

Quirk's

January 1998

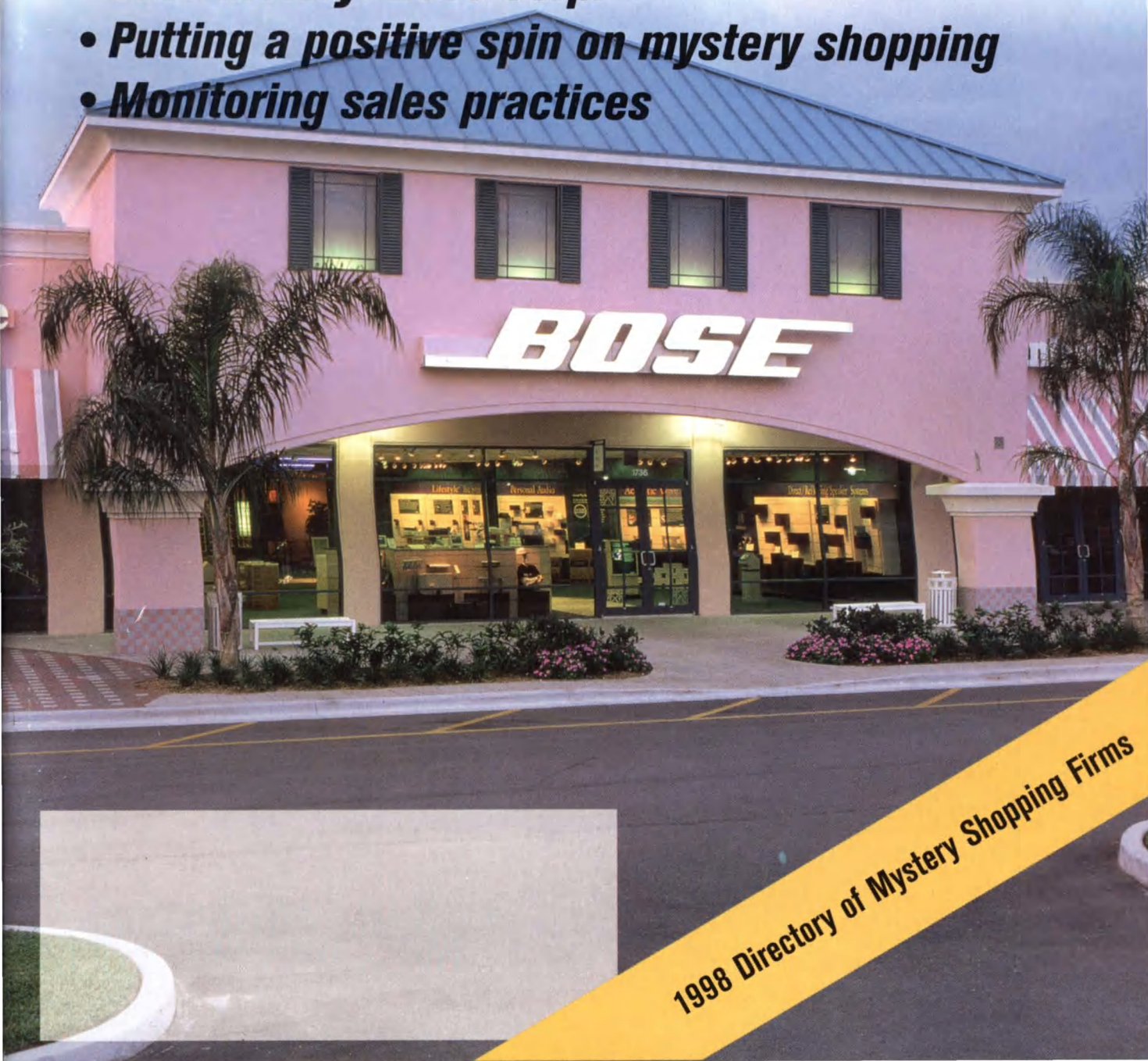
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Mystery shopping issue

- **Case history: Bose Corp.**
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An ongoing mystery shopping program helps Bose listen to the voice of its customers. Photo courtesy of Bose Corporation, Framingham, Mass.

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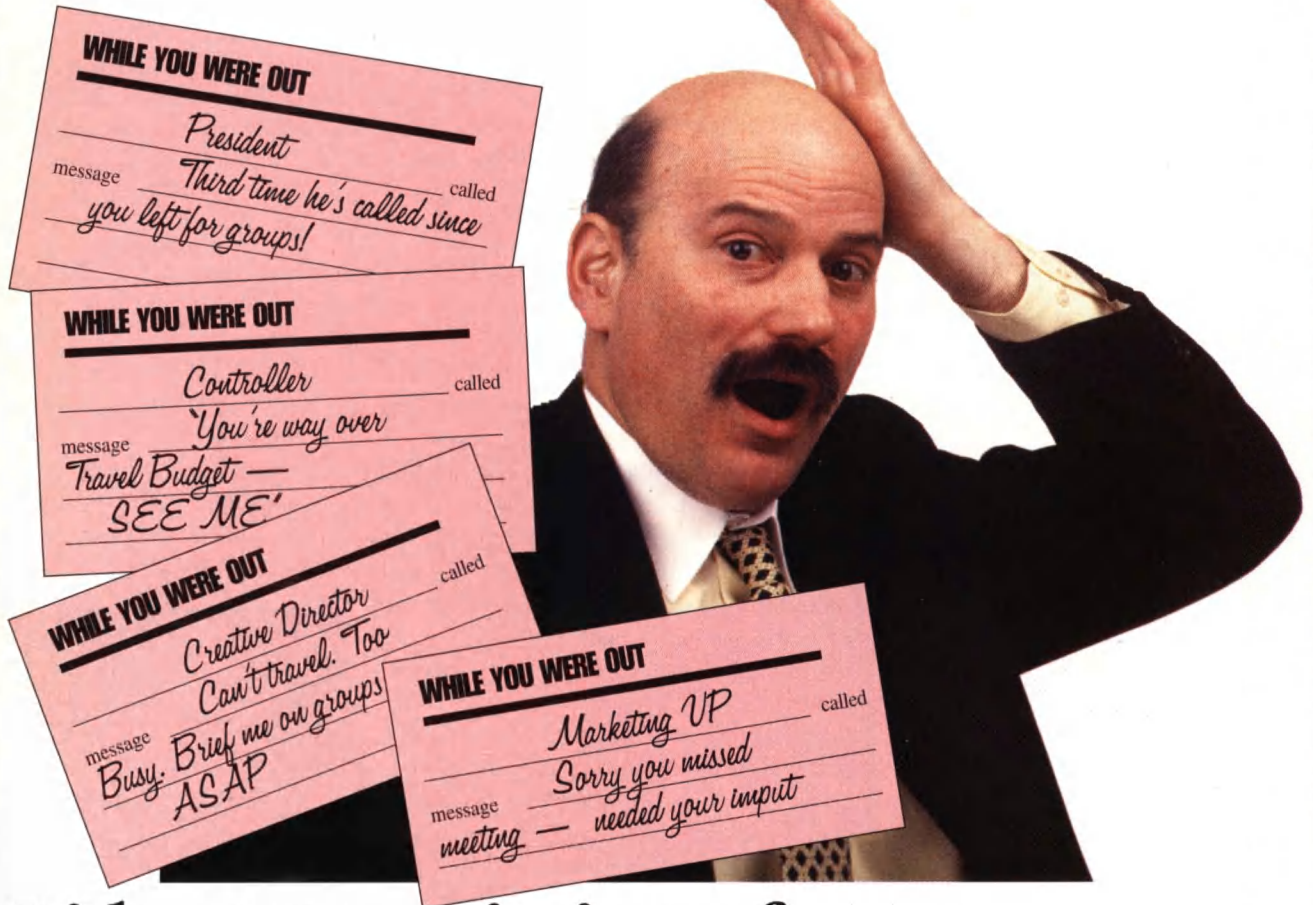
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Holiday season survey found status quo

More than half (58 percent) of consumers surveyed prior to the holiday season said that they expected to spend about the same amount of money as they did in 1996 on holiday purchases. Twelve percent said they expected to spend more than they did in 1996, while slightly more than one-quarter (26 percent) anticipated spending less. As in previous years, the majority of consumers (75 percent) planned to head off to the discount department stores to purchase their holiday gifts. These are some of the major findings cited in the fourth annual International Mass Retail Association (IMRA) Gallup survey, sponsored by Visa USA.

According to the "1997 IMRA Holiday Shopping Study," the amount consumers planned to spend on gifts on average in 1997 was \$813 per family, compared to the 1996 average of \$806. The product category most frequently identified by consumers for their increased spending was casual clothes, with toy buying remaining at the same rate as 1996. Continuing a trend from 1996, large household items, computer hardware, home furnishings, hardware and small household/kitchen appliances were the product areas where respondents reported the biggest anticipated decline in spending.

Three-fourths (75 percent) of all consumers surveyed expected to make their Christmas purchases at the discount department stores, continuing a steady trend since 1994. Only 49 percent of shoppers planned to shop at department stores, reporting a decrease of 6 percent from 1996, and only 23 percent of the respondents planned to make purchases from non-store retailers, a decrease of 2 percent from 1996. On the other hand, 43 percent of consumers planned to shop at category-dominant stores—an increase of 3 percent over 1996.

In a poll of its retail members, IMRA listed some of the hot toy prod-

ucts to be purchased during the 1997 holiday season as Interactive Barney, Sing and Snore Ernie, Holiday Barbie, Hot Wheels, Star Wars Collectibles and Sesame Street products, to name a

few. In the apparel categories, consumers were expected to purchase blazers, jerseys, blouses, sweaters and polar fleece jackets. Jewelry, power tools, bath sets, ice cream makers,

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What is the most cost-efficient way to communicate with business decision-makers?

Personal sales calls are the most expensive way for a business-to-business firm to communicate with customers and prospects. According to a Penton Research Services analysis of cost figures for various business marketing tools, the average cost per contact ranges from a low of \$0.32 for an ad placed in a specialized business publication to \$277.00 for an industrial sales call, each in-person visit costing over 800 times more than a specialized business publication contact. Penton Research Services, Cleveland, is the research arm of Penton Publishing, a business media company.

The average cost per contact for other marketing tools: trade shows, \$162.00; telemarketing, \$31.16; business letters, \$13.60; direct mail, \$1.68; and the Internet, \$0.98.

"Business marketers need to keep in mind how costs escalate as communication becomes more personal and personnel-intensive," says Ken Long, director of Penton Research Services. "Business publication advertising can boost the effectiveness of more expensive marketing tools by helping pre-sell prospects and keep current customers sold."

Research shows that sales reps at fast-growing firms recognize the role that advertising plays in their success. A study conducted by Gordon & Associates found that 75 percent of the salespeople at companies with a big increase in sales over the last year feel that advertising supports their selling efforts, compared to just 40 percent of the reps at companies with a big decrease in sales.

Penton Research Services compiled cost figures from a variety of sources, including Data & Strategies Group (industrial sales calls), Exhibit Surveys (trade shows), The Business Marketing Notepad (telemarketing), Dartnell (business letters), and Alpert O'Neil Tigre & Company (direct mail). Internet cost per contact was estimated by dividing the average cost per viewer for a banner linked to a target ad/Web site, calculated by Focalink Communications, by 4 percent, the average percent who click on a banner the first time they are exposed to it, according to a DoubleClick/KRC Research & Consulting study. Penton Research Services computed the cost per contact for specialized business publications by dividing the page rate for a six-time, four-color insertion in 25 Penton magazines by the estimated number of individuals reached by the average one-page, four-color ad.

These and other research findings are outlined in a series of 80+ PRO (Penton Research Overview) Reports. For more information call Penton Research Services at 800-736-8660, E-mail: research@penton.com, or visit the company's Web site <http://www.penton.com/corp/research>.



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Catapult launches new survey tool

Catapult Systems Corp., Austin, Texas, has introduced Inquisite, a survey tool that allows users to create electronic surveys and distribute them via the Internet, E-mail, corporate network or reply-by-mail diskette. When a survey is complete, responses are automatically collected and inserted into an open relational database, allowing users to analyze the results using built-in statistical and drill-down reports. The program helps beginning users develop new questionnaires with a built-in survey wizard, pre-defined survey templates and a variety of sample questions and surveys. Advanced users can develop surveys using skip logic, branching, and data validation features. For more information call Sandy Dennison at

512-328-8181 or visit the company's Web site at <http://www.launch.com>.

New features for TimeTrends

A Forecast Warehouse Module has been added to TimeTrends, a forecasting system for Windows, by ALT-C Systems, Inc., Montreal. Geared to companies moving towards an Open Data Systems standard, as well as those seeking Year 2000 compliance in their forecast application, the Forecast Warehouse Module provides an ODBC-compliant, Internet-enabled data storage and administration environment. Utilizing 32-bit code written in Visual C++, this multi-user capable module utilizes the MS-Access (.MDB) data format as the database.

The forecasting database can be created electronically by querying any

ODBC-compliant corporate or external database, whether it be an enterprise system (ERP), MRP system, data warehouse or other, using database environments such as Oracle,

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MYSTERY SHOPPING CONFERENCE: The first national conference of mystery shopping providers will be held February 20-21 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel - Orlando International Airport, Orlando, Fla. Among other activities, attendees will hear proposals by the Marketing Research Association and the American Marketing Association for developing an association or special interest group specifically for mystery shopping providers and discuss critical issues facing the industry. Reservations are needed by January 31. For more information call Mark Michelson at 770-955-5400 or Mike Bare at 703-591-9870.

CLARITAS CONFERENCE: Claritas Inc., Arlington, Va., will hold its annual Precision Marketing Conference on May 3-6 at the Westin St. Francis hotel in San Francisco. The conference will feature breakout sessions and labs to offer industry-specific marketing solutions for advertising, auto, banking and consumer finance, cable, direct mail, electronic media, insurance, magazines, newspapers, telecommunications, utilities and more. Claritas will offer marketing courses from its Precision Marketing Institute and a trade show. For more information call 800-678-8110 and press "4," fax your request to 703-812-2788, or E-mail pmc@claritas.com.

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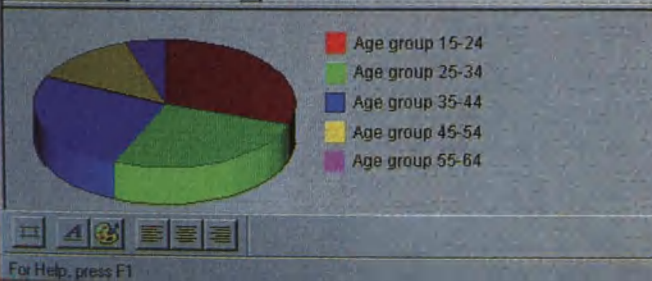
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	Greek	10.00	13.00	23.00
	Indian	0.00	1.00	0.00
	Pizza	1.00	4.00	3.00
	Pub	9.00	8.00	15.00
Other	8.00	9.00	22.00	
What type of music do you like?	Soul/Blues	17.00	31.00	35.00
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E x t e n d i n g

As a manufacturer of top quality loudspeakers and other audio equipment, Bose Corporation has a reputation for excellence. Thanks to the firm's strong belief in R&D, audiophiles and the general public alike know that the Bose name is synonymous with technological innovation and great sound.

To make sure employees extend the pursuit of excellence to the retail setting, Bose has been using mystery shopping since 1995 to monitor performance of salespeople at its factory stores — which sell new and factory renewed products — and at its Bose showcase stores — which sell new merchandise. Mystery shops are also conducted at department stores and electronics superstores where Bose products are sold.

"We started mystery shopping because we were rolling out a recognition program and we wanted a non-threatening way to find people who were excelling in the area of customer satisfaction, to locate the people who were the star performers, who were excelling at satisfying our customers, rather than having a district manager go in and do an evaluation," says Lisa Pazol, manager, customer experience, retail direct group, Bose Corp., Framingham, Mass.

The mystery shops are conducted by Customer Perspectives, a Hooksett, N.H., mystery shopping firm. Each Bose store is shopped twice a month. (One low score is dropped per store per quarter, Pazol says, acknowledging that "Everybody may have a bad day; the store may be extremely busy and the customer doesn't get the attention that they deserve, for example.")

Judith Ann Hess, partner, Customer Perspectives, says that although most retail clients want to measure similar things in their mystery shopping programs, such as greeting skills, friendliness, product knowledge and sales skills, many also have individual issues to examine. "We therefore do a lot of custom designing for clients based on their specific standards and training programs. Our mystery shopping then helps them measure compliance with those standards and the effectiveness of their training efforts. It also allows them to reward exemplary employees by identifying those who meet or exceed their standards," Hess says.

For Bose, it's important for employees to greet customers quickly. They should introduce themselves, or, if they're busy with another customer, acknowledge their

*Mystery shops help Bose
service matches its*



e x c e l l e n c e

make sure its customer reputation for quality



By Joseph Rydholm
QMRR editor

presence with a nod or other gesture. Once with the customer they must be friendly, helpful and demonstrate product knowledge.

"One of the key things our customers have told us that our salespeople can do to increase satisfaction is make them feel welcome. We do that in a number of different ways, including trying to acknowledge or greet them in 10 seconds. That's one of our standards," Pazol says.

Starts with a phone call

The Bose store mystery shops are two-part. They begin with a phone call, in which the shopper calls to ask questions on specific products. Shoppers indicate if the employee performed tasks such as answering questions clearly. Employees are also rated on their friendliness, helpfulness, etc., using an excellent-satisfactory-unsatisfactory scale. Finally, shoppers have space to write about their interaction and support the ratings they gave the employee.

"We ask our shoppers specifically what we could have done to improve. We have a lot of yes/no questions so that it can be as objective as possible but we also want them to express in their own words how we did and what we could do to make them feel more welcome," Pazol says.

For the in-person visit, shoppers describe how/if they were greeted, their evaluation of the employee in charge of the theater presentation (Bose stores contain a theater for presenting a short audio-visual show which highlights Bose equipment), the employee's selling and closing skills and exploration of customer needs (Did the employee use language which helped you picture having the product in your home?), product demonstration and knowledge (Did the employee describe and demonstrate the benefits?), and overall impressions (Did the Bose representative make you feel important, provide a comfortable environment?). At the factory stores, shoppers must note if the employee volunteered an explanation of factory-renewed products during their visit.

"Speakers have to be sold on the basis of customer needs so there has to be a lot of needs exploration," Hess says. "Does the salesperson explore needs and listen effectively to those needs? Do they mention the benefits in addition to the features?"

"We want the salesperson to develop a rapport with the customer," Pazol says, "and ask enough questions to make them feel that they are interested in their business without

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Constructing an effective mystery shopping program

By Donna S. Guido



Editor's note: Donna S. Guido is CEO of DSG Associates Inc., a Santa Ana, Calif., field service company. She can be reached at 714-835-3020.

Mystery shopping programs have become an important tool in the researcher's kit of information gathering techniques. As with all tools, however, it's important to recognize what they can and can't do well.

Properly designed and implemented mystery shopper programs can provide an early warning system for any business that relies on extensive public contact. Executional problems can then be corrected before they result in sagging customer perceptions and, eventually, falling sales.

Mystery shopper programs can also be an excellent barometer of how changes in products, systems, people, marketing, weather or even dayparts and weekparts affect the execution of customer service and product quality compared to company standards.

Additionally, mystery shoppers can provide objective data about employee performance on specific, observable behavioral measures for use in training, compensation and motivation of both hourly and management employees. In some instances, this information is invaluable in gaining, improving or proving compliance with government regulations.

In short, when properly designed and implemented, mystery shopper programs can provide valuable information about the way businesses and people actually operate at the customer level. What they can't do is determine how businesses ought to operate.

They can't say with any reliability what a target market wants from a business or product or, conversely, whether a business or product is delivering what customers want. Nor can they reliably make the attitudinal trade-offs that consumers routinely make throughout a sales or service

transaction, e.g., "The service person was slow reaching me, but was really friendly and helpful so, on balance, the experience was positive."

Not a substitute

While they can offer a great deal of insight into what is feasible in terms of real-world deliverables, specifically what mystery shoppers are not is a valid substitute for traditional, quantifiable consumer market research.

The first reason is fairly simple: traditional consumer research is based on perceptions. Mystery shoppers, at their best, deal with observable, measurable behaviors and consumer deliverables. Consumer research may say that sales people are perceived as rude; mystery shoppers can report on what behaviors are present or missing that help shape that perception. Is it lack of smiles and eye contact? Is it sales personnel talking to each other instead of to customers? Is it sneering? Swearing? Talking on the phone? Refusing to respond to a customer's request for help?

The second reason shoppers are not interchangeable with more traditional market research is more subtle but also has far-reaching implications in terms of managing mystery shoppers. Research validity is based on the aggregate perceptions of a statistically sound sample, while a mystery shopper report should be capable of standing alone. While it's true that a mystery shopper report is only a snapshot of a particular visit to a particular location at a specific date and time, the report should exhibit the accuracy of a snapshot, not the blurred edges of a memory. And as with photos, the more there are, the

greater the validity, e.g., an album of mystery shopper reports taken over time is better than a single report. The important point here is that the report must have the integrity to stand alone and the entire process that yields mystery shopper reports must be designed to support that integrity, one shopper at a time.

Individual shopper reports simply do not enjoy the luxury of tempering that takes place in market research when a few strong perceptions are rolled up into the total sample. But while each shopper report must be

While they can offer a great deal of insight into what is feasible in terms of real-world deliverables, specifically what mystery shoppers are not is a valid substitute for traditional, quantifiable consumer market research.

accurate in terms of objective observations and measured results, one individual shopper's perception should not be treated any differently than any other single perception in any research.

This is not to say that shopper perceptions do not add interesting footnotes on an individual basis or that they can't be rolled up to provide a statistically valid sample; both of these can be true, but neither makes the best, most economically efficient use of what distinguishes shoppers from more typical research respondents. Shoppers can be directed to observe and measure specific

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Mystery shopping



Putting a positive spin on mystery shopping

By Mary Baum

Editor's note: Mary Baum is a freelance writer based in St. Louis.

In the summer of 1977, a young woman got a job in a department store — and spent the next three months living in fear that any one of her customers might be a mystery shopper. The customers all seemed nice enough. And she thought she was doing a good job. But what would a mystery shopper say about her to her bosses? What rules had she broken? Worst of all — would she ever know what happened?

Twenty years later, just about every facet of the art and science of mystery shopping has changed — including, sometimes, the name. According to Len Berry in his book *Great Service*, the phrase “mystery shopping” sounds sinister and makes some people uncomfortable. So one provider of

the service, St. Louis-based Maritz Marketing Research, changed the name of its program to Virtual Customers to put a positive spin on its approach to the methodology.

Far from being a sword of Damocles ready to fall on dishonest employees, mystery shopping plays a vital role in measuring and improving customer service. And done right — especially when combined with training, rewards and recognition — it can make everyone a winner.

But as valuable a tool as mystery shopping is, it can only effect change in an organization if the whole company gets on board, from top management to front-line employees. Specifically, management must support the process, believe the report and take action on the results. And front-line employees need to see the big picture and their role in it, to

understand that this is a learning and not an evaluation process.

Building buy-in with management

So how do you get management to support the process? With solid objectives, a well-designed program and an action plan that, on re-measurement, demonstrates real improvement.

Al Goldsmith, who directs Virtual Customers mystery shopping programs for Maritz, puts it this way: “We like to position mystery shopping as part of an overall improvement process that incorporates successive waves of measurement and action. For example, we might shop a client’s locations, then do training and incentives based on the results. Then we’ll go back and re-shop to keep the positive results coming.”

Showing that cycle of continuous improvement up front lets manage-

ment know what to expect. And if they're new to the concept, case studies from other companies in the industry — with documented results in terms of improved sales and customer retention — can go a long way to getting the green light.

That's how Texaco keeps management interested. "A leading business magazine recently named Texaco Best in the Oil Industry in Customer Service. That, along with steady incremental increases in scores, helps keep management and customers on board," says Terry Fitzgerald, manager, resale marketing, Texaco.

Sales Program Analyst Corey Carver of the Virginia Lottery says it often works to give management ownership in the idea. "When we do a concept, I send out bullet points for feedback and give them an opportunity to add or build in elements."

Another key: tangible incentives for the Lottery retailers and their employees. "Every time a clerk at a Lottery retailer won for performing well in a mystery shop," Carver says, "the store

would win too." And there were even incentives for participating. If a given store agreed to let clerks participate — and carry some additional POS — the Lottery would raise the commission it pays the store by a full percentage point. Then if a clerk in that store won, the Lottery would pay an additional 2.5 percentage points.

Finally, management needs to know how the process is going to play on the front line. "It's kind of a mutual thing," says Goldsmith. "When we show the front line what's in it for them, often management gets that much more behind the whole process, because we've alleviated their concerns about morale."

Building buy-in on the front line

While the threat of being mystery shopped can rattle employees, with today's approaches, not only do employees have nothing to fear from being shopped — they might even look forward to it.

For the Virginia Lottery, Maritz developed a program in which Virtual

Customers visited convenience stores and other lottery outlets after the store employees had completed awareness training about the Lottery's new game, called The Big Game.

When a front-line employee mentioned The Big Game, the Virtual Customer would reveal his or her true identity and award the employee a certificate good for \$25, and if the employee answered a question about the game correctly, he or she got another \$25. If the clerk didn't mention the game, the Virtual Customer would still come clean and say that there would be other shops and that the employee could still win a certificate just by mentioning the new game.

What's more, every employee who got shopped got an entry in a \$1,000 sweepstakes drawing the Lottery would hold at the end of the program. "It was our way of making sure there were no losers," says Carver.

"Not only was it an opportunity to check how well the training had been

continued on p. 52

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War Stories

True-life tales in marketing research

By Art Shulman

Editor's note: "War Stories" is a regular feature in which Art Shulman, president of Shulman Research, Van Nuys, Calif., presents humorous stories of life in the research trenches. He can be reached at 818-782-4252 or at artshulman@aol.com.

Dave Chill of the Disney Channel tells about a study where he sent a questionnaire draft to a supplier to finalize. The study involved a telephone survey in Tulsa, Okla. When the supplier submitted the final version, one alternative on the ethnicity question had been changed; the supplier had replaced "Native American" with "American Indian."

When Chill asked the supplier about the change, the supplier told him that he'd recently conducted a survey in Oklahoma where he'd used "Native American" and over 80 percent of respondents had claimed to be Native Americans, with explanations like, "My granddaddy was born here, my daddy was born here, and sure as shootin', I'm a native American too."

Reminds me of a survey we conducted with engineering students. One of our study locations was on the campus of a predominantly black university in Florida. On the ethnicity question we used the alternative "African-American."

The only problem was that many of the students on the Florida campus were from the Caribbean, and did not consider themselves African-American. Not only were they not American, but they didn't consider themselves African either. We had a lot of "Other" responses written in on that question.

Chuck Teaman of Strategic Alternatives Of Florida tells about being a neophyte researcher who had occasion to accompany an interviewer door-to-door in sub-zero Midwestern weather on a home placement callback interview.

When the interviewer came to the overall rating question (a 5-point asymmetrical scale) and read the scale choices, the respondent answered, "I liked it fine." The interviewer said, "Oh, you mean excellent," promptly circled "Excellent" and went on to the next question.

Teaman didn't want to interrupt so he spoke to the interviewer afterward, who assured him that, "Well, everybody knows 'fine' means 'excellent' in Peoria, Ill.!"

Recently I was sitting in the monitoring room of a telephone interviewing service that was conducting my survey on reasons for calling my client's airline to make travel reservations. The service was also conducting several other surveys which were not mine. The interviewing service was very specific in notifying me that I was not to leave the monitoring room without notifying them. Security was very important to them, they assured me.

As one of "my" interviews was completed, the monitor pressed some buttons so I could listen in on another. The interviewer was at the tail end of asking one of the questions in my survey. "Please use a 1 to 10 scale, where 10 means 'Extremely important' and a 1 means 'Not at all important.'" She then proceeded to read the first item, "Being able to dream and think big."

Suddenly I thought, "This doesn't

seem like a reason for selecting an airline. In fact, I don't recall adding this item to my battery of items. In fact, I'm sure it isn't on my survey."

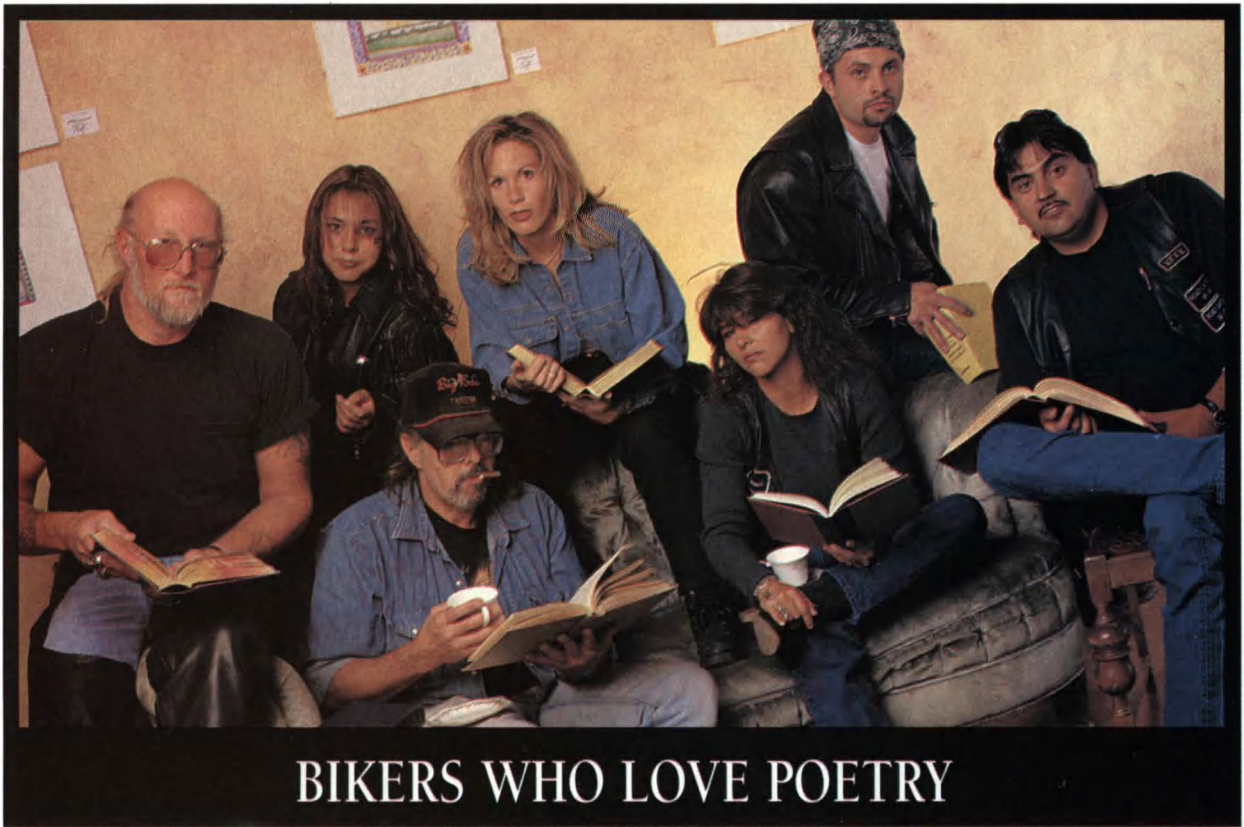
I was right. The monitor had accidentally pressed a wrong button and tuned into another survey the service was conducting, probably on a lottery.

Donna Tinari-Siegfried of Fundamental Research Group was conducting a focus group, and one of the respondents, with an enormous black bag slung over her shoulders, introduced herself as a surgeon. As Tinari-Siegfried was getting into the main topic of the session, the surgeon was paged. She needed to use a telephone immediately, and left the room to make her call.

Suddenly, Tinari-Siegfried's eye was caught by movement on the floor. She glanced over and there, looking up at her, was a little dog! All the respondents took a look in the same direction and one of them yelled "There's a dog in the room!" Tinari-Siegfried could hear the back room break out into hysterics.

Just then, the surgeon came through the door, having completed her call, scooped the dog up and put it back into the enormous black bag.

In future issues, we'll report on more quirky, loopy and strange happenings in the world of market research. If you'd like your story to be told — anything related to research is usable, from spilling soup on your client's new suit to cute answers respondents provide on questionnaires — please call me at 818-782-4252 or, better yet, write it up and fax it to me at 818-782-3014 or E-mail me at artshulman@aol.com.



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Mystery shopping



An established shopper program can be the answer for customer service management

By Gary Harper

Editor's note: Gary Harper is a vice president, Marketing Services Division, at Elrick & Lavidge, an Atlanta research firm. He can be reached at 770-621-7617.

Recipe for mystery shopping success: Take one individual shopping experience, combine hundreds to thousands more. Add a full scoop of measurement, analysis and reporting using a full-service program. Repeat, to create a cycle that sets the stage for successfully managing customer service.

One of the most important parts of this recipe for success is making sure that your mystery shopping program encompasses a complete, well thought-out program that follows a general set of guidelines or steps:

Step 1: Establishing objectives

The most important step in any mystery shopping program is establishing objectives. You need to determine what you want to accomplish. You may want to gather information about employees' customer skills, see how employees are presenting products or determine whether the retail environment is safe, clean and attractive. Or any combination of the above. It may be measuring employee training programs, tracking or benchmarking your business against

the competition. The variation is endless. The key factor is to clearly establish where you are, where you want to be, and how mystery shopping can help get you there.

Step 2: Questionnaire design

The questionnaire must be designed for the sole purpose of measuring and meeting established objectives. Typical retail mystery shopping questionnaires often cover: customer service, facility cleanliness and orderliness, speed of service, product quality and employee product knowledge. The questionnaire should satisfy the objectives of the program and yet be focused and concise for quality of information and accuracy of shopper reporting.

Step 3: Recruitment

The larger the professional mystery shopping or research organization, the more likely it is to have a pre-recruited pool of mystery shoppers nationwide ready to complete assignments. If such a base is not in place, shoppers must be recruited.

Step 4: Shopping instruction

Once assigned to a program, mystery shoppers are given

continued on p. 50

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Names of Note

Allan Benedict and **John Wargo** will join Chapel Hill, N.C.-based *FGI, Inc.*, as managing director and account director, respectively, of the firm's new Detroit office. Previously Benedict was a partner and executive vice president at Nordhaus Research, Southfield, Mich. Wargo was a vice president at Nordhaus.

Elizabeth Hurlow-Hannah has been named director of the Training Institute of *RIVA Market Research, Inc.*, Bethesda, Md., and **Jill Treby** has been named training coordinator.

Response Analysis Corp., Princeton, N.J., has added **Joe Hagan** as vice president for banking research services. Previously he was president and founder of 20/20

Financial Research Corp. In addition, **Regina Goutevenier** has joined the firm as vice president in the telecommunications and information technology group. Previously she was with AT&T and NYNEX.

Merrill Dubrow has joined the Paramus, N.J., office of *Elrick & Lavidge* as senior vice president-Northeast. Previously he was president of *Phonelab Research*, Philadelphia.

Todd Napier has joined the Cincinnati office of *Burke Customer Satisfaction Associates* as an account executive. Previously he was vice president, Healthcare Services Group, for Alliance Research.

Roper Starch Worldwide, New York, has added **June Wallach** as account director. Previously she was sales director at International Data Corp.

Todd Winfrey and **Heather Parker** have been named assistant project directors in the Atlanta office of *Creative Research Services*.

St. Louis-based *Porchey Research Inc.*, has promoted **Kathy Farmer** to



Farmer

Donahue

senior vice president, **Jill Donahue** to vice president, and **Christian Watkins** to manager of research and technology.



Watkins

Keen

David Keen has been named study director of the Energy Research & Consulting Division of *Market Strategies, Inc.*, Southfield, Mich. Previously he was senior research director at Affina in Troy, Mich.

Sharon Thompson has been promoted to research coordinator, and **Melissa Gibbs** to project coordinator, at *Aragon Consulting Group*, St. Louis.

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Jan Johnson has opened **Millennium Research, Inc.**, a new full-service research firm, at 16842 Jackpine Trail, Lakeville, Minn., 55044. Phone 612-435-6320. Fax 612-435-8609.

PGM Incorporated, Orem, Utah, is in the process of acquiring Paria Group, a research firm also located in Orem. The company currently owns existing contracts and revenues of Paria Group but the complete acquisition will take approximately one year.

Focuscope, Oak Park, Ill., is now a member of the FocusVision Network.

Swaran Saxena has opened **Marketing World, Inc.**, at 823 White Rock Dr., St. Louis, Mo., 63131. The firm will work exclusively in international research.

The American Marketing Association and The Wharton School announce the call for nominations for the 1998 Charles Coolidge Parlin Award. The award was established in 1945 by the Philadelphia Chapter of the AMA and The Wharton School in association with the Curtis Publishing Company to honor academics and practitioners who have demonstrated outstanding leadership and a sustained impact on advancing research over an extended period of time. This impact might be reflected in one or more of the following ways: new concepts, methods and models for measurement and analysis that expand the capabilities of organizations to achieve a better understanding of markets, customers and consumers; creative integration of existing methodologies and an understanding of information needs resulting in more widespread use and/or appreciation of marketing research; demonstrated leadership resulting in stimulating the effective use and value of marketing research and market based knowledge. All nominations must include: the nomi-

nee's full name, title, address and phone number; a description of the work done by the nominee that qualifies them for the award; the full name, title, address and phone of the person making the nomination. Nominations should be submitted by March 1, 1998, to Patricia Goodrich, director, Marketing Research Division, American Marketing Association, 250 South Wacker Dr., Suite 200, Chicago, Ill., 60606. Phone 312-993-7542. Fax 312-831-2721.

The Hollis Research Centre of Hollis, N.H., has opened a Web site at www.hollisresearch.com.

NFO Research, Inc., Greenwich, Conn., has formed a new division, InfoCom, specializing in research, analysis and consulting for the telecommunications industry. The new

division will be led by Jonathan Rubin, who has been named president, and Jill Wynn, who has been named vice president.

Digital Marketing Services, Inc. (DMS), Dallas, a provider of on-line market research and consumer incentive programs via America Online (AOL), has formed an alliance enabling four U.S. research firms to conduct on-line custom research surveys with AOL's members. The firms are ASI Market Research Inc., Custom Research Inc., M/A/R/C Research and Roper Starch Worldwide Inc. The alliance is an expansion of DMS' AOL feature in which members choose to participate in on-line surveys by going

continued on p. 53

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Using mystery shopping for discrimination and sales practices monitoring

By Paul C. Lubin and Barry Leeds

Editor's note: Paul Lubin is executive vice president, and Barry Leeds is president, of Barry Leeds & Associates, Inc., a New York research firm. They can be reached at 212-889-5941.

Mystery shopping, as initially used by industries, was unsophisticated, lacked reliability and, in most cases, was statistically unsound. The goal of early programs was to evaluate retail conditions — that is, for example, how products were sold and promoted or how

prominently a product was displayed and where.

These early mystery shopping programs were deemed “observational” because the program objective was to have the shopper observe and record what he or she saw. In translating the observational approach to the retail scenario, this approach has advantages but also some drawbacks. By making observations only, it is difficult to evaluate the interaction of a company's staff and customers. In other words, some of the mystery is taken out of mystery shopping.

Mystery shopping became much more useful as a self-assessment tool when mystery shoppers — or testers posing as customers — based their evaluations not only on observations but also upon actual retail transactions or inquiries — for example, asking about or purchasing a product from a sales clerk at a department store, opening an account at a bank, or cashing a check at a teller station.

Although mystery shopping was often initially thought of as a very subjective and qualitative research technique, by increasing sample sizes

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(number of shops) and adding an objective (checklist-yes/no) questioning format, the findings became more reliable. Therefore companies began relying on mystery shopping more and more. Indeed, the information and sales age of the 1990s has brought with it an increasing reliance on mystery shopping to monitor sales and service performance during customer-employee meetings.

Most retail companies and financial institutions got their feet wet in market research via mystery shopping programs to evaluate the sales process, cross-selling, product knowledge and customer courtesy. These programs were usually conducted annually or at least every two years. They served as benchmarks or baselines and as follow-up programs to evaluate change.

But by the 1970s, companies realized that mystery shopping done infrequently did not serve a motivational purpose; it was nothing more than an expensive monitoring tool. By this time, the retail industry had begun using shoppers on an ongoing basis. The result was that store managers and employees, aware that mystery shoppers might visit, were more careful about how they treated customers and how they displayed and sold their products.

Many service providers such as banks, hotels, etc., took a page from their book and also began using the mystery shopping technique on a more or less continuous basis. By having mystery shoppers visit stores and/or branches quarterly, monthly, and even weekly, the technique not only evaluates sales professionalism and service quality but also serves as a motivational tool.

Matched pair testing

In more recent years, banks, mortgage and finance companies have come to recognize the importance of monitoring compliance with the Fair Housing Act and Equal Credit Opportunity Act for evaluating equal treatment, disparate treatment and overt discrimi-

nation in lending.

The banking industry uses a technique called matched pair testing to ferret out discrimination. Borrowed from civil rights advocates and fair housing rights groups, the technique has become so popular that it is now recommended by the Department of Justice as well as other banking regulatory agencies. The government has gone so far as to protect or privilege the information collected via matched pair testing from discovery in litigation for banks.

Other service sectors such as the brokerage and auto industries are also using mystery shopping to ensure that their sales practices are fair, equal and not misleading.

Matched pair testing is a classic form of self-evaluation. It is similar to mystery shopping programs that are designed to evaluate sales practices, sales professionalism and skills and service quality/courtesies, etc. It involves sending pairs of testers (shoppers) posing as potential borrowers (if it is a bank) potential investors (if it is a brokerage firm) or potential retail customers, patients or hotel guests, into the field. They conduct their tests (shops) separately, but each is provided with similar profiles or scenarios. The only significant difference between them is that one tester may be a minority and one is not, or one tester may be a male while the other is a female or one tester may be young while the other is old.

Although a well-designed matched pair testing program can provide information about service quality and sales professionalism, the primary objective is to evaluate and compare the treatment each tester receives and if the treatment is equal.

Risk is high

Most companies don't recognize discrimination's effect on sales and marketing. The risk associated with discriminatory practices is high and can take different forms — financial liability, legal violations and lost business. Bias charges can be made

regarding equal employment opportunity, equal credit opportunity and equal access to goods and services.

Shoney's restaurants agreed to pay \$105 million to black employees and job applicants who claimed they were discriminated against. Another restaurant chain, Denny's, agreed to pay \$54 million to settle claims that it denied service to black customers.

More recently, Texaco agreed to pay \$176 million to African-American employees because of charges the company denied promotions on the basis of race. Texaco also agreed to increase employment of minorities and women. These companies faced negative and damaging press that drained their goodwill in the community and set back sales and marketing.

Uncover bias

In addition to mystery shopping, other forms of market research (e.g., fair treatment surveys and statistical modeling) can measure: whether

marketing discourages minority business; minority and non-minority access to a company's goods and services; service bias towards whites or men; access to products made available to different consumer groups; and the role race plays in various business decisions.

In most cases, discrimination can be classified as either overt or subtle. Overt discrimination denies minorities the same opportunities offered to whites. Subtle actions are more difficult to measure; they encompass assistance issues and the level and type of accommodation but can be ferreted out via matched pair testing.

Matched pair testing represents a powerful approach for detecting discrimination in the pre-application or purchase phase of the sales process. Testers or mystery shoppers matched in every possible way, with the exception of the treatment tested (e.g., race or ethnic status), measure the sales process in terms of access to goods and services encourage-

ment, information and types of products and terms offered, courtesy and time spent. The methodology tells you whether discrimination is occurring and whether or not your sales practices are limiting sales.

Correct problems

The nature of your business and the way your company markets its products determine how you should test for discrimination. Matched pair testing helps companies detect and correct problems, practices or policies that may represent a risk, just as product testing is self-testing because it helps companies limit consumer rejection and identify potential product defects that can lead to lawsuits.

There are plenty of reasons to conduct matched pair testing and if you do, you can do so with confidence. The fees aren't great considering the risk associated with discrimination and the technique is time-tested and widely accepted by business and government agencies. □

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"IF YOU DON'T TAKE CARE OF THE CUSTOMER...SOMEBODY ELSE WILL."

High-tech mystery shopping: using audio and video shopping effectively

By Stephanie E. Smith

Editor's note: Stephanie E. Smith is director of operations and research of ServiceTRAC, Inc., a Scottsdale, Ariz., training, research and consulting firm. She can be reached at 602-941-3121.

Myystery shopping has evolved from an innovative "Big Brother is Watching" integrity control method to a standard corporate practice with results that can be used in training and employee reward programs. In fact, most mystery shopping companies strongly recommend that the results be used for training and positive reinforcement rather than as a disciplinary tool or a method of intimidating employees. This positive aspect of mystery shopping has eliminated most of the fear and anxiety that employees may feel towards mystery shopping programs.

Most employees don't fear the repercussions of poor mystery shop reports, but some still engage in the "he said, she said" battle. This is a common and natural reaction. Individuals view and remember experiences through their own eyes and ears, not through those of the cus-

tomers or the company. Therefore, when shown the mystery shopping report, even if it is largely positive, employees will offer their own version of the experience. Oftentimes they will attempt to discredit the shopper or qualify the answers. Even if employees concede to management that they accept the results and have learned from them, chances are that it is only lip service. In their minds they still believe that they executed a near-perfect performance.

Audio and video shopping

Mystery shopping programs that use results in a positive manner can be further enhanced by audio and video. Although most companies have just begun to learn about A&V shopping, many progressive companies insist on it. Audiotaping or videotaping the shop renders employee arguments useless since results are captured on tape. The shopper acts only as a medium. The tape can be reviewed to ensure that the accompanying written report is objective and accurate.

Once an employee has recovered from initial uneasiness about being recorded, the shop becomes an inval-

uable training tool. The employee is afforded the opportunity to step outside himself or herself and hear and/or see what the customer experiences. They are no longer giving lip service to the value of the program; they are using the program to improve their sales and service skills. This ultimately serves to improve the company's overall performance and increase revenue.

While benefits can be obtained from all mystery shopping programs, A&V shopping increases effectiveness due to the objective nature of the results.

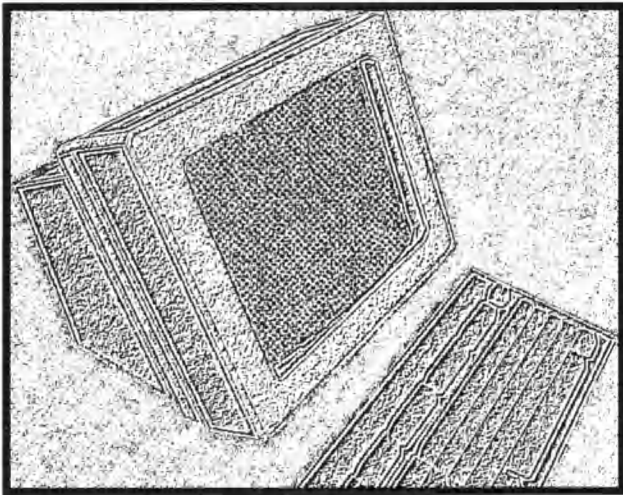
- People learn more effectively from a combination of media. The written report, coupled with the audio and visual components, provides a comprehensive learning experience for employees.

- Companies can see if the training provided is being incorporated into their employees' sales presentations.

- Companies can judge the overall effectiveness and value of their training programs while uncovering areas for improvement and concentration.

- Management is provided with a starting point for employee consulta-

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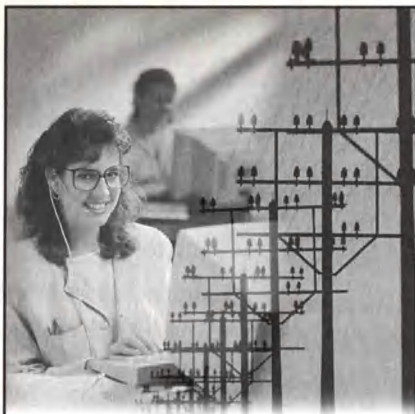


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tion and follow-up training.

- Companies can use the tapes in sales meetings and sales training.

- Companies are provided with tools that can be integrated into their employee rewards and incentives program.

- Employees can listen to and/or see their presentation from the customer's point of view.

- Employees may evaluate and improve their own performance more effectively.

- Shopper-completed reports can be compared to the videotape or audiotape to verify objectivity and accuracy.

- Tapes capture the performance of actual sales skills and techniques used by employees. This alleviates shoppers' tendencies to award good scores based on subjective qualities such as friendliness.

A&V shopping is probably most feasible and useful for companies that are interested in evaluating their sales and marketing staff. Companies spend a great deal of money and time on sales training programs; therefore it is essential to evaluate sales performance. Home building, senior housing, automotive, retirement and assisted living are some of the industries currently using audio shopping on a regular basis. Although video shopping is becoming more popular, it is not yet a standard practice.

How audio shopping works

Mystery shopping companies that offer tape-recorded in-person mystery shops train shoppers to conceal and use micro-recorders during their mystery shop. The shopper practices with the device at home to ensure that they have placed it somewhere invisible but where it can still clearly pick up the sales presentation. Although there are some favorite areas to conceal the device, there is no standard. Some companies use a small microphone that runs from the concealed recorder to a hidden area on the shopper or on some type of common accessory such as a pen, purse, belt or pager. This method improves the sound quality of the tape.

How video shopping works

Video shops may or may not include sound, depending on the company offering the service and the desires of the customer. Video shopping is conducted in much the same way as audio shopping. Just as audio shopping uses micro-recorders, video shopping requires micro-cameras, transmitting equipment and concealed video recorders. Video shoppers are normally professional shoppers employed full time by the mystery shopping company who travel around the country conducting video shops. The technology involved in video shopping is far more advanced and expensive than audio shopping. Therefore, it is necessary to use highly trained professional shoppers who can operate the equipment properly. This also eliminates issues of liability.

How much does it cost?

It is difficult to provide a specific price on this type of service as several factors influence the cost. However, it is estimated that adding the audio component to an in-person mystery shop increases the price of the shop by \$50-\$100, and adding video increases the price by \$250-\$350 per shop. In addition, companies that provide video shopping services will often charge for expenses incurred. It is important to note that these prices are for in-person mystery shops. Tape recorded telephone mystery shops are available at significantly lower cost and provide a valuable training opportunity as well. Tape recorded telephone mystery shops typically cost anywhere from \$25-\$50 per call and may cost as much as \$75 per call if follow-up reports are desired. Follow-up reports track the mail and phone follow-up efforts of the employee shopped.

Using mystery shopping effectively

For mystery shopping to have value as a training tool, managers must be taught how to coach and train the employees based on the

mystery shopping tapes and reports. This means the written survey tool must be based on and reinforced by company training. The managers must understand the value and meaning of the program so that they can bring the mystery shopping results to life. Sales managers and trainers who learn to review the tapes with the employees in a constructive and non-confrontational manner will get more value from the program. Most often, mystery shopping programs fail to reach their potential because the results are not used adequately. It is recommended that you hire a consultant from the mystery shopping company to train the trainers and managers on how to use mystery shopping effectively.

Getting more for your mystery shopping dollar

- Incentives and awards: Management has watched sales increase significantly while holding sales contests in which the winners were largely determined by mystery shopping scores. It is helpful to have the contests take place over a few months so that the employees perform as if they could be evaluated at any time. Prizes are often cruises or trips to desirable vacation destinations.

- Program consistency: It is important to the success of the program to maintain the mystery shopping effort. The shops must take place on an ongoing basis so that employees must perform as if each customer is a mystery shopper. Otherwise, performance efforts may relax once the employee has received their mystery shopping report.

- Results benchmarks: Value can be added to your mystery shopping program by working with a company that can track employee and company scores over time, and offer trend analysis and comparison to industry standards. This enables companies to effectively track improvements and setbacks over time. Comparing company scores to industry averages allows companies to more accurately gauge their performance, and determine opportunities for improvement. □



Is your research up to par? In golf, par is the score that, in theory, an average player would take to complete a hole. Two strokes under par is an eagle. In the game of research, all participants in the interviewing process want to believe their research soared like an eagle. In reality, the research project may be a “bogey” (one over par and not perfect).

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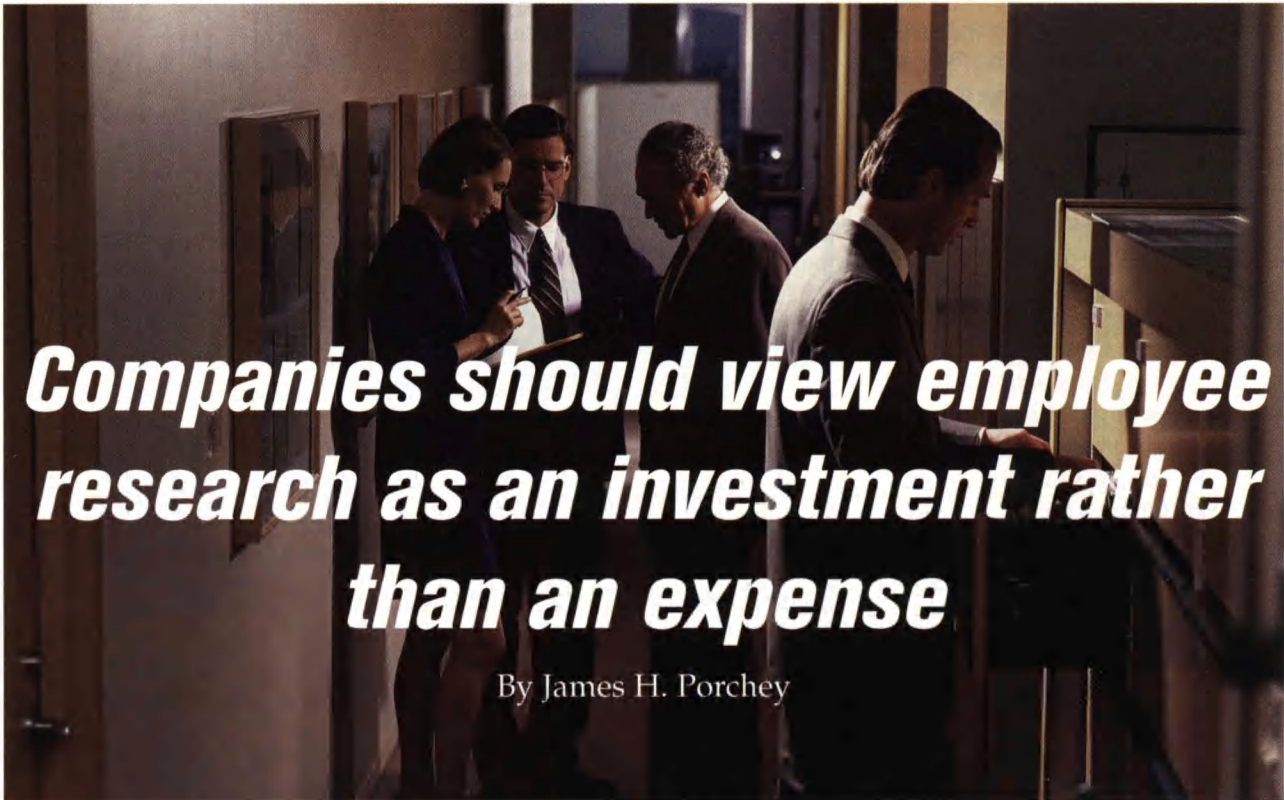
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Companies should view employee research as an investment rather than an expense

By James H. Porchey

Editor's note: James H. Porchey is president of Porchey Research Inc., St. Louis. He can be reached at 314-567-6464 or at porcheyinc@stlnet.com.

Amid the downsizing, reorganization and merger frenzy in today's corporate America, staying in close touch with employees' opinions and ideas is an essential component of bottom-line success. Whether or not they are directly affected by those changes, employees are increasingly sensitive about company direction and what role they will play in achieving corporate goals. Knowing what employees think about their company, its products and services, and the key issues it faces are fundamental needs in a changing and highly competitive marketplace. Also, understanding how best to educate and motivate employees to help reach corporate objectives is essential to overall success.

More and more, businesses are turning to action-oriented employee research as a way of learning about workers' perceptions and suggestions and developing action plans to improve their effectiveness. A variety

of methods exist to collect employees' views, including telephone, in-person interviews, E-mail and mail surveys. Three "C's" — cost, confidentiality and convenience — make mail the favored approach.

A major part of an employee survey is deciding which issues to examine. Typically, interviews are conducted with selected management and non-management employees to pinpoint key workplace issues from a variety of perspectives. Most often, those issues tend to center on items such as:

- overall images of the company;
- perceived company strengths and weaknesses;
- internal communications, both actual and preferred;
- key characteristics of the company, e.g., responsiveness, honesty, innovation, trustworthiness, industry leadership, etc.;
- awareness, knowledge and feelings about company products and services;
- understanding company goals and direction;
- resources needed to perform the job effectively;

• ways employees indirectly market the company and its products and services — and ways they can do it better;

- overall ratings of the company, morale, teamwork, management quality and employee quality; and
- demographic information.

Once the key issues are agreed upon, a questionnaire is developed. The questionnaire should be easy to use and understand. Also, special care is taken to ensure that question wording and sequence are objective and not slanted to elicit a particular response.

After the questionnaire is designed and approved, it is sent to employees through the company mail system or directly to workers' homes with a letter from the company president or CEO explaining what is being done and why. The letter also confirms that answers will be reported only in their composite form, that all individual responses will be confidential, and the questionnaire can be completed conveniently either at home or at work.

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directly back to the outside firm selected to conduct the research. Once the questionnaires are completed and returned, the data is analyzed using statistical programs that allow crosstabulations, correlations and factor analysis.

These analytical procedures help the company identify differences between the various types of employees studied and which issues are most closely associated with overall ratings. This information helps set clear priorities that become the foundation of an action plan to be implemented in response to survey findings.

Action plan

Developing and carrying out an action plan to respond to research results are two critically important parts of the employee research process. Those steps lead to improved employee performance and reaffirm for workers that their views and ideas are valued and acted upon.

Specific action plans depend, of course, on survey results. Yet, the fol-

lowing are the types of recommendations for action such research might suggest.

- Build on perceived company strengths by featuring them regularly in corporate communications, and take needed steps to lessen perceived weaknesses.

- Use the types of internal communications media employees prefer, and ensure employees receive the types of information they need to do their jobs effectively.

- As a company, be responsive, honest, innovative, trustworthy and an industry leader, and make sure employees are aware of company performance in each of these areas.

- Make sure employees are aware of and knowledgeable about company products and services, and inform employees about company goals and direction.

- Ensure employees have the resources they need to do their jobs effectively.

- Educate employees about ways they can indirectly market the compa-

ny as they interact with people beyond the workplace.

- Pinpoint ways to improve morale, teamwork, and management and non-management quality.

- Target specific employee groups, and construct appropriate messages for each, using demographic characteristics.

After implementing the action plan, it is important to establish a method of evaluating its success. Most often, that is a follow-up survey similar to the initial benchmark employee study to provide a before-and-after picture of the workplace. That data, along with financial and other pertinent information, is used to help evaluate company success.

Investment pays off

While employee research requires an investment of time, money and energy, a well-executed survey, and the actions that result from it, can pay off in improved morale, better customer service and an enhanced company image. □

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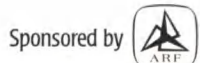
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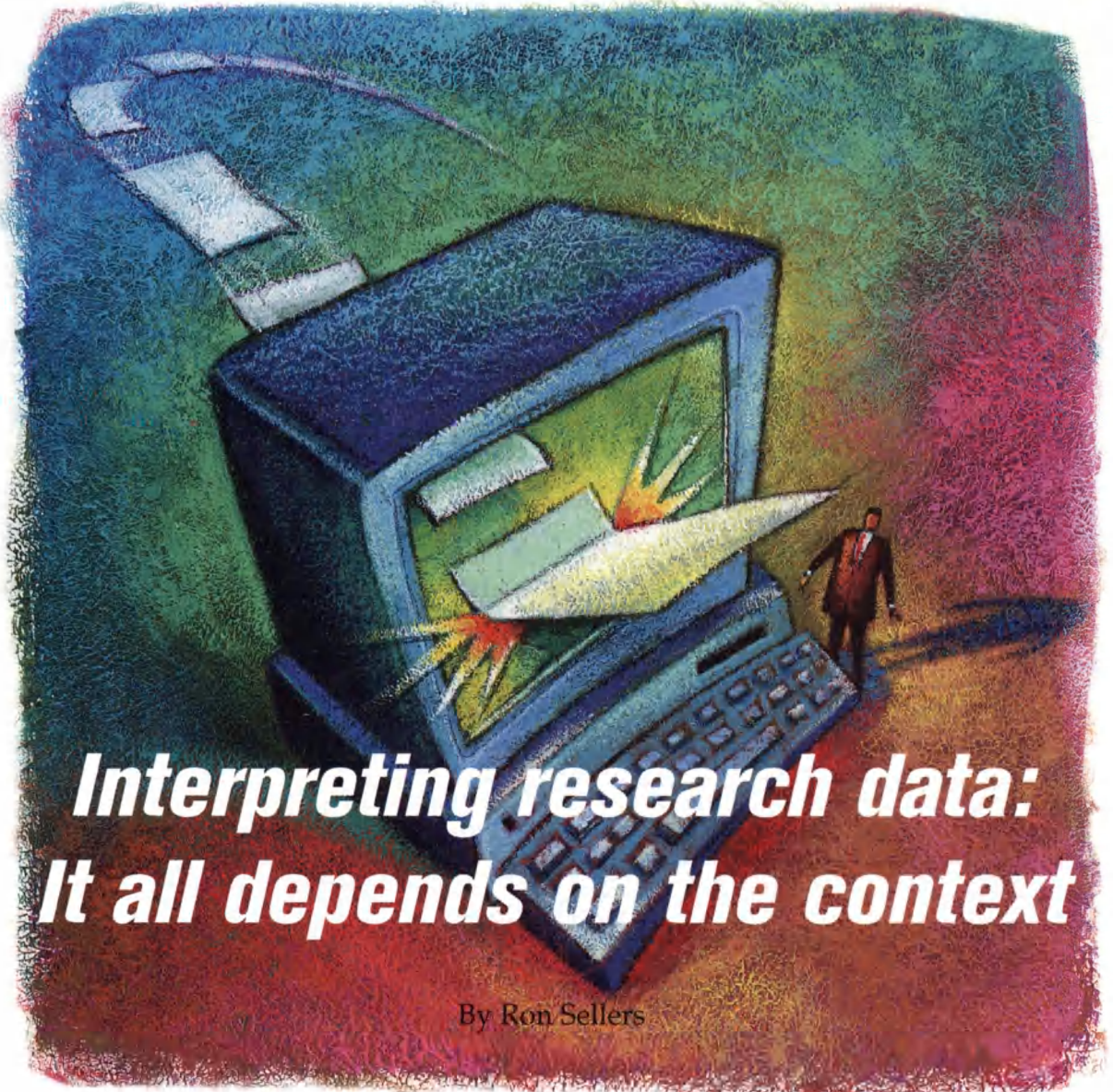
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Interpreting research data: It all depends on the context

By Ron Sellers

Editor's note: Ron Sellers is president of Ellison Research, Phoenix. He can be reached at 602-493-3500 or at ronsellers@ellisonresearch.com.

Sixty percent of your customers just gave your company a top-box rating on a five-point scale of overall customer satisfaction.

Good or bad?

Well, if last year's rating was 40 percent, this is probably cause for a celebration — unless the goal for this year was 80 percent. Similarly, if your competition is all at 80 percent, you may be in trouble. But if the competition hovers around 20 percent satisfaction, you look terrific by comparison.

It all depends on the context. It may be possible to compare your findings to competitive surveys or industry standards. In many cases, however, there is no readily available context. This is especially true when creating a baseline survey to track data over time. In future waves, you'll be able to see changes in the data, but to start out, is your 60 percent top-box rating good or bad?

This is not just a problem with customer satisfaction surveys. Let's say your company or client is relatively new to gathering information. A study discovers that 25 percent of your customers also purchase from the competition. Is this high or low? The same

study shows that 50 percent of your customers have been doing business with your company for less than two years. Is this good or bad? This could suggest heavy recent growth (good), or it could point to high customer turnover (not good).

Often, the only context that exists is within the minds of the company leaders. Just as often, their expectations and desires will vary substantially from one key executive to the next. It isn't uncommon to present findings in a meeting and have one person surprised at how high the satisfaction level is, while the next person is shocked at how low it is.

A very simple exercise can help to

bring leaders together on this issue, while establishing context for the findings at the same time. This four-step process can be handled as follows:

- First, agree on the most important findings from the study. Before the findings have been presented or made public, establish the key data points coming from the research. What are the five or 10 most important findings that will be the focus of the study? For a customer satisfaction study for a provider of value-priced consumer goods, a sample list might look like this:

1. Overall top-box satisfaction with the purchase.
2. Top-box satisfaction with the value received from the purchase.
3. Intent to repurchase.
4. Willingness to purchase from a competitor for a lower price.
5. Top-box satisfaction with the quality of the product itself.

These five data points, or others like them, may describe the most important elements of the study. This step is best accomplished with the researcher

and the end users of the data, who will be setting the agenda for any changes that must be made as a result of the findings.

- Second, have the team members each set realistic goals for what they hope the research will show. Each individual should write down what they would be satisfied with for each of the most important data points.

- Third, have the team members each predict what they believe the research will show. This may or may not be the same number as appeared in step two. For instance, the marketing director may wish for overall customer satisfaction of 60 percent, but honestly believe it is closer to 40 percent. On the other hand, the product manager may be satisfied with a 60 percent rating, but believe that the real rating will come back as 90 percent satisfaction.

Even if these were the only three steps to the process, this exercise will often have substantial value. For one thing, managers frequently don't know how to react to study findings

because they didn't know what to expect, and hadn't really thought it through. In addition, it's not uncommon for different leaders in a firm to have totally different expectations of what their customers will say. Much worse is that leaders may also have completely different views of what the company's goals should be in these important areas. Steps one through three will alert them to these differences, and properly managed, this can mark the start of a process to crystallize company goals and expectations.

Finally, this will also help managers act on the research findings. Frequently, studies don't get used to their full potential because different people come away with different ideas on what should be done with the information. If the end users are unified in their view of what is important, what their expectations are, and what their goals are as a company, the study is much more likely to receive action and attention when the data points to problems.

- Fourth, compare goals and expect-

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tations with the actual study data. This will reveal gaps among expectations, goals, and reality. Let's take the example given in step one, and fill in some sample figures from this exercise.

What do these figures show? First, the leaders already anticipate a higher-than-desired level of willingness to switch to a competitor due to price. They also believe their company will fall short of the overall satisfaction goal among customers. These two findings alone should open up some very useful dialogue among key managers in the company.

The findings should also be an eye-opener for these managers. First, their goals probably aren't high enough in overall satisfaction, and their expectations of company performance certainly aren't. There needs to be an exploration of why they felt the company is under-performing in these areas, and why goals are set so

low.

Second, there is much more customer satisfaction with the quality of the product than they expected. Not only that, but concerns about customer defections due to price are far

vulnerable than they thought to competitive price cuts.

Of course, the study will be more comprehensive than the five data points presented here. Assuming that careful examination of the complete data confirms these topline assumptions, what you now have is a leadership team in agreement about what the most important questions are, what the surprises were, and where action is needed. They have also begun discussing why they expected satisfaction to be so low.

In some cases, research may point toward necessary improvements in the product or service — in others, company leaders just need a more realistic view of what is going on in the marketplace. By having the end users of the data set forth their goals and expectations beforehand, you have a more useful set of findings as a result. □

Data Point	Goal	Expectation	Actual
Overall satisfaction with the purchase	60%	50%	68%
Satisfaction with the value	75%	75%	59%
Repurchase intent	80%	80%	70%
Willingness to purchase from a competitor	15%	30%	54%
Satisfaction with the quality of the product itself	60%	60%	81%

greater in reality than even in their fears. Finally, satisfaction with value was lower than they expected. The combination of these three findings suggests that their products may not be the value-pricing leaders the managers believe them to be. There is evidence here that although overall satisfaction is better than they believed, the company may be much more

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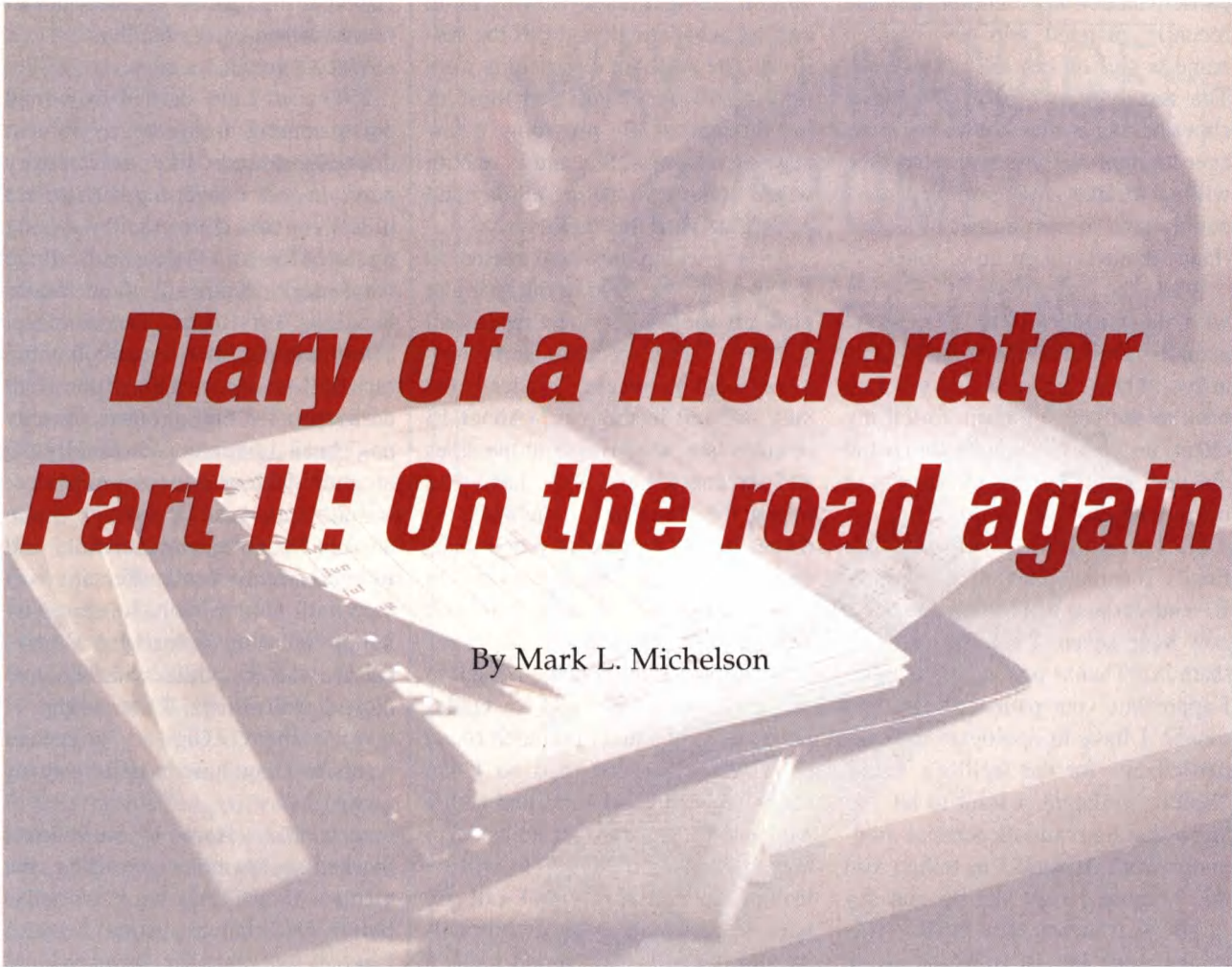
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Diary of a moderator **Part II: On the road again**

By Mark L. Michelson

Editor's note: Mark Michelson is president/CEO of Michelson & Associates, Inc., an Atlanta market research firm. He can be reached at focus@onramp.net or 770-955-5400. Part I appeared in the December issue.

There is much more to moderating focus groups than what is seen through the mirror. Professional moderators must manage multiple priorities while dealing with numerous unexpected challenges.

This diary is a composite of a typical week in my life as a moderator. It is my hope that this diary will help others involved with focus groups understand the many tasks, challenges and obstacles that a moderator faces in their work. Any resemblance

to actual facilities or situations is not coincidental. However, names have been changed to protect the clueless.

At the end of part I, I was just beginning a session on publishing in Boston with a group of "professional" participants (consumers — but the kind who seem to participate in sessions for a living) in a frightful facility. The week improves — I promise. (Note: Boston is not a bad place to conduct focus groups — over the past 14 years I've experienced many excellent facilities, professionals, participants and meals in Beantown).

TUESDAY

7:45 p.m. Finished the first of two sessions. It seemed like pulling teeth, but I was finally able to get the participants to express themselves

coherently. We even gained a few new ideas on the topic. My client, Judi, who is still waiting on her dinner, seems satisfied with the session. As we grope through some stale pretzels and chips, we discuss some additional topics to explore with the second group.

I seek out Jessica, our hostess, to inquire about dinner for my client. She apologizes and says it was ordered and should be delivered soon. I have to remind her the discussion room needs cleaning to prepare for our next group.

8:10 p.m. Three of the 12 participants have arrived. I go out to the lobby to look them over. They appear intelligent yet bored as they thumb through last year's *People* magazines. A fourth arrives while I'm in

the lobby. The receptionist, who demands to see ID from the participant, looks over her list and says curtly "You're not on my list." The participant politely mentions that she recently married and her maiden name is still on her driver's license. The receptionist growls something about having to check with her manager for approval. At this point I'd be willing to take anyone — at least I could make something out of a quad (fancy name for a group of four).

While the receptionist is checking with the manager (who I've yet to actually meet), two more participants arrive. Whew! Now I've got six. I go back to the viewing room to tell my client the news. Though somewhat disappointed, she says she's ready to begin with the six.

8:20 p.m. The receptionist has finally finished checking everyone's ID and Jessica informs me that we now have seven. I ask her to bring them in. "Thanks for coming tonight. I appreciate your patience." I feel as though I have to apologize to these participants for the facility's faults. "Before we begin, I want to let you know that I am an independent moderator from Atlanta. I'm telling you this because I may slip up and say 'y'all' — it means 'you guys'." This brings some laughs from the group

and everyone seems to relax a little.

10:00 p.m. The session has ended and I visit with Judi for a few minutes before leaving for the hotel. I turn on the light in the viewing room and ask what she thought of the sessions. She says the discussions were informative and confirmed most of her thoughts while providing a few new ideas as well. She and I are both wiped out after traveling all day and putting up with this facility.

After packing the books used in the sessions, we head to the lobby to pick up the audio/video tapes and screeners. The receptionist is now gone (thank goodness). Jessica is the only one left in the place. About 15 minutes later she brings out the tapes and screeners. I ask if she has a bag to put the tapes in — she says the owner hasn't ordered any new bags and offers a box. I stash the tapes in my already over-packed notebook case.

11:00 p.m. Finally make it back to the hotel room. My flight for Dallas leaves at 7:00 a.m. (I prefer to travel early when on road trips so I can check into the hotel early and take a nap to recharge and get adjusted to the time change.) My client will be leaving on a later flight. I call my wife to tell her about the awful facility and phone-kiss her good night. I

have a hard time falling asleep - I'm feeling somewhat anxious over the sessions tonight. Actually, I feel OK about the discussions, but I'm disturbed at the lack of professionalism demonstrated by the facility.

WEDNESDAY

2:00 a.m. I am startled by a loud noise coming from the room next door — sounds like a fraternity party. In vain I cover my head with a pillow — they counteract by turning up the MTV. As a last resort I call the front desk. Knowing they should handle it, I try to fall back to sleep. Thirty minutes later, boom boom, rap rap. Still no security. I call the front desk again — they promise security has been dispatched. Finally at around 3:00 a.m. the noise subsides.

4:30 a.m. Like it or not, I am awake. No coffee in the room and room service doesn't offer any service until 6:00. Slowly I unpack my laptop and plug in to check E-mail. Click...wheeee...zzzzz...chkchk...ahh. Now downloading...49 messages.

re: *Focus Groups* (someone wants to know how to be in a focus group).

re: *Hi!* (from a multi-level marketing spammer extolling the virtues of an amazing new belly-button lint removal system).

re: *Request for proposal* (a multinational company needs assistance with qualitative research on three continents within the next 30 days...this gets my interest.)

re: *When in Chicago* (from a focus group facility selling their services — the name sounds familiar — it's from the one that didn't respond to my RFP last week).

After responding to the E-mail it's time to check my list of things to do today: Flight leaves at 7:00 a.m. Arrives Dallas at 10:00 a.m. I need to call a few clients and finish a report sometime today. Maybe I can arrange a visit with a client in Dallas while I'm there.

5:30 a.m. Better get ready to go. The hotel shower seems willing to only drip today — and the little water that does come out is ice cold.

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I call the front desk — after 16 rings someone informs me that the water is not working today and maintenance should have it fixed by 7:00. I tell them my flight leaves at 7:00. They apologize, but offer no solutions. I resign to a sponge bath with a frozen washcloth.

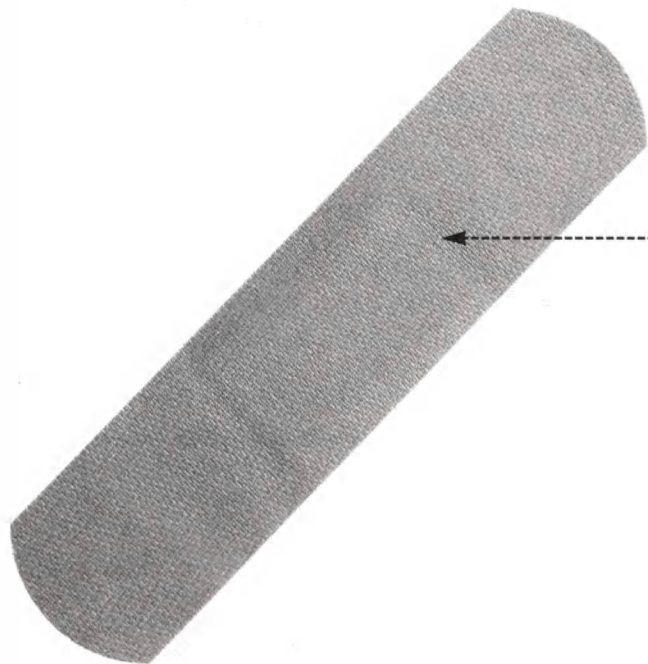
After checking out I head to the airport. The traffic is not moving and my plane leaves in less than an hour. At times like this I wonder if it is worth the hassle. I maneuver past a stalled truck and into the tunnel — return the car to the rental company with 20 minutes to flight time. I sit in the rental van for what seems like an eternity, until finally I'm let off at the Delayed Airlines terminal. I rush into the airport to security. They want to check my laptop — thank goodness the batteries are charged. Finally, running to the gate I see a hundred or so people standing in line.

An announcement in thick Bostonian accent comes across: "Flight 457 to Daallas is delayed due to heavy fahhg. All paassengers please remaain the gate area until further notice." A collective groan resonates from the crowd. I make my way to the "no-service" counter and ask how long the flight will be delayed. The representative, without looking at me, barks, "How should I know? Do I look like Mother Nature?"

Time to work on that report. I prepare the introduction including the objectives and methodology, then outline the summary according to objectives. Next I begin pulling key quotes from the transcripts. Some interesting comments from these sessions. Just as I begin reviewing the second transcript an announcement is made that the plane is now boarding. Only 90 minutes late — not too bad considering the fahhg in Baastan.

Rushing to save my report, I put the computer to sleep and re-pack the laptop. They're now up to seating row 12 out of 196. Luckily I have been confirmed in first class (one of the few perks I get from traveling all

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the time).

After waiting for another 10 minutes to board, I finally find my seat...occupied. I tell the other passenger that he is in my seat and show him my ticket. He produces a ticket with the same seat. Finally a flight attendant comes to my rescue, or so I thought. "Sir, since you boarded late, we gave your seat away."

I protested, "But I checked in at the gate and I have my ticket right here!"

"Sorry sir, please take any seat you can find in coach — we're ready to leave once you are seated." The only seat available is between the lavatory and the engine in the middle of a five-seat row. Great.

I decide to plow into the report and ignore these upsetting twists of fate. I guess I should expect this now from Delayed Airlines (Motto: Delaying Everyone, Lying To All). At least I was able to complete the report during the flight — now I just need to modem it back to my editor for final review and printing — I'll do this

once I check in at the hotel.

Once we arrive in Dallas everyone rushes to get out of the plane as though we were in a crowded NYC subway car. I decide to wait it out until everyone has left. Besides, I'm in row 195 in the middle of five seats.

Once I get off the plane I call in to check my voice mail — 15 messages. I listen to most and return a few urgent calls. Then I find my way to the rental car shuttle — which in Dallas is a bus that serves many different rental car companies. After waiting for 10 minutes in the "Preferred Customer Line," I am given the keys to a maroon sardine can. At least it starts up on the first try, and the AC works.

Time to find the hotel and check in. Once there I can relax and get some work done. I've stayed at this hotel before so I'm fairly comfortable because I know what to expect. The employees at the front desk are helpful and efficient and before long I'm in my room unpacking my bags

and setting up my computer. Time to return those other calls. Nothing too urgent. One of the calls is from the facility in Dallas — everyone's confirmed and set to go. I log on to the server at the office and upload the report — my editor says she'll handle it from there.

Ahhh. I can relax. By now it's almost 1:30. Too tired to visit my client, I'm ready for a nap. Alarm is set for 4:00. Buzzzzzzzz. Time to get going. Since the shower in Boston wasn't working, I spend some extra time relaxing in this one.

By 4:45 I'm ready to go to the facility, which is located within a few miles. Even though I've been to this facility several times before, this time it appears somewhat shop-worn with a distinctively early '80s decor. I try to reserve judgment about the quality having gone downhill as well, but sometimes it's hard not to judge a book by its cover.

When I enter the facility reception area, the hostess stands, greets me cheerfully and asks if I am Mark. I tell her I am. She introduces herself as Melissa and says "I've talked with you on the phone several times. It's nice to meet you finally. Michelle, our manager, is looking forward to seeing you. I'll show you to your room. Let me get David to help you carry your bag."

(David appears from out of nowhere and takes the heavy bag with the books I'll be reviewing in the session.)

"Help yourself to the drinks in the refrigerator. If you need to use the phone, just dial 9 to get an outside line. I'll be right back with Michelle."

I want to hire this young lady — she's an angel.

"Hi Mark, I'm so glad to see you again!" Michelle says as she bounces into the viewing room. "We've really enjoyed working with you on this project and want you to know if there's anything you need, anything at all, feel free to ask Melissa, David (who offers a handshake) or me. We had fun recruiting this project for



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you. With the screener you provided we were able to find qualified people fairly easily. There were several people who said they were really looking forward to coming because they've never been in a focus group."

Compared to last night in Boston, I feel like I'm in moderator heaven. I inform Melissa that my clients should be arriving any minute. Melissa responds, "We will bring them back immediately and make sure they're comfortable. We have a fresh fruit and cheese dish they can snack on before their dinner comes."

While waiting for my clients, I call in to check my voice mail once again — 12 messages. The facility in San Francisco wants to confirm the number of clients attending and lets me know that we have full recruits for both sessions. I call the San Francisco facility, give them the info and thank them for calling. They ask where I'll be staying in San Francisco so they can contact me directly should anything change.

Judi and her gang enter the room. "This place seems much better than last night. Look, they've even got fresh flowers on the table and fruit and cheese! Good choice Mark!" I tell them this facility really seems to care about their customers — and unfortunately not all facilities are as concerned with customer service. It's hard to tell, even from the brochures and phone calls, unless you've been there. Fortunately I've been here before, and even though the facility is looking a little tired, the service seems to get better with every visit.

While my clients and I are talking in the viewing room, I notice David setting up the discussion room. He arranges all the chairs neatly, cleans the table and puts away all miscellaneous materials. Next he brings ice, drinks and a plate of cookies into the discussion room for the participants. David then knocks on the viewing room door and asks if I'll be needing anything else in the discussion room. I tell him I will need an easel and a small table to display the books. He

says he knows the perfect thing — and rushes off to set up the display and easel.

5:50 p.m. Without asking, Melissa brings a list of the participants who have arrived. So far eight of the 12 have signed in. She mentions that one of the participants looks like they have a cold and we should consider sending them home. I tell her I trust her judgment.

By 6:00 all 12 participants have arrived. I prefer to have smaller groups with no more than 10. Actually, eight is preferred. Melissa offers suggestions on a few of the participants we should send home. My clients and I agree with her suggestions and I let her know I'm ready to begin.

In the discussion room before the participants arrive, I fix myself a soda then stand by the door to greet everyone. "Good evening! I appreciate your coming tonight."

The rest of the evening goes remarkably well. Everyone participates openly and evenly. Near-complete shows for both sessions and many first-timers. My clients and I feel we learned much more from these participants than from those in Boston. The mood and setting of the facility made it more relaxing and natural for everyone. The manage-

ment and staff at this facility understands the definition of facilitate — to make things easy.

After the last session, as my clients and I review the discussions, David asks if he should repackage the books we used in the session. Melissa then appears with our tapes and screeners along with a goodie bag containing fruits, cookies and treats for the road. Simple gestures like these go a long way with me. We thank Melissa and David for their hospitality as we are leaving.

That evening back at the hotel, I rest well knowing that my client is satisfied. I feel good about my profession - knowing that professionals like Melissa, David and Michelle can make a difference in the quality of qualitative research.

Tomorrow my flight for San Francisco leaves at 8:00 a.m. Another client, a different topic and one of my favorite cities. My wife will be meeting me on Friday for the weekend. I expect everything will go smoothly with tomorrow's travel and sessions. However, once you're on the road doing focus groups, I know a lot can happen that's beyond your control. Preparation and experience will determine how you play the cards you're dealt. □

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Survey Monitor

continued from p. 6

animal slippers, and fitness equipment were also expected to be hot product categories.

More than a third of all respondents (35 percent) planned to complete their holiday shopping in the first two weeks of December, while 23 percent stated that they shop for Christmas throughout the season. Fourteen percent of shoppers planned to complete their holiday shopping in the last two weeks of December, while 11 percent said they would complete their shopping during the last two weeks of November.

Respondents who expected to spend less compared to 1996 were those consumers with household incomes of more than \$50,000 (-3 percent) and 18-34-year-olds (-4 percent). Among those consumers who expected to spend more compared to last year were individuals 55 years or older (+3 percent).

The IMRA/Gallup survey was conducted during October 1997 and is based on a random telephone poll of 1,009 adult consumers nationwide. For more information call Robin Lanier at the IMRA, 703-841-2300.

Consumers dominate paging

"PageTrac '97," a study by the Strategis Group, a Washington, D.C., telecommunications consulting firm, reveals a radical shift in the customer composition of the paging industry. Over the past five years, the number of personal paging users grew from 4 million to more than 21 million.

"It is no surprise that subscriber growth is being fueled by consumer adoption," says John Zahurancik, paging analyst for the Strategis Group. "However, the pace of change from paging as a business tool to paging as a personal communications device has been

incredible."

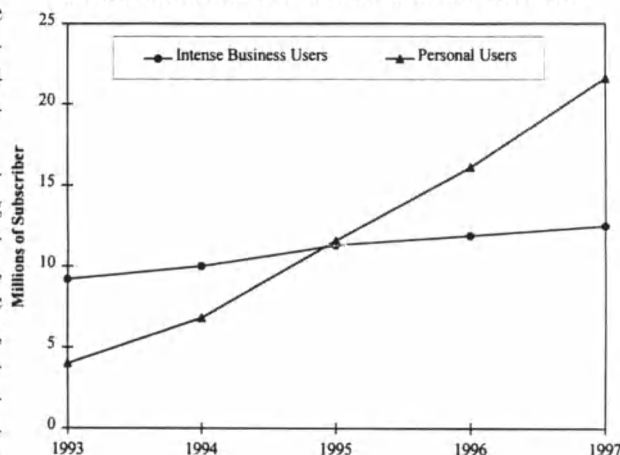
While the number of intense business users grew from 9.2 million to 12.5 million between 1993 and 1997, the percentage of total users with little or no business usage of their pager expanded from 23 percent in 1993 to 46 percent in 1997. In addition, almost 70 percent of new paging users are personal paging users.

"PageTrac '97" also finds that personal paging users are much younger than traditional business subscribers. Half of personal users are under the age of 29, compared to only 18 percent of business users. While carriers and manufacturers are currently targeting the teenage market segment, this data indicates huge growth and potential among twenty-something consumers.

As consumers continue to dominate the expansion of the industry, operators face new opportunities for brand differentiation of paging services. Although 44 percent of all users do not know who they purchase paging services from, personal paging users are much more likely to know the name of their provider than business customers. Since 92 percent of personal users pay for their own service, they are more involved in the selection of the operator and in the choice to continue service.

For more information call contact John Zahurancik at 202-530-7500, via E-mail at jjz@strategisgroup.com, or visit the company's Web site at www.strategisgroup.com.

Personal and Business Total Subscribers



Most welcome government control of Internet

Despite the fact that 29 percent, or nearly one-third, of all Americans access the Internet, four of five say they are concerned about what can be found, and who might find it, while cruising the Information Superhighway.

In a nationwide telephone survey of a random sample of Americans ages 18 and older conducted by Chilton Research Services, Radnor, Pa., 80 percent of respondents answered "Yes" when asked, "Do you think that the government should take steps to control access to pornographic or sexually explicit material on the Internet to protect children and teens under 18 years of age?"

A significantly higher percentage of women than men favored government intervention. More than 88 percent of women invite censorship or some other action, while 71 percent of men feel such steps are warranted.

Respondents were similarly divided by economic and education levels. In all demographic categories a resounding majority wants to limit youngsters' access to sexually explicit material on the Internet, but some groups feel more strongly than others. For instance, among households with incomes below \$35,000 annually, 85 percent want Uncle Sam to step in. Among respondents with household incomes above \$50,000

the percentage drops to 71 percent. Similarly, nine in 10 respondents with a high school diploma or less said the government should control access, while seven in 10 who had at least attended college want such action taken.

In addition to worrying what their children might see on the Internet, Americans worry about what others might be able to learn about their private lives. Better than five of every six respondents

(84 percent) said they are concerned about unauthorized or illegal access to personal and financial information through the Internet. A solid majority (65 percent) of all respondents said they were "very concerned," while another 19 percent admitted to being "somewhat concerned."

Fewer than 10 percent of respondents were "not at all concerned." Those with less than a high school education and those over 65 years of age expressed less concern, possibly because these groups are not as likely as others to use the Internet.

The Chilton EXPRESS telephone omnibus survey was conducted among a sample of 1,000 American men and women ages 18 and older, between April 16 and April 20, 1997. The margin of error is +3 percent. For more information call 610-964-4600.

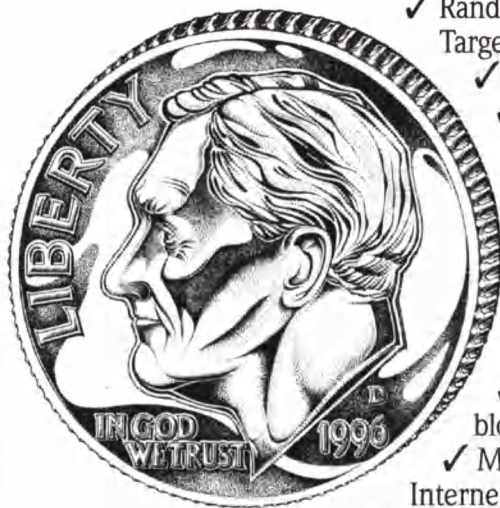
Shoplifting, employee theft and worthless checks top supermarket losses

Shoplifting and employee theft are still the most common causes of theft, costing the supermarket industry more money each year, according to the seventh annual "Security and Loss Prevention Issues Survey." Conducted by Food Marketing Institute (FMI) and sponsored by Checkpoint Systems, the national survey questioned 74 FMI member companies who collectively operate more than 11,000 supermarkets.

Supermarket companies apprehended approximately 252,264 shoplifters in 1996, which averages about 41 incidents per store. The average value of the recovered merchandise exceeded \$8.6 million, and the items included cigarettes (41 percent) and health and beauty care items (36 percent).

FMI members in the survey reported an average of 2.8 incidents of detected employee theft per store, resulting in a total of 18,054 detected incidents. The average value of cash and merchandise recovered per incident was \$175.14. Forty-four percent of the detected incidents occurred at

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the checkout, and approximately 23 percent occurred in the sales and service areas.

"Clearly, high-tech security measures such as electronic article surveillance (EAS) systems and closed-circuit television (CCTV) systems are being used effectively to combat internal and external thefts in the super-market industry," says Charles I. Miller, vice president of loss prevention services for FMI.

In addition, the survey reports that worthless checks, robberies and burglaries are serious loss prevention concerns. In 1996, worthless checks were responsible for a total net loss of more than \$111 million, with an average of \$70.30 per check and an average loss of \$1.7 million per company. This total net loss is up from the \$70 million lost in 1995.

Companies that experienced robberies — approximately 73 percent of the respondents — lost an average of \$2,547.12 per robbery. About 50 percent of the robberies in 1996 occurred between Friday and Sunday, 6:00 p.m. and 12:00 a.m. Handguns were used

88.9 percent of the time. According to the survey, one employee was killed during robberies in 1996.

This survey also contains information on how drug testing, theft hotlines and preemployment testing or integrity testing can help prevent company theft. The report also summarizes the impact of targeted loss prevention programs on shrinkage rates. For more information on the "Security and Loss Prevention Issues Survey," contact the FMI Publications and Video Sales Department at 202-429-8298.

Fax machines appearing in more homes

Nearly 15 percent (14.9 percent) of U.S. households now have fax machines, according to a recent national survey by Decision Analyst, Inc., Arlington, Texas.

In its June 1997 survey of 6,490 households, Decision Analyst found that the number of homes with fax machines increased more than four percentage points since a similar sur-

vey was conducted during the first quarter of 1996. In that survey, 10.6 percent of respondents said they had home fax machines.

"The growing popularity of home fax machines is somewhat surprising. We normally think of fax machines as primarily for business purposes," says Jerry W. Thomas, president and chief executive officer of Decision Analyst, Inc. "The growing home use of fax machines indicates that many Americans are operating businesses from their homes or conducting business from home. It may also reflect the growing number of PCs with built-in fax capability."

Decision Analyst found that fax machines are most common in households headed by consumers 18 to 34 years old (where 18.6 percent of households own fax machines). They are used least often in households headed by consumers 55 or older (9.3 percent of households).

Fax machines are most common among households with annual earnings of \$50,000 or more (24.1 percent ownership level). Among households with lower incomes (under \$30,000), only 6 percent of homes have fax machines.

The national survey of home fax machines has a margin error of ± 1 percent. For more information call 817-640-6166 or visit the company's Web site at <http://www.decisionanalyst.com>.

Infomercials unpopular but effective

A national study by St. Louis, Mo.-based Aragon Consulting Group's research division indicates that nearly two-thirds (65.8 percent) of all Americans have watched an infomercial; however, nearly 86 percent of these infomercial viewers do not report an increased interest in viewing infomercials as a result of having seen one.

"And although these people have seen infomercials, our findings show that only 11.8 percent of the viewers watch them from beginning to end before deciding to make a purchase," says Vicki Savala, senior vice president of Aragon Consulting Group. "In

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fact, within 15 minutes of tuning into an infomercial, we found that more than half of the viewers say they are ready to tune back out."

Young, single people appear to have the highest propensity for watching infomercials, Savala says, noting that 18.4 percent of people age 18 to 34 say they might watch an entire infomercial, compared to 9.1 percent of people age 35 to 54, and 11.2 percent of those age 55 and older.

"And once an infomercial has reeled in a viewer, the likelihood that the individual will buy the product is fairly high — 30 percent of people who say they have watched an infomercial also say they bought the product being promoted on the show," says Savala. "Even so most buyers are not frequent purchasers."

The Aragon data shows that more than 75 percent of people who have purchased an item from an infomercial say they do so less than five times a year. And the most frequently purchased items are products for health

and beauty products.

Almost 62 percent of people surveyed say the quality of merchandise sold on infomercials is on a par with that of products sold in retail stores; however, 26.4 percent say they expect to find items of higher quality in retail stores. Less than 6 percent say that merchandise sold in catalogs is of higher quality.

"However, the majority of consumers would not go so far as to say that products sold through infomercials are a better value than those sold in stores," says Savala. Forty-eight percent of those who participated in the study disagree with such a statement.

"Our research indicates that convenience drives consumer behavior when it comes to television shopping," Savala says. Nearly a fourth of consumers believe shopping from the sofa is a time-saver. Another 16.2 percent of consumers say they like the fact that they do not have to leave home to make their purchase; 8.9 percent say it's advantageous because they can shop any time; and 5.7 percent say

such shopping is simple and convenient.

However, consumers also say there are some disadvantages associated with purchasing items sold via an infomercial. Chief among them is uncertain product quality. In addition, 19.3 percent of consumers agree that they like to inspect a product before purchasing it; and nearly half of the respondents in the Aragon study also indicate that infomercial delivery charges are expensive.

A national random sample of 398 was drawn in the spring of 1997 to complete Aragon's research, which produced results within a ± 5 percent margin of error. For more information call 314-726-3403.

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Product & Service Update

continued from p. 8

SQL Server, and others.

Designed as a relational database system supporting multi-dimensional queries, the Forecast Warehouse can store individual item histories, forecasts, overrides, promotional information, annotations and different versions of the same, along with accuracy calculations and user-defined fields containing data replicated from the host system. Users can execute pre-defined or

ad-hoc SQL queries into the database to create custom views of the data, as well as create their own calculations such as day's supply, inventory stockturns, standard cost of forecast error, pro-forma revenue change and more.

Database navigation functionality includes "drag and drop" hierarchical roll-up structures and graphics. Data processing functionality such as batch processing of forecasts is included. Users may also create aggregate or summary level tables as needed, to combine bottom-up and top-down forecasting.

Non-specialized users or remote users may choose to use data entry forms to supply forecast-related information to the TimeTrends database. These forms can be customized using MS-Access or Lotus Notes.

Designed to run under Windows 95 or Windows NT, the software is network-compatible. For more information call 514-683-9778 or visit the company's Web site at <http://www.login.net/alt-c/>.

Shareware edition of survey package available

A shareware edition of E-Form Version 1.0, a data collection program from Beach Tech that allows users to collect information such as survey and registration forms via E-mail, is now available for downloading from <http://www.beachtech.com>. The shareware version displays a promotional message in E-mail forms and is limited to 50 participants. When you purchase E-Form you receive a key that unlocks all features and removes the promotional message. For more information call 800-323-0434 or visit the company's Web site.

Saja Software intros E-mail module

Saja Software, Inc., Longmont, Colo., is now shipping Survey Select Web/E-mail Module 1.0, a new product that allows users to conduct electronic surveys from Web sites and via E-mail. Survey Select Web/E-mail works together with the company's Survey Select software program, allowing users to incorporate survey capabilities with-

in Web sites and conduct surveys with recipients around the world through E-mail.

After a survey is designed, Survey Select Web/E-mail allows the survey to be generated into an HTML format that can be placed on the Web site. The survey administrator can perform formatting changes or export the survey to a more sophisticated program for customized formats. Once a respondent has completed a survey on the Web site or through E-mail, they click the "submit" button and the survey will be sent back to the survey administrator. The survey answers can then be imported directly into Survey Select for analysis with no data entry.

A free, self-running demo and/or interactive trial version of Survey Select are available by visiting Saja Software's Web site at <http://www.surveyselect.com> or by calling 800-945-0040.

KD1 debuts Retail Discovery Suite

Knowledge Discovery One (KD1), Inc., Austin, Texas, has released its Retail Discovery Suite of client/server decision support applications. The Retail Discovery Suite provides retailers a detailed understanding of their advertising, merchandising, assortment, inventory, promotion, and vendor performance issues. The Retail Discovery Suite is made up of application modules that share a common architecture and intuitive user interface. KD1's applications are capable of supporting thousands of users and large volumes of data through a parallel design.

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BEHAVIORdynamics — A customer profiling and target marketing application. Where the customer identity is known, this application provides profiling, loyalty, and segmentation models and measurements.

BASKETdynamics and **PRO-****MOTION**dynamics are available now. **BEHAVIOR**dynamics will be available during the second quarter of 1998. For more information call 888-275-4531 or visit the company's Web site at <http://www.kd1.com>.

New Web site evaluation tool

Griggs-Anderson Research, Portland, Ore., has introduced **WebMetrics**, a Web site evaluation tool designed to gather information on site visitor interest, ease of use, and satisfaction. It also profiles visitors to determine whether the site is attracting its target demographic. The product uses Griggs-Anderson's Internet data collection tool, **NetReturn**, for capturing information from site visitors. Through **NetReturn**, a link is programmed onto the site to allow for random exposure to the survey. Once the link is established, the survey will be site activated for a set period of time. Reactivation of that survey can be accomplished with very little notice. For more information call Deb Givens at 503-241-8036 or visit the company's Web site at <http://www.gar.com>.

North American youth study from Angus Reid

Toronto-based Angus Reid Group plans to conduct an in-depth study of youth and popular culture in North America. Titled the "popCulture report," the annual study will provide clients with insights into the latest signs, symbols and trends in pop culture. The study combines a number of different qualitative methodologies including interviews with business elite, on-site ethnographic research and focus groups. The first phase involves 50 business elite interviews with key North American figures in fashion, music and media. Then, the study team will visit seven major underground centers in North America to observe and interview patrons of clubs, bars and lounges. The final portion of the study will test the findings of the first two phases against the reality of mainstream youth via 23 focus groups across Middle America and suburban Canada. For more information call Karl Troutfetter at 612-904-6970 or E-mail ktroutf@angusreid.ca.

Data Entry, AnswerTree from SPSS

SPSS Inc., Chicago, has introduced **SPSS Data Entry**, a data collection product that allows users to design and process questionnaires. Surveys are created using "drag and drop" forms design. The program provides on-line forms to speed keyboard entry. Data cleaning rules check both the logic and accuracy of the entered data while skip and fill rules guide entry through only the relevant questions. SPSS has also introduced **AnswerTree**, a tree classification product which finds segments, builds profiles, predicts outcomes and uncovers patterns in data. The product contains four decision tree algorithms for a total of eight decision tree methods, each working best with certain types of data so users can apply the right algorithm for each situation. With a dynamic interactive tree program, users can identify and examine key groups in their data. For more information call 800-543-5815 or visit the company's Web site at <http://www.spss.com>.

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Constructing

continued from p. 13
behaviors and deliverables.

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Why does this difference between aggregate perceptions and individually accurate observations and measurements matter so much? After all, perceptions drive customer satisfaction and sales.

The answer is this: Observations and measurements provide calibration that can be used to change behavior much more efficiently than perceptions.

Let's look at an example. A fast-food restaurant company knows that speed of service is a critical factor in its customers' selection process. Additionally, its scores have fallen on this attribute within the target market in the company's biannual attitude, trial and usage tracking studies. The company's management has numerous choices for how it responds to this information and

what steps it takes to improve its speed of service perceptions:

- Tell its operations people to improve "or else," then wait for the results of the next tracking study to see what happens. Of course, they could lose a lot of customers and a lot of potential sales during this process.
- Another choice is to make changes in its menu and systems to make it easier for employees to fill orders faster. McDonald's did this when it stopped toasting burger buns.
- The company can also decide that the issue is perception, not reality, and that it can change the perception by training service people to be friendlier so customers don't mind waiting. Or it might decide the issue is too much reality and take down all the large clocks installed recently to create awareness of time and speed of service.
- If management is lucky, however, and if it has been wise, it will have several sources of empirical data — from point-of-sale readings to ongo-

ing mystery shopper timings — to help determine what is driving the drop in perceptions. Is speed of service really slower? Is it slower everywhere at all dayparts and weekparts? Is it only slower during dayparts and weekparts in which responsibility has recently been shifted from managers to shift leaders? Is the time from order-taking to food delivery slower or is the line longer? Is actual delivery time the same, but perceptions down because the competition is now faster than it used to be?

Change perceptions

Mystery shopping can not only help define the real problem, but after a solution is introduced, it can help provide the necessary ongoing specific feedback to help the employees at each location deliver whatever is required to ensure the improved perceptions that build sales and show up on the next wave of the tracking study.

In short, perceptions help drive sales. One of the measures market research can provide is the strength of and changes in perceptions. A well-designed and properly implemented mystery shopper program can measure the specific components of employee behavior, product deliverables and customer experience that drive those perceptions. How can a company and its mystery shopping company develop a "well-designed and properly implemented" mystery shopper program?

- Measure what matters and what the employees at the location can control. First a company must determine what employee behavior and which product deliverables help drive its business at the point of customer contact, then set standards for the smallest measurable components. Mystery shoppers can't help build vacuum cleaner sales over the long term if the vacuums don't clean well. What they can do is help ensure that customers who walk into the vacuum cleaner store are waited on promptly and politely and that the sales pitch is presented consistently and com-

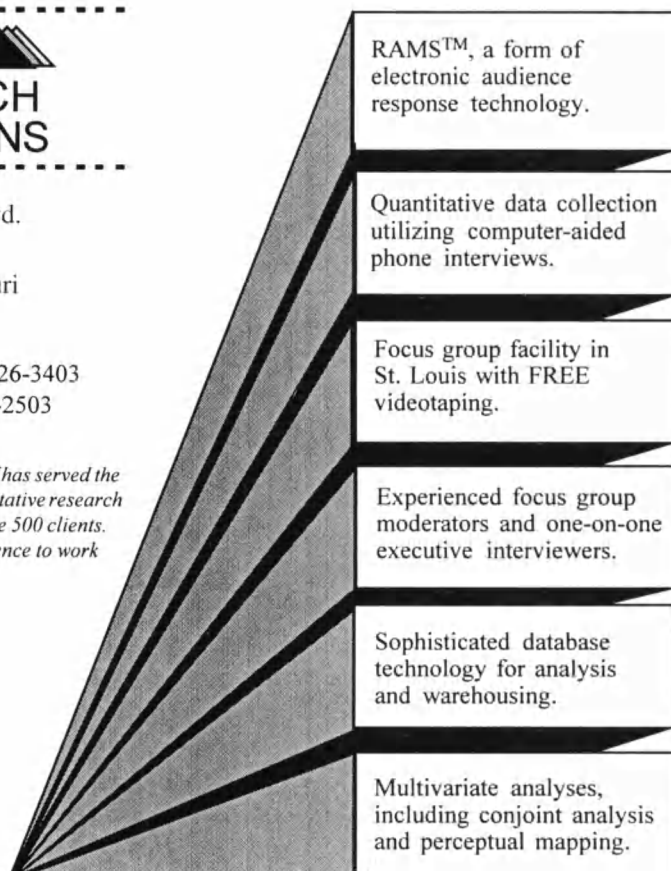


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pletely. But before addressing mystery shoppers, any company needs to know that it has the right product and what is required on the part of employees to sell, deliver and service the product to gain maximum long-term benefits.

- Create an objective mystery shopper evaluation form. Although perceptions can be included as interesting footnotes, the observations and measurements should be as objective as possible. Generally, that means questions with yes or no answers and specific measurements of time and, where appropriate, temperatures, weights and distances. Ratings of 1 through 10 are fine for aggregate perceptions, but extremely difficult to teach shoppers to use reliably. If ratings must be used, better to stick with 1 through 3; the difference between "great," "acceptable" and "poor" is much easier to validate than the difference between 7 and 8.

- Set shopper requirements. For businesses that serve a broad target market, such as fast-food restaurants, requirements may be very basic, e.g., driver's license, reasonable intelligence, ability to follow directions and use measuring tools, availability at specified times and places, reliability. For other businesses, requirements can vary widely. Shoppers for packaged alcohol sales may be required to be 21, but look younger. Shoppers for financial institutions may need to be employed and live within a certain area. Shoppers for apartment leasing agents may need to fit specific socio-demographic profiles. Knowing who will use the training materials will make it easier to target them effectively.

- Create training materials. It's best to be brief and to the point, but assume little. Point out that "dirty" and "old" are different when rating the cleanliness of an older establishment. Recognize, however, that unless that's part of the shopper specifications, shoppers are not and should not pretend to be experts in the field being evaluated. Unless a

company specifically wants experts, most shoppers should maintain a customer's point of view. Training is not to teach them the business, but to ensure that they understand the questions, their role, the standards that should be applied, the use of any equipment required and any specifications for making the visit and reporting on it.

- Set up a visit schedule. Although some companies prefer totally random visits, the best shopper programs are based on creating daypart and weekpart comparability by geographical regions. This is important because it allows companies to look at trends and changes on a comparable basis. Most businesses not only experience peaks and valleys in customer traffic on a daily, weekly or monthly basis, they also staff differently at different times. While most businesses want all customers well-served, most make their money during busy periods, so that's when comparability in the data makes analysis and deciding on corrective action easier. Where scheduling is concerned more frequent is always better, but especially when a business or location is new.

- Make sure the shopper reporting process not only validates the data, but also turns it around quickly to

unit-level management. Although time requirements for processing reports vary based on complexity, "quickly" in this case means time should be measured in days, not weeks and never months. At the unit level, the manager will need to distinguish between personnel and systemic issues. The longer the time between shopper visit and report, the harder this is to do.

- Create a roll-up reporting and distribution system that gets the right information to the right people in a user-friendly format on a timely basis. The reports should help answer these questions:

- How am I (a unit, district, region, area, company) doing versus company standards?

- Was that good or bad?

- What changed? Specifically, when and where did it change?

Powerful tool

The bottom line is that in most businesses, the customer's experience at every point of contact directly affects future sales trends. A well-designed and properly implemented mystery shopper program can be one of management's most powerful tools to help make each customer contact memorably positive. □



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Established program

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verbal and written guidelines to help understand the clients' objectives. As part of the assignment, the shopper agrees to perform the shop within an acceptable time frame.

Step 5: Shopping procedures

Mystery shoppers visit the client retail locations during the specified time posing as typical customers. The shoppers then complete the questionnaires and report the results to the mystery shopping supplier via phone, mail or E-mail. Shoppers obtain receipts during their visit for validation purposes. Data is collected, coded, tabulated and/or compiled into reports.

Step 6: Quality control

Quality control is a vital step and an often overlooked process. During the quality control process, the completed questionnaires should be proofed to verify the time, location, data and other information of the shop for accuracy. While 100 percent of the documents will go through the quality control

process, we insist that at least 10 percent of a program's gathered surveys should be second-party validated to make sure a credible sample has been received.

Some suppliers contain and manage an in-house data processing department. Others contract outside data processing houses. Some client businesses prefer the use of a supplier that has on-site data processing capabilities because modifications to reports or changes to the deliverables can be provided to the client more expediently. Flexibility is a key attribute of a mystery shopping company since the customer service management process is ever changing. The mystery shopping supplier should be ready and able to adapt to the needs of its customer.

Step 7: Information analysis

This is the stage when information is provided from the supplier to the client. When compiling and comparing reports at this stage, a client should be able to isolate areas for improvement as well as highlight their strengths and weaknesses. Once compiled, the data is sorted based on the required deliver-

ables. Reports can be delivered to the client's headquarters as well as broken out by region, district, site etc. The supplier's experience can be used to provide a thorough understanding of the results, what they mean to a client's business and how the client can best obtain actionable information. Mystery shopping results should also be compared with other client market research data and overall customer satisfaction study scores. Executive summaries should be supplied to highlight important results.

Step 8: Client action

Once the data is delivered, appropriate action steps need to be put in place. These action steps are to be taken once an accurate assessment has been made and the client has come to a full understanding of the scope of the information provided. A few examples of client action include: modifying the current operational standards, focusing on training needs, or rewarding employees for achieving certain levels of customer service. The important thing is to communicate results, develop an action plan and monitor implementation of all action steps through fulfillment.

Step 9: Repeat progress tracking

The last step is to track progress. This involves repeating Steps 1-8 after a period of time — optimally once per month or once per quarter. This time slot enables retail locations to make necessary changes and focus on areas of needed improvement. Repeating this process regularly provides an important corporate function. It demonstrates to employees that you are committed to providing your customers with the highest quality of products and services by keeping customer service top of mind with employees. Studies show that when mystery shopping monitoring is done and appropriate action steps have taken place, companies typically see marked improvement in customer satisfaction levels.

Make sure your mystery shopping program is a recipe for success. Following these important steps will help in your efforts to not only obtain valuable mystery shopping measurement but literally to manage customer satisfaction. □

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Bose

continued from p.11

being too overbearing.”

Customer Perspectives also sends shoppers to other retailers that sell Bose equipment. The shopper notes how long it took to be noticed by a salesperson, when/if the salesperson steered them toward Bose products, if a demonstration was conducted and if the Bose equipment was in good shape (no broken/missing parts) and positioned for optimal sound quality.

Improvement opportunities

Each store receives a quarterly summary showing the staff's overall performance. “The district and store managers also get copies of the shops. The stores use the mystery shopping data as a tool to bring awareness of where they're doing well and where there are opportunities to do better. They can use it as a basis for a staff meeting, to look at things they can do to improve,” Pazol says.

Depending on each store's overall performance, the employee team, including managers, are awarded a customer satisfaction bonus. Outstanding mystery shopping reports are often posted at the individual stores so employees can celebrate.

Individual employees are noted only for outstanding service (they're not singled out if they perform poorly) and can win points in the Bose employee recognition program. “On the shopping form we ask if anybody in the store provided exemplary customer service. The shopper writes the person's name and explains why the service was exemplary and that person gets a point for each reference,” Pazol says.

Fresh in their mind

Shoppers are instructed to complete the forms immediately after the experience, while everything is still fresh in their mind, Hess says. “In addition to the objective measures, we ask shoppers to provide a lot of qualitative information so clients can see exactly what happened. For example, the shopper might hear two cashiers chatting together about something inappropriate. Or witness an employee

talking on the phone instead of helping customers.”

While some retail clients want to compare mystery shopping results on a branch-to-branch basis, Hess discourages them from doing so unless they have enough shops to obtain statistically significant data. “If they're telling me they want to compare stores and they only have one shop in that store for the month, it's not really valid information.”

Raise the bar

Bose conducts an annual telephone survey to make sure that the service attributes it measures in the mystery shopping are still important to customers. “Prior to each fiscal year we reevaluate the behaviors we're asking the staff to demonstrate and make sure that we're raising the bar,” Pazol says. “If we can identify the things that satisfy customers, and then determine the behaviors that contribute to them, we can measure those behaviors in the mystery shops and we can continue to

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Positive spin

continued from p. 15

received,” Goldsmith says, “it also reinforced the message on the spot — an extra dose, if you will — and made employees actually eager for their next shop.”

By adding a short-term incentive, the program was able to generate some significant long-term results, exceeding projections by 47 percent.

Likewise, Texaco uses the program to reward its retailers, wholesalers and wholesalers/retailers as well, and many of those customers rely on mystery shopping scores to reward individual units.

Sharing long-term results builds the team

Another way to get employee buy-in is to share results of the program over time — how service scores are up, how sales have increased, or anything else that’s relevant. It makes them feel part of the team and lets them know that the company’s objectives are achievable — and shows them their role in the big picture, as if to say, “When you, the employee, do X, and do it well, the company gets Y, which in turn generates both short-term and long-term rewards for you.”

As the program progresses through a few cycles of shop, train, shop, train, the company will start to show some tangible business results — more sales, better customer satisfaction and the like. Those results will speak for themselves with management.

The Virginia Lottery, for instance, built three waves of shopping into its initial program. In the first wave, 18 percent of the retailers shopped mentioned The Big Game and correctly answered a question about it. In the second, the number rose to 23 percent; in the third wave, fully a third of the retailers mentioned the game and answered the question.

But to get to the point that a program can progress through several cycles, the initial shop reports have to be credible. Often, there’s a tendency to discount the results of a mystery shop — “Our people don’t do that!” And when people don’t believe the

data, they aren’t going to make the changes it recommends.

So how do you build credibility into the program? “A key component is maintaining a force of competent shoppers across the country. At Maritz, we train and then certify every Virtual Customer we send out with three successively more challenging levels of training,” Goldsmith says.

Those levels reflect a three-step process: In the first step, Virtual Customers complete a process that demonstrates their ability to do the shop. In the second, shoppers get job-specific, ongoing training that builds their expertise further. Shoppers get third-level status when they demonstrate special expertise with a specific industry or client company.

Another facet of training shoppers is SQE surveys that help assess how well-prepared shoppers feel as they go out into the field. Over time, these surveys show that the better the preparation, the more accurate the resulting shops.

Experience has shown that this process ensures consistent reporting from shopper to shopper and can give shoppers a deeper understanding of client companies’ business concerns.

Beyond certifying shoppers, another key to building credibility is building enough shops — and shoppers — into the program. That way, the results show trends over time and throughout the target area rather than just specific instances of service levels, making the data quantitative as well as qualitative.

Texaco, for example, sends out information packets to over 700 shoppers every evaluation period, and they each do multiple shops. So when the report comes back that the restrooms were clean a certain percentage of the time, or the windshield-washing equipment was available another percentage of the time, there’s more than enough data to let everyone know that the results are accurate.

The Virginia Lottery program did over 3,000 shops a week during the program, data from which was gathered and verified quickly, to support the report’s recommendations.

How much positive spin is enough?

Even today it’s still possible to find pockets of resistance to the idea of

mystery shopping. Experience shows that the more positive spin put on a program, the better it will work.

But is there a law of diminishing returns? Corey Carver hasn’t found one yet. As the Virginia Lottery ran a second and then a third Virtual Customer program, it kept adding improvements. First, it gave clerks the chance to earn the whole \$50 in one step, instead of the two steps (mentioning the game and then answering a question about it) of the first program. Then it made it possible for Virtual Customers to give \$50 in cash or travelers’ checks, so that winning clerks had the prize in hand instead of having to fill out a form and wait for processing. And they got more retailers on board by sharing the results they were getting from — and the commissions they were paying to — participating retailers.

The results speak for themselves. By the end of the third program, of the clerks helping mystery shoppers who had come in to buy lottery products, 35 percent won the \$50 prize, and of the clerks helping mystery shoppers who had come in to buy non-lottery items, nearly 23 percent were winners.

What’s more, a survey of both winning and non-winning clerks found that 94 percent said they liked the program or liked it a lot; 93.4 percent said the shopper they met was either pleasant or very pleasant. So even though nearly two-thirds of the clerks didn’t win money, they still felt good about the program.

Of course, it’s nice that employees and management feel good about a program while it’s going on. But the real payoff of a well-supported mystery shopping program comes on the bottom line, as employees apply what they’ve learned in training and — documented in mystery shopping and properly rewarded — they continue to improve, lifting sales and profits in the process.

Because after all, there’s only one reason to do any kind of research, mystery shopping included: to show long-term, tangible results that grow the company. □

Research Industry News

continued from p. 21

to Keyword: Opinion Place.

F-Squared Market Research + Consulting, Moscow, Russia, has opened a marketing research test center at 1 Red Square in Moscow. The center features 20 individual product/ad test interviewing stations with mirrored observation room, a focus group facility and a test kitchen. For more information call 7-095-721-1850.

Network has moved to 501 Main St., Ste. 50, Covington, Ky., 41011-1371. Phone 606-431-5431. Fax 606-431-5838.

Effective in December, Paris-based **SOFRES** and London-based **Taylor Nelson AGB** have merged. The merger of the two research giants will be effected through the acquisition of shares in Financiere SOFRES, the holding company of SOFRES, by Taylor Nelson ABG S.A., a subsidiary of Taylor Nelson AGB plc, for a cash consideration of approximately \$199 million. The merged business will be led by Chairman Tony Cowling, currently chief executive of TN AGB, and managing director Pierre Weill, currently president of SOFRES. Other board members will be drawn from both companies.

Personal Touch Marketing, Inc., an Ann Arbor, Mich.-based research firm, has moved to 325 E. Eisenhower Pkwy., Ste. 7, in the Burlington I Building across from Briarwood Mall in Ann Arbor. For more information call 313-741-1134.

Eleanor Lea has opened **Service Audits**, a mystery shopping and customer service training firm, at 265 Eastchester Dr., Ste. 3318, High Point, N.C., 27262. Phone 336-812-3115.

Market Facts, Inc., Arlington Heights, Ill., and Juno Online Services, an E-mail provider, will jointly launch a comprehensive interactive market research panel. The firms will solicit panel participation and conduct surveys over the Juno service. In the first year of operation, Market Facts and Juno expect to establish a respondent panel of 20,000 subscribers, growing the panel to over 250,000 subscribers within the next five years. In addition to building the online panel, Market Facts will also be able to survey Juno's general membership on behalf of clients.

The Consumer's Voice, Inc., Syosset, N.Y., is now **Jay L. Roth & Associates, Inc.** The mailing address and telephone numbers are unchanged.

FGI, Inc., a Chapel Hill, N.C., research provider, has opened an office in Detroit. Allan Benedict and John Wargo, formerly of Nordhaus Research in Detroit, will join FGI as managing director and account director, respectively, of the Detroit office. □

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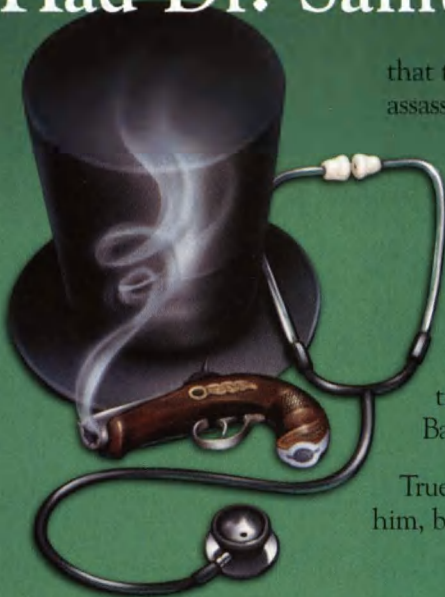
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(See advertisement on p. 65)

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(See advertisement on p. 63)



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(See advertisement on p. 7)

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(See advertisement on p. 64)

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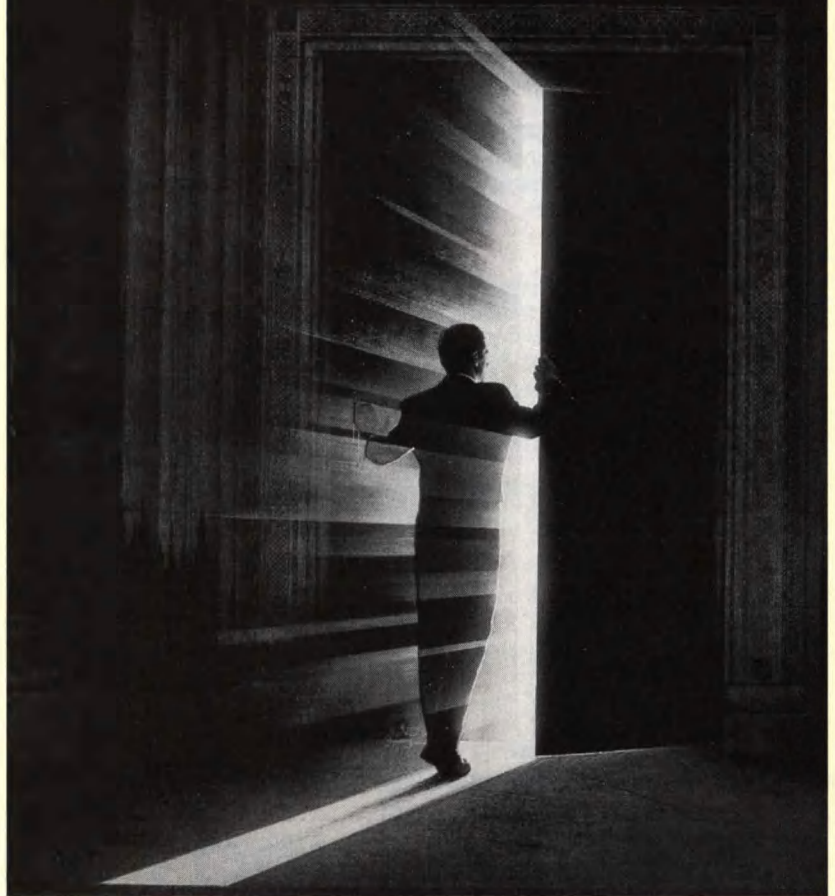
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Call **Mark Michelson**, President/CEO

Phone: 770-955-5400
Fax: 770-955-5040
E-Mail: focus@onramp.net

1900 The Exchange, Suite 360
Atlanta, Georgia 30339

For more info, visit our website
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 S - Services

MDi Research, inc.
 5841 Edison Pl., Ste. 210
 Carlsbad, CA 92008
 Ph. 760-603-7600
 Fax 760-603-7604
 E-mail: jabmdir@aol.com
 Jacqueline Arsivaud, Principal
 Nationally - Full service
 B

Mellon Market Research
 2850 Parkway Bldg. 6, Ste. 40
 Pigeon Forge, TN 37863
 Ph. 423-428-8360
 Fax 423-428-6042
 Vicki Phillips, Dir. Marketing Research
 Regionally - Full service
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Merchandising Specialists
 3620 N. Josey Ln., Ste. 105
 Carrollton, TX 75007
 Ph. 972-394-5059
 Fax 972-394-1312
 E-mail: merchspec@airmail.net
 Leslie Gorman, President
 Regionally - Data collection/Field service
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Meyers Research Center
 58 W. 40th St.
 New York, NY 10018
 Ph. 212-391-0166
 Fax 212-768-0268
 E-mail: MRC00@aol.com
 Jeff Friedlaender, Vice President
 Nationally - Full service
 B, E, F, R, RT, S

**Michelson
 & Associates, Inc.**
 Strategic Marketing Research

Michelson & Associates, Inc.
 1900 The Exchange, Ste. 360
 Atlanta, GA 30339
 Ph. 770-955-5400
 Fax 770-955-5040
 E-mail: focus@onramp.net
<http://www.michelson.com/research>
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Since 1984, Michelson & Associates, Inc. has provided mystery shopping services nationwide. With over 35,000 qualified mystery shoppers, Michelson & Associates has the capability and experience to handle a variety of shopping projects. Extensive experience with retail, hospitality, automotive and property management. Our services are guaranteed to your satisfaction.
(See advertisement on p. 71)

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 Valley West Mall
 1551 Valley W. Dr., Ste. 157A
 W. Des Moines, IA 50266
 Ph. 515-225-6232
 Fax 515-225-1184
 E-mail: MID225@aol.com
 Doug Brown
 Regionally - Data collection/Field service
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Midlands Market Research
 6700 Longbrook Rd.
 Columbia, SC 29206
 Ph. 803-782-8697
 Fax 803-787-0371
 Regionally - Data collection/Field service
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Midwest Survey & Marketing
 9802 Nicholas St.
 Omaha, NE 68114
 Ph. 402-392-0755
 Fax 402-392-1068
 Elaine Bosilevac, General Manager
 Locally - Full service
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MPS
MPS RESEARCH INC.

MPS Research, Inc.
 16-00 Rte. 208
 Fair Lawn, NJ 07410
 Ph. 201-703-6868
 Fax 201-703-6870
 E-mail: MPSResrch@aol.com
 Raymond Capozzi, President
 Nationally - Full service
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MPS offers flexibility and the commitment to serving all our clients' needs. With 20 years of experience and nationwide coverage, including Canada/Puerto Rico and five European countries, we know our mystery shopping. We offer complete data processing and reporting. Our staff is eager to discuss your next mystery shop program. Call Ray Capozzi at 201-703-6868 or fax 201-703-6870.
(See advertisement on p. 70)

MRCFOCUS

MRC Focus
 101 Convention Center Dr., Ste. 1005
 Las Vegas, NV 89109
 Ph. 702-734-7511
 Fax 702-734-7598
 E-mail: research@mrcgroup.com
<http://www.mrcgroup.com>
 Lisabeth Clawson
 Locally - Data collection/Field service
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MRC Focus is Las Vegas' premier state-of-the-art focus group facility. Strategically located between the Las Vegas Convention Center and the exciting "Strip," clients and respondents alike will welcome the convenience, privacy, comfort

NG Group & Mystery Shopping Services

NG GROUP
 Maryland Heights, Missouri
 Telephone: (314) 291-0509
 Fax: (314) 291-6230
 E-Mail: nggroup@aol.com



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and security. MRC Focus is setting the standard for design, recruiting and personal services. If you are planning to conduct focus groups, intercept interviewing or mystery shopping in the Las Vegas marketplace, MRCFocus should be your first call.

(See advertisement on p. 73)

Mystery Guest, Inc.
2107 Park Ave. N.
Winter Park, FL 32789
Ph. 407-647-3333
Fax 407-647-3016
Nationally - Full service
F, R, RT, S

Mystic Marketing
6654 Mohawk Ct.
Columbia, MD 21046
Ph. 301-596-1437
Fax 301-596-1437
Pam Vaughn, Owner
Locally - Data collection/Field service
E, F, R, RT, S

National Field & Focus, Inc.
190 N. Main
Natick, MA 01760
Ph. 508-655-1926
Fax 508-655-0096
E-mail: NFF@ultranet.com
Brenda Chartoff, President
Nationally - Data collection/Field service
B, E, F, R, RT, S

National Opinion Research Services
760 N.W. 107th Ave., Ste. 106
Miami, FL 33172
Ph. 800-940-9410
Fax 305-553-8586
E-mail: quality@nors.com
<http://www.nors.com>
Regionally - Data collection/Field service
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National Shopping Service
5777 W. Century Blvd., #775
Los Angeles, CA 90045
Ph. 310-645-1927
Fax 310-645-1922
E-mail: nssuser1@aol.com
<http://www.nssmysteryshoppers.com>
Susan K. Meyer, V.P. of Operations
Nationally - Full service
B, E, F, R, RT, S

National Shopping Service Network, LLC
P.O. Box 76
Eastlake, CO 80614
Ph. 303-451-0538
Fax 303-451-0325
E-mail: howard@mysteryshopping.net
<http://www.mysteryshopping.net>
Howard Troxel, President
Nationally - Full service
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New England Interviewing, Inc.
5 Coliseum Ave.
Nashua, NH 03063
Ph. 603-889-8222
Fax 603-883-1119
Joan Greene, President
Regionally - Data collection/Field service
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New South Research
3000 Riverchase, Ste. 405
Birmingham, AL 35244
Ph. 205-985-3344 or 800-289-7335
Fax 205-985-3346
E-mail: NSRJ@aol.com
La Donna Burks
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NGG**Group**
11943 Kentwood
St. Louis, MO 63043
Ph. 314-291-0509
Fax 314-291-6230
Neal Gross, Owner
Nationally - Full service
R, RT, S

NGG**GROUP** will paint you a picture of how your business is doing from a customer's point of view. We will design a mystery shopping program that is tailored to fit your needs. Our reports are detailed, objective reports that show the trends of your company. We have extensive experience in retail, service stations, and restaurants. NGG**GROUP** has the ability to handle many projects at once. We feel communication is the key to a successful program.
(See advertisement on p. 72)

Oklahoma City Research
Div. of Ruth Nelson Research
Quail Springs Mall
2501 W. Memorial Dr.
Oklahoma City, OK 73134-8003
Ph. 405-752-4710
Fax 405-752-2344
E-mail: rnmcmrs@aol.com
<http://www.ruthnelsonresearchsvcs.com>
Ruth Nelson, President
Regionally - Data collection/Field service
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Olympia, Inc.
1400 W. Markham, Ste. 400
Little Rock, AR 72201
Ph. 800-676-7600 or 501-376-7600
Fax 501-372-1909
Regionally - Data collection/Field service
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OMR (Olchak Market Research)
7255-A Hanover Pkwy.
Greenbelt, MD 20770
Ph. 301-441-4660
Fax 301-474-4307
E-mail: omr_dc@aol.com
<http://www.OMRdc.com>
Jill L. Siegel, President
Locally - Data collection/Field service
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Opinions of Sacramento
2025 Hurley Way, Ste. 110
Sacramento, CA 95825
Ph. 916-568-1226
Fax 916-568-6725
E-mail: opinionsos@aol.com
Magda Cooling, Partner
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E-mail: research@MRCGroup.com

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or see our listing on page 65**

1998 MYSTERY SHOPPING DIRECTORY

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P V R, Inc.
 11445 Johns Creek Pkwy.
 Atlanta, GA 30097
 Ph. 770-232-0322
 Fax 770-232-0344
 E-mail: geric@mindspring.com
 Jeri S. Christopher, Vice President
 Regionally - Data collection/Field service
 B, E, F, R, RT, S

Perceptive Market Research, Inc.
 2306 S.W. 13th St., Ste. 807
 Gainesville, FL 32608
 Ph. 800-749-6760 or 352-336-6760
 Fax 352-336-6763
 E-mail: surveys@pmrresearch.com
 http://www.pmrresearch.com
 Dr. Elaine M. Lyons-Lepke, President
 Nationally - Full service
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The Performance Group (PGI Research)

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(See advertisement on p. 73)

Performance Plus
 111 Speen St., Ste. 105
 Framingham, MA 01701
 Ph. 508-872-1287
 Fax 508-879-7108
 Shirley Shames, President
 Locally - Data collection/Field service
 B, E, F, H, R, RT, S

Pinkerton Shopping Services
 400 Chastain Ctr. Pkwy., Ste. 410
 Kennesaw, GA 30144
 Ph. 800-540-6077 or 770-919-0260
 Fax 770-919-1359
 E-mail: 76521.1004@compuserve.com
 Lisa Van Kesteren, Managing Director
 Nationally - Full service
 B, E, R, RT, S

Pittsburgh Phone & Focus, Inc.
 300 Mt. Lebanon Blvd., Ste. 2204
 Pittsburgh, PA 15234
 Ph. 412-341-8770
 Fax 412-341-8774
 Regionally - Full service
 B, E, F, H, R, RT, S

PMR-Personal Marketing Research, Inc.
 322 Brady St.
 Davenport, IA 52801
 Ph. 319-322-1960
 Fax 319-322-1370
 E-mail: PERMARRES@aol.com
 Patricia E. Duffy, President
 Regionally - Data collection/Field service
 B, E, F, R, RT, S

PRECISION RESEARCH

Precision Research, Inc.
 O'Hare Corporate Towers
 10600 W. Higgins Rd., Ste. 100
 Rosemont, IL 60018
 Ph. 847-390-8666
 Fax 847-390-8885
 E-mail: saa@preres.com
 http://www.preres.com
 Scott Adelman, President
 Locally - Data collection/Field service
 B, F, R, RT

Because we host over 500 focus groups per year and recruit for dozens of taste tests and audience studies, some clients don't realize that we handle hundreds of mystery shop locations each year. We are experienced at shopping financial institutions, auto dealers, restaurants, and retail stores. We operate throughout Chicagoland.
 (See advertisement on p. 49, 74)

Public Insights, Inc.
 825 E. Golf Rd.
 Arlington Heights, IL 60005
 Ph. 847-364-5133 or 800-292-1852
 Fax 847-364-5663
 E-mail: valerie@PublicInsights.com
 http://www.PublicInsights.com
 Locally - Data collection/Field service
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PWI Research
 5100 Poplar Ave., Ste. 3125
 Memphis, TN 38137
 Ph. 901-682-2444
 Fax 901-682-2471
 http://www.pwiresearch.com
 Charlotte R. Reid, Operating Manager
 Locally - Data collection/Field service
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Q M S
 100 Saratoga Village Blvd., Ste. 37E
 Malta, NY 12020
 Ph. 518-899-6479
 Fax 518-899-6862
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Quality Controlled Services
 1375 N. Highway Dr.
 Fenton, MO 63099
 Ph. 800-325-3338 or 314-827-1773
 Fax 314-827-3373
 E-mail: postmaster@qcs.com
 http://www.qcs.com
 Mary Bommarito, Project Coord.
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Trained consumer mystery shoppers "role play" as customers, evaluating employee performance during those critical moments when customers judge your company. With 19 offices and 8,000 shoppers in 500+ cities, QCS offers discovery, compliance, observation and reward, quality

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Quest Marketing Group
400 Clifton Corp. Pkwy., Ste. 472
Clifton Park, NY 12065
Ph. 518-373-1990
Fax 518-373-4824
Glen Lasher, Owner
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The Question Shop, Inc.
2860 N. Santiago Blvd., Ste. 100
Orange, CA 92667
Ph. 714-974-8020 or 800-411-7550
Fax 714-974-6968
Ryan Reasor, President
Regionally - Data collection/Field service
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Questions & Marketing Research Svcs., Inc.
19211 Henry Dr.
Mokena, IL 60448
Ph. 708-479-3200
Fax 708-479-4038
Marge Weber Tripton, President
Locally - Data collection/Field service
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Quick Test
Corporate Headquarters
1061 E. Indiantown Rd., Ste. 300
Jupiter, FL 33477
Ph. 561-748-0931 or 800-523-1288
Fax 561-748-3601
E-mail: info@quicktest.com
<http://www.quicktest.com>
Thomas J. Zoretich, President
Nationally - Data collection/Field service
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R.I.S. Christie - The Data Collection Co.
14 Verral Ave.
Toronto, ON M4M 2R2
Canada
Ph. 416-778-8890
Fax 416-778-8898
E-mail: r.i.s.@inforamp.net
Olga Friedlander, President
Nationally - Data collection/Field service
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Research International USA
466 Lexington Ave.
New York, NY 10017
Ph. 212-973-2300
Fax 212-973-2340
E-mail: h.daume@research-int.com
<http://www.research-int.com>
Hal Daume, Exec. V.P./Managing Dir.
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The Retail Advantage, LLC
4906 E. Brown Rd., #21
Mesa, AZ 85205
Ph. 602-832-0436
Fax 602-396-3438
E-mail: datafile@worldnet.att.net
Thomas Slater, CEO
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A Marketing Research Corporation

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Edison, NJ 08837 • Phone (732) 906-1122 • Fax (732) 906-8792
SASMKtres@aol.com

West: 13109 Addison Street • Sherman Oaks,
CA 91423 • Phone (818) 501-0440 • Fax (818) 501-3780
SlesWest@aol.com

South: 1065 Maitland Center Commons • Suite 204,
Maitland, FL 32751 • Phone (407) 660-1808 • Fax (407) 660-9674
SlesSouth@aol.com



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Rosen Research
 25906 Emery Rd.
 Cleveland, OH 44128
 Ph. 216-464-5240
 Fax 216-464-7864
 Mary Ann Sheets, Field Director
 Locally - Data collection/Field service
 F, R, RT, S

Rosow Interviewing
 2713 15th Ave. N.
 Ft. Dodge, IA 50501
 Ph. 515-576-6464
 Fax 515-576-5454
 Clarice Rosow, Owner/Manager
 Regionally - Data collection/Field service
 B, E, F, R, RT, S

Rothermel Research, Inc.
 107 Elm Tree Ln.
 Elmhurst, IL 60126-3616
 Ph. 630-834-8330
 Fax 630-834-3182
 E-mail: krothermel@sprynet.com
 Karen Rothermel, Pres.
 Locally - Data collection/Field service
 B, E, F, R, RT, S

Sales & Service Evaluators, Inc. (SSEI)
 5050-B Gulf Blvd.
 St. Petersburg Beach, FL 33706
 Ph. 813-367-7574 or 800-978-9332
 Fax 813-367-3348
 E-mail: sseico@aol.com
 Dick German, President
 Nationally - Full service
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San Diego Surveys, Inc.
 4616 Mission Gorge Pl.
 San Diego, CA 92120
 Ph. 619-265-2361 or 800-895-1225
 Fax 619-582-1562
 E-mail: SDSURVEYS@aol.com
 Regionally - Data collection/Field service
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Savitz Research Center, Inc.
 13747 Montfort Dr., Ste. 211
 Dallas, TX 75240
 Ph. 972-386-4050
 Fax 972-450-2507
 E-mail: hsilverman@savitz-research.com
 Harriet E. Silverman, Vice President
 Locally - Data collection/Field service
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Schlesinger Associates, Inc.
 Executive Plaza, Ste. 400
 10 Parsonage Rd.
 Edison, NJ 08837
 Ph. 732-906-1122
 Fax 732-906-8792
 E-mail: sasmtres@aol.com
 Steven Schlesinger, President
 Nationally - Data collection/Field service
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Schlesinger Associates has been conducting mystery shopping for over 20 years. We have conducted mystery shops in banks, restaurants, retail establishments, automobile dealerships, etc. We have over 300 mystery shoppers available across the country.
(See advertisement on p. 75)

Secret ShopNET
 501 - 1202 Centre St. S.
 Calgary, AB T2G 5A5
 Canada
 Ph. 403-261-5000
 Fax 403-261-4999
 E-mail: salesdept@secretshopnet.com
 http://secretshopnet.com
 Sean Young, Dir. Bus. Dev.
 Internationally - Full service
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Seek Research
 2641 Drayton Dr.
 Wilmington, DE 19808
 Ph. 302-998-3088
 Fax 302-998-3099
 Virginia Pellegrini, Owner
 Locally - Data collection/Field service
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Service Excellence Group, Inc.
 211 Stablestone Dr.
 St. Louis, MO 63017
 Ph. 314-878-9189
 Fax 314-878-1818
 E-mail: servicex@aol.com
 Marci Bikhorn, President
 Nationally - Full service
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Service Research Corp.
 6201 S. 58th, Ste. A
 Lincoln, NE 68516
 Ph. 402-434-5000
 Fax 402-434-5006
 E-mail: srcbritt@aol.com
 Gloria Britten, Vice President
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ServiceTRAC Inc.

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ServiceTRAC, Inc.
 1525 N. Granite Reef Rd., Ste. 10
 Scottsdale, AZ 85257
 Ph. 800-951-6606
 Fax 602-941-3121
 E-mail: will@servicetrac.com
 William Nowell, President
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ServiceTRAC, Inc. provides full-service national

in-san'i-ty(in-san'ə te) n.; doing the same things and expecting different results.

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At ServiceTRAC, we do things differently than other firms. We'll provide you with an integrated solution that results in actionable steps enabling you and your staff to retain and grow loyal customers.

After all, it's a new year and different results require new methods. We'll help you improve your customer satisfaction, service and retention with:

Nationwide mystery shopping services

- INDUSTRY BENCHMARK COMPARISONS
- CUSTOM EVALUATIONS AND REPORTS
- AUDIOTAPED SHOPPING
- SPECIALIZING IN SALES AND CUSTOMER SERVICE EVALUATION
- COMPREHENSIVE AND TURNKEY CUSTOMER SATISFACTION PROGRAMS
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ServiceTRAC Inc.

Helping our clients build stronger relationships with their customers.

1-800-951-6606

www.servicetrac.com

1998 MYSTERY SHOPPING DIRECTORY

mystery shopping and research services... ServiceTRAC provides "Real Customer" shoppers who are selected because of their match to the target profile of our clients. ServiceTRAC's focus is high-end sales professionals. ServiceTRAC specializes in all types of housing and homebuilding, healthcare, retail and financial services. ServiceTRAC offers fully integrated training and consulting.

(See advertisement on p. 76)

Millie Sevedge & Associates
6101 W. Vliet St.
Milwaukee, WI 53213
Ph. 414-453-6086
Fax 414-453-6087
E-mail: MILLIE@execpc.com
Regionally - Data collection/Field service
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Shapiro Research Services, Inc.
Trumbull Shopping Park
5065 Main St.
Trumbull, CT 06611
Ph. 203-373-9391
Fax 203-371-4257
Regionally - Data collection/Field service
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Shop'n Chek, Inc.
76 Perimeter Center E., N.E.
Atlanta, GA 30346-1801
Ph. 770-393-1072 or 800-669-9939
Fax 770-668-0816
E-mail: abailey@shopnchek.com
<http://www.shopnchek.com>
Anne Bailey
Internationally - Full service
B, E, F, R, RT, S

Shop'n Chek specializes in custom designed mystery shopping programs to gather objective information regarding customer service performance internationally. Over 25 years of experience in the restaurant/hospitality, retail, manufacturing, petroleum, services, and utility industries. Shop'n Chek's 70,000 representatives act as our clients' "eyes and ears" with 100 percent location coverage guaranteed. Services include customer service evaluations, product presentation, pricing studies and ad audits. Specializing in national accounts with 300 or more locations.

(See advertisement on p. 77)

Sights On Service, Inc.
DBA Secret Shopper
3405 Kilmer Ln. N.
Minneapolis, MN 55441
Ph. 612-525-1460
Fax 612-595-0210
E-mail: jackieg@secretshop.com
<http://www.secretshop.com>
Jackie M. Gonyea, Dir. Sales & Mktg.
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Marion Simon Research Service, Inc.
49 Wildbriar Rd.
Rochester, NY 14623
Ph. 716-359-1510
Fax 716-334-9423
E-mail: Msrdc@aol.com
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Fax: (770) 668-0816

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Sinclair Service Assessments, Inc.

10715 Gulfdale, Ste. 140
San Antonio, TX 78216-3633
Ph. 210-979-6000 or 800-880-3111
Fax 210-979-6677
E-mail: info@sinclair
<http://www.sinclair.org>
Robert Sinclair Jr., President
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Specializing in state-of-the-art mystery shopper programs since 1987, SSA provides mystery shopping services throughout the U.S. and abroad. Using the latest information systems technologies, SSA can make service measurement part of your company's daily operation. If you don't measure it, you can't manage it. (See advertisement on p. 25)

Smithmark Corporation
9942 Hard Key Circle
Indianapolis, IN 46236-7360
Ph. 317-826-9095
Fax 317-826-9095
Karen D. Smith, President
Regionally - Full service
B, R, RT, S

Sonoma Research, Inc.
P.O. Box 1609
Sonoma, CA 95476
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Fax 707-939-6730
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1998 MYSTERY SHOPPING DIRECTORY

International Mystery Shopping

These firms conduct mystery shopping on an international basis.

Audits & Surveys Worldwide

Automotive Insight, Inc.

Barry Leeds & Associates, Inc.

Capstone Research, Inc.

DSG Associates, Inc.

Stanford Klapper Associates, Inc. (Puerto Rico)

Kudos Research (United Kingdom)

Michelson & Associates, Inc.

Research International USA

Secret ShopNET (Canada)

Shop'n Chek, Inc.

Tenox Appraisal Systems (Canada)

National Mystery Shopping

These firms conduct mystery shopping on a nationwide basis. See also International Mystery Shopping.

A One Research, Inc.

ACA Research Pty Ltd (Australia)

BAIGlobal Inc.

Bartels Research Corp.

Berkey Research

BestMark

Better Marketing Associates, Inc.

CB & A Market Research

Certified Reports, Inc.

CHK-UR-SERV

Commercial Service Systems, Inc.

Cross Financial Group

Customer Perspectives

Cutting Edge Research, Inc.

Decision Services Corp. of America

Ehrhart-Babic/NRTI (Nat'l. Retail Tracking Index)

Elrick & Lavidge

Field Dynamics Marketing Research

Fogerty Group, Inc.

Friedman Marketing Services

Pat Henry Market Research, Inc.

IMAGES Market Research

Innovative Marketing, Inc. (Canada)

Integrated Research Associates, Inc.

Rickie Kruh Research

Leibowitz/Roher Marketing, Inc.

Maritz Marketing Research Inc.

Market Dynamics Research Group

Market Monitor, Inc./Service Monitor

Market Research & Development, Inc. (Guam)

Market Trends Pacific, Inc.

Marketing Solutions Corporation

McGladrey & Pullen, LLP

MDI Research, inc.

Meyers Research Center

MPS Research, Inc.

Mystery Guest, Inc.

National Field & Focus, Inc.

National Shopping Service

National Shopping Service Network, LLC

NGGroup

Perceptive Market Research, Inc.

The Performance Group (PGI Research)

Pinkerton Shopping Services

Quality Controlled Services

Quick Test

R.I.S. Christie - The Data Collection Co. (Canada)

The Retail Advantage, LLC

Sales & Service Evaluators, Inc. (SSEI)

Schlesinger Associates, Inc.

Service Excellence Group, Inc.

Service Research Corp.

ServiceTRAC, Inc.

Sights On Service, Inc.

Sinclair Service Assessments, Inc.

Stewart International Associates (Br.)

Survey Service, Inc.

WestGroup Research

Regional Mystery Shopping

These firms conduct mystery shopping on a regional basis. They have been organized by state for your convenience. See also National & International Mystery Shopping.

Alabama

Connections, Inc.

New South Research

Polly Graham & Associates, Inc.

Arkansas

Olympia, Inc.

Arizona

Arizona Market Research

California

Decision Research

Elliott Benson

Isaacson Group

Jordan Associates

L.A. Research, Inc.

Opinions of Sacramento

The Question Shop, Inc.

San Diego Surveys, Inc.

Sonoma Research, Inc.

Margaret Yarbrough & Associates

Colorado

Colorado Market Research

Connecticut

Beta One, Inc.

Shapiro Research Services, Inc.

Delaware

Keystone Marketing Research

Florida

Kirk Research Services, Inc.

Mar's Surveys

National Opinion Research Services

Georgia

Beisner Research Associates

Highsmith-Charnock Interviewing Service, Inc.

P V R, Inc.

Illinois

Accurate Data Marketing, Inc.

C R Market Surveys

Horizon Field Service, Inc.

Marketing Advantage Research Consultants, Inc.

Indiana

Herron Associates, Inc.

KLD Marketing Research, Inc.

Smithmark Corporation

Iowa

Mid-Iowa Interviewing, Inc.

PMR-Personal Marketing Research, Inc.

Rossow Interviewing

Louisiana

Southern Spectrum Research, Inc.

Maryland

Bay Area Research

Michigan

Crimmins & Forman Market Research

Missouri

Carol Max Marketing Services, Inc.

Superior Surveys of St. Louis, Inc.

Nevada

Consumer Research Center

Las Vegas Surveys, Inc.

New Hampshire

New England Interviewing, Inc.

New Jersey

Frances Bauman Associates

Treistman & Stark Marketing, Inc.

New York

C.B. DuPree Associates

Q M S

Quest Marketing Group

Marion Simon Research Service, Inc.

Surveys Unlimited, Inc.

Wolf/Altschul/Callahan, Inc.

North Carolina

Free Lance Services

Oklahoma

Oklahoma City Research

Oregon

Gilmore Research Group

Pennsylvania

Pittsburgh Phone & Focus, Inc.

South Carolina

Midlands Market Research

Tennessee

Mellon Market Research

Texas

Mar's Surveys of Texas

Merchandising Specialists

Utah

Utah Market Research

Vermont

Action Research

Virginia

Capital Research Services
Issues and Answers Network, Inc.

Washington

Gilmore Research Group

West Virginia

McMillion Research Service

Wisconsin

InGold Research Services, Inc.
Millie Sevedge & Associates

Local Mystery Shopping

These firms conduct mystery shopping on a local basis. They have been organized by metropolitan area for your convenience. See also Regional, National & International Mystery Shopping.

Anchorage, AK

Dittman Research Corp. of Alaska

Atlanta, GA

Jackson Associates, Inc.

Baltimore, MD

Mystic Marketing

Boston, MA

Performance Plus

Charlotte, NC

A O C Marketing Research

Chicago, IL

Focuscope, Inc.
Galli Research Services
Precision Research, Inc.
Public Insights, Inc.
Questions & Marketing Research Svcs., Inc.
Rothermel Research, Inc.

Cincinnati, OH

Assistance in Marketing, Inc.

Cleveland, OH

Focus Groups of Cleveland
Market Tasks, Inc.
Rosen Research

Colorado Springs, CO

Brewer Research

Dallas/Ft. Worth

Fenton Swanger Consumer
Research, Inc.
Savitz Research Center, Inc.

Detroit, MI

Yee/Minard & Associates, Inc.

Ft. Wayne, IN

Dennis Research Service, Inc.

Houston, TX

M.A.T. On-Site Research

Las Vegas, NV

MRC Focus

Lubbock, TX

United Marketing Research

Memphis, TN

PWI Research

Milwaukee, WI

Field Surveys & Audits of
Milwaukee
Mazur/Zachow, Inc.

Minneapolis/St. Paul, MN

Jeanne Drew Surveys
Sally E. Zorich & Associates

Newport News/Norfolk/ Virginia Beach, VA

Marketrends, Inc.

Omaha, NE

Midwest Survey & Marketing

Philadelphia/Southern New Jersey

JRA (J. Reckner Associates)
JRP Marketing Research Services
Liberty Research Services, LLC

Raleigh/Durham, NC

Alar Market Research

San Diego, CA

Taylor Research

Shreveport, LA

DCW Interviewing Service

St. Louis, MO

Consumer Opinion Council
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Washington, DC

OMR (Olchak Market Research)

West Palm Beach, FL

Cynthia Deutsch Interviewing

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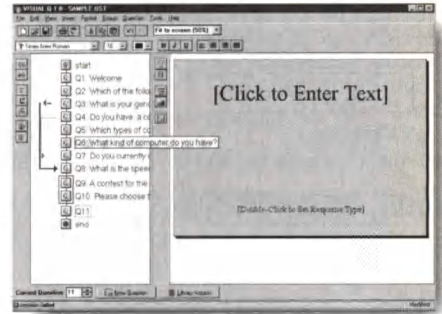
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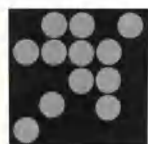
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Corrections

The Editor's note in the Data Use column in the December issue contained an error. The phone number for Macro Consulting is incorrect. The correct number is 415-964-9707.

In the display ad for Focus First America on p. 96 of the December issue, the name Rose Israel should not have appeared.

Due to production errors in the November issue, the Product & Service Update section, the Names of Note section, and the Research Industry News section each had incorrect jump lines. The correct page number shown in the jump lines should have been 49, 109 and 64, respectively. In addition, some material in the Research Industry News section appeared twice. We apologize for any confusion these errors may have caused.

Listing Additions

Please add the following firms to the 1998 Focus Group Facilities Directory:

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1997 QMRR Story Index

CASE HISTORIES

January

Mystery shopping: "Right on cue — Mystery shopping makes sure salespeople sing praises of Yamaha digital pianos"

February

Tracking research: "Staying in touch — Cotton Inc. uses tracking study to monitor consumer attitudes toward clothing, fashion"

March

Advertising research: "The eyes have it — Eye tracking helps Saab fine-tune print ads"
Advertising research: "A working vacation — Agency uses a little R&R (research & relaxation) to develop ads for RV group"

April

Business-to-business research: "Your prescription is ready — USP asks pharmacists to evaluate new drug information source"

May

Packaging research: "Readdressing the ball — Maxfli puts a new spin on its golf ball line"

June/July

On-line research: "Investing in the Internet: Research tells American Century what investors want in a mutual fund Web site"

On-line research: "Search no further — On-line research is logical choice for Yahoo!'s audience analysis project"

October

Customer satisfaction: "Switching gears — Research steers auto makers toward better customer satisfaction"

On-line research: "An integrated approach — Technology firm conducts worldwide customer satisfaction survey via E-mail, Internet"

November

International research: "A global enterprise — Worldwide tracking study keeps IBM in touch with mainframe users"

International research: "A breath of fresh air — First-time use of Kano method helps Carrier Corp. research buyers of its air conditioning units"

December

Qualitative research: "The people have spoken — Customer input improves Oregon utility's power outage reporting system"

TECHNIQUE DISCUSSIONS

January

Mystery shopping: "Patterns revealed — the evolution of a mystery shopping program"

Mystery shopping: "Taking the mystery out of mystery shopping"

Mystery shopping: "Mystery shopping scams hurt researchers, consumers"

Research perspectives: "Student research — better than the real thing"

Marketing to women: "Remember the ladies — Why marketers should care about reaching women on-line"

Concept testing: "Testing product innovations — a case history"

Mystery shopping: "Mystery shopping 101"

February

Product testing: "User interface testing becomes accessible and cost-effective"

Public relations research: "Changing minds — Using research to measure the effectiveness of public relations programs"

Interactive research: "One of the crowd — Interactive response systems ease research on controversial subjects"

March

Advertising research: "Qualitative advertising communication checks — 10 rules to guarantee great creative choices"

Advertising research: "A measured response — Realize the potential of your advertising with tracking research"

Survey design: "The numbers game — refining multi-point scales"

The business of research: "Working with a consultant — who, why and how"

April

Ethnic research: "Acculturation, value orientation and media usage in the U.S. Hispanic market"

Ethnic research: "African-Americans express optimism as millennium approaches"

Ethnic research: "Understanding Hispanic culture — a case for ethnographic research"

Ethnic research: "Research uncovers Hispanic advertising impact"

Business-to-business research: "Beating the competition — Analysis of business-to-business survey database yields insights on creating competitive advantage"

Ethnic research: "27 focus groups, seven ethnicities, seven languages and 11 locations"

May

Telephone research: "First impressions are crucial in telephone interviewing"

Telephone research: "Asking the right questions in telephone interviews"

Qualitative research: "A look at focus group moderators through the client's eyes"

Qualitative research: "Grounding attitudes in behavior — working tips for more productive research"

Customer satisfaction research: "Comment cards and rating scales — Who are we fooling?"

Research spotlight: "Mineral supply-demand-price studies — another type of market research"

June/July

Internet research: "Using the Internet for quantitative survey research"

Internet research: "Still a few hurdles to clear"

Internet research: "Internet surveys — Does WWW stand for 'Why waste the work?'"

Internet research: "Women offer tips to make Internet commerce more appealing"

On-line research: "On-line focus groups — Four approaches that work"

Health care research: "Planning health care focus groups? Pack your scuba gear"

Health care research: "Instant access: Polling machines give Oakland hospital a quick read on patient satisfaction"

Health care research: "Standardizing health care satisfaction measurement — Jury still out on mail- and phone-based data collection methodologies"

October

Customer satisfaction: "A simple method of setting priorities for improving customer service"

Customer satisfaction: "Customer satisfaction research in the physician's office"

Customer satisfaction: "Linking customer satisfaction and compensation"

Customer satisfaction: "The anonymity gradient"

Customer satisfaction: "Use customer satisfaction research to drive quality improvement"

Customer satisfaction: "Beyond customer satisfaction — Measuring the components of competitiveness"

Customer satisfaction: "Gaining strategic business advantage through customer value measurement"

November

Competitive intelligence research: "Cyber-intelligence and market intelligence"

International research: "A look at the Indian market research industry"

International research: "The language of international research — 'Very satisfied' and 'totally satisfied' are not the same thing"

International research: "Report from Scotland — ESOMAR conference looks to the future"

International research: "Q&A: Research in Europe"

International research: "Overcoming the obstacles to conducting international qualitative research"

December

Qualitative research: "Ten keys to defusing political land mines in the back room"

Qualitative research: "Seven rules for observational research — how to watch people do stuff"

Qualitative research: "The magic of eight"

Qualitative research: "Short attention span theater or Why consumers don't understand your concept even though it passed qualitative testing with flying colors"

Qualitative research: "Why are the employees leaving? Focus groups uncover reasons for worker flight"

Qualitative research: "Learning from customers' stories"

Qualitative research: "Focus group videos — a survival guide"

Qualitative research: "The focus group report — What is the moderator's responsibility?"

Qualitative research: "Diary of a moderator — Part 1: managing multiple priorities"

DATA USE

February

"SPSS 7.5 for Windows 95 and Windows NT — software that does things right"

April

"Neural networks: understanding back-propagation"

May

"Neural networks pt. II: unsupervised learning neural nets"

June/July

"Neural networks pt III: using the past to forecast the future"

October

"Visualizing buyer behavior with unconstrained models"

November

"Don't forget your at-risk customers"

December

"Three-and-a-half steps to statistical success"

TRADE TALK

January

"Need statistics? These books have 'em" (a review of five books of demographic/statistical information)

March

"Can we meet these challenges?" (a look at issues facing the research industry)

April

"Packaged facts: book wraps up packaging knowledge" (a review of *Packaging Strategy: Winning the Consumer*)

June/July

"Stepping into cyberspace in the name of research" (a look at an on-line focus group)

November

"The value of communication" (a look at an MRA chapter meeting)

December

"A crash course on customer satisfaction measurement" (a review of the book *Improving Your Measurement of Customer Satisfaction*)

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Manager, Marketing Research, **Bausch & Lomb**

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Assistant Manager, Marketing Research, **Riverside Methodist Hospital**

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