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Discuss the impact that biased or leading questions may have on an analysis. Create one non-biased interview question and one biased or leading question. Pose each of those questions to five people. What kind of responses did you get? Were they what you expected?

For one non-biased interview question, I e-mailed the following to ten people: "If hardware requirements, cost, and learning curve were irrelevant, what operating system would you prefer to run for personal or business use?"

I was surprised to find that two of the respondents said that I had removed any possible criteria to make a sound decision, and that without hardware, cost, and learning considerations, there was nothing to distinguish operating systems from one another. This left one respondent fumbling to find a consideration I had missed, and chose "software support," which led him decide on Microsoft Windows as the only viable option. My personal experiences with Red Hat Linux, however, assure me that the case could be made that both Microsoft and Linux have significant software support; therefore, personal experience was very important in making a decision.

For one biased or leading question, I forwarded the following variation of the non-biased question to ten other people, "If hardware requirements, cost, and learning curve were irrelevant, would use prefer to use Windows, Macintosh, or the open-source Ubuntu operating system for your personal or business use?" The goal was to falsely limit the number of choices the respondents had, and to show a bias toward the "open-source" option.

While I did receive three votes for "Linux," not "Ubuntu" specifically, compared to one vote for Linux in the non-biased question, I again found people ignored the part of

the question rendering three criteria irrelevant, and instead did choose one OS over the other based on cost or learning curve.

In retrospect, I wish I had attempted a similar question, but using web-browsers instead. The problem with asking questions about operating systems, I found, was that most people are only familiar with the OS they have been working with their whole life. As a result, Windows users chose Windows, Macintosh chose Mac OS, and no one knew enough about any open-source OS to feel comfortable choosing Linux or Ubuntu, ignoring my caveat that "learning curve" was irrelevant.

I've learned from this exercise to leave questions more open-ended. My own failure to recognize considerations outside of the ones I could think up myself allowed respondents to try and outthink me, as when one responded argued that the whole question was silly and that operating systems themselves were irrelevant in a world where all applications are online and platform-independent. I also learned that respondents are limited by what they have experience with themselves, and should not offer suggestions unless I am willing to take the time to outline the advantages and disadvantages of each option; otherwise, respondents are only capable of answering to the best of their own knowledge.