



## **“Yes” or “No” Is Not Enough**

By Linda Rink, President, RINK Consulting. September 2024

Yes or no? True or false? How often are you asked to choose one or the other as your answer? But if done thoughtfully, making a decision usually entails considering more than just two options. Unfortunately, in the rush to bring closure to an issue, we often fail to identify and evaluate all of them.

*“Too often, decisions are presented as a toggle switch where the choice is “on” or “off,” says [Eric J. McNulty, writing for PwC network’s Strategy+business newsletter](#). He urges decision-makers to hold out and probe for more information, and then reframe the question. “It’s critical for executives to overcome this cognitive tendency to quickly make insufficiently informed binary choices.”*

Having the right information, complete enough to understand all available options, is the way to bypass defaulting to binary “yes” or “no” decisions.

**One very useful source of nuanced information for decision-making is primary research.**

- **In-depth interviews and focus groups** are designed to uncover deeper understandings of perceptions, motivations and opinions that go well beyond binary answers. It is the responsibility of the interviewer to probe for more complete context and rationales.
- **In the case of surveys**, questionnaires should be crafted with care. Too often, menu options are limited and/or do not include a range of possible answers beyond yes or no. Menu choices should cover *all* reasonable possibilities. And although it may seem like a cop-out, including a response option such as “Don’t know” or “Need more information to answer” is legitimate, as it can reflect the respondent’s mindset more accurately.  
**Forcing someone into an answer box they are not comfortable with does not yield valid data.**

*“Before you decide, check how the question is framed to ensure you have all the information you need and have considered all your options,” advises McNulty.*

**In other words, a simple “yes” or “no” answer is rarely that simple.**

*Need help framing your questions? Contact me at [lrink@LindaRink.com](mailto:lrink@LindaRink.com).*



© Rink Consulting 2024