human element that can generate interest in or sympathy with a cause. Used at a local or even regional scale, some of the people sharing their stories may be recognizable, which allows viewers to understand a particular agency action on a personal level. At any given moment, there may be myriad agencies operating in a variety of capacities within a community, so it is important to find ways to stand out in the crowd. By providing compelling, relatable, personal stories,

an agency can more effectively communicate the gravity of an issue and make its causes and goals seem more real.

When to Use It

An agency should utilize keypad polling when its goal is to obtain extremely accurate and honest feedback from a large audience, especially if the topic or issue begs questions that are controversial (and therefore best answered privately). Additionally, keypad polling is an excellent way to show the audience what everyone else is thinking. As such, it can be used as a strategy for demonstrating a consensus (or lack thereof) about a subject.

Audience

There is almost no limit to who can participate in keypad polling because it is a relatively simple technology. It can be used with children in schools or adult residents at community meetings. It can also be adapted to accommodate people with Limited English Proficiency (LEP). However, it may be difficult for those with visual impairments or low literacy levels to participate.

Examples

[Enhancement of public meetings in cities across California](#)

[Input on various Metropolitan Area Planning Council projects; Boston, MA metro area](#)

Resources

[Report on keypad polling by Center for Advances in Public Engagement](#)

[Guide to Instant Polling Technology](#)

Estimated Level of Effort

Presuming that a meeting has already been coordinated and the technology is on hand, there is very little effort associated with keypad polling. A competent staff person may need to set up the software in advance and integrate questions into a presentation. Other than that, all an agency needs to do is distribute the keypads to participants and ask for input.

Cost Considerations

Keypad polling may be a significant financial investment. If an agency plans to use the technology often or on a consistent basis at meetings and other events, a full purchase of a package should be considered. Various companies offer differing products and packages, but an agency should expect to spend at least \$1,000 and perhaps up to \$3,000 on the technology. However, if an agency is anticipating only using keypad polling at a single event or very infrequently, much cheaper rental options are available that may cost anywhere from \$100 to \$500.