Guidelines for Ethical Concept Testing

Evaluate the ethics of a concept test by asking these questions. If you answer yes to any, consider revisiting and revising that aspect of your test.

Learn more at ideo.to/ethicaltesting

IDEO

Responsibility

Protect people's current and future interests

QUESTIONS

Consider the emotional risk of the concept and its industry (especially if the test is in a sensitive industry like healthcare)

- Could this test communicate a false promise?

- Could this test cause confusion, and as a result, cause the user emotional harm?

Consider the concept's potential adverse impacts

- Could the way the concept is presented lead people to believe that a better, alternative solution already exists?

- Could the way the concept is presented cause people to cancel or sell their existing solutions?

TIPS

If diverting people from the initial test platform, get their consent first

If you plan to follow up with people via an external platform (e.g. by having people sign up for a newsletter), be sure to get their consent by adding a prominent disclaimer, making it clear that they are and will continue to be interacting with a test. Double check the main platform's terms of use to ensure that moving to a secondary platform is legal.

Respect

Honor participants' limits
and value their comfort

Consider the impact on your targeted audience

• Could this test make a specific type of user feel uncomfortable?

• Could specific targeting make this test appear to violate people's privacy?

Consider keeping collected personal data to a minimum

• Does this test collect more data than you need to validate a hypothesis?

• Does this test collect people's personal data without explicitly asking?

• Does this test prevent people from getting in touch and providing you with feedback?

Read up on all applicable false advertising and privacy policies

Be sure to follow any relevant guidelines—review any online platform policies and your local false advertising and privacy laws.

Provide an easy way for people to get in touch

If a person is interested in learning more, being kept up-to-date, or has a question, give them the opportunity to stay informed and reach out.

Honesty

Be truthful and timely with communication

Consider whether what you're promising is technically feasible

- Could this test set unrealistic expectations about what the concept could be when it's fully developed?

Consider whether the development stage of the concept is clearly communicated

- Could this test mislead people into thinking that the offering is already in the market?

- Could the way the concept is presented leave people unclear about the test's purpose?

- Could this test mislead people about the concept's development timeline?

TIPS

Ensure any concept testing assets accurately reflect the development stage of the concept

If your concept is at an early stage, consider visualizing it with illustrations instead of high-quality renderings.

Find the right place to explicitly state the concept test's goal

It's essential to be transparent with people about the purpose of your test. If applicable, state that your test is purely for research purposes in an about or bio section.