Does the Timing of Invitation Emails Matter When Surveying School Counselors?

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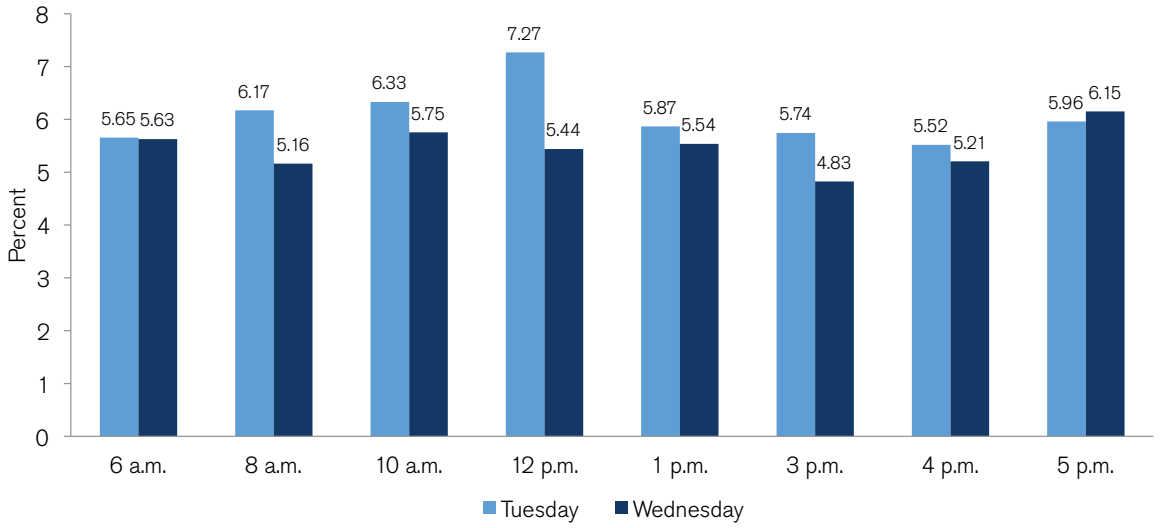
Response Rate by Time and Day



Does the timing of invitation emails matter? That is, will higher or lower response rates be achieved by sending messages at a particular time of day or day of the week? Previous research findings on the timing of invitations have been mixed.[1]

We investigated the timing of invitation emails in a survey of school counselors. Results showed that during regular business hours, timing does not matter for them. As shown in the figure, counselors are likely to respond at comparable rates irrespective of time of day.

Response rates across times of day varied little on both Tuesday and Wednesday. Counselors receiving invitations on Wednesday responded at a slightly lower rate, on average, but this could also have been because they had only three days to respond, whereas the Tuesday invitees had four.

Even the most "extreme" within-day contrast, of noon Tuesday (7.3%) vs. four p.m. Tuesday (5.5%) was not significant in a statistical or practical sense.

Our study was based on a sample of K–12 school counselors. Although counselors from across the country were included, the sample is not necessarily representative of counselors nationwide. The sample was sorted by time zone, such that the times in the figure above were the *actual times at which the emails were received*. A total of 10,000 invitation emails were sent per day. These were distributed equally across the eight different time options. ■

[1] Sauermann H. & Roach M. (2013). Increasing Web survey response rates in innovation research: An experimental study of static and dynamic contact design features. *Research Policy, 42*, 273–286.

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