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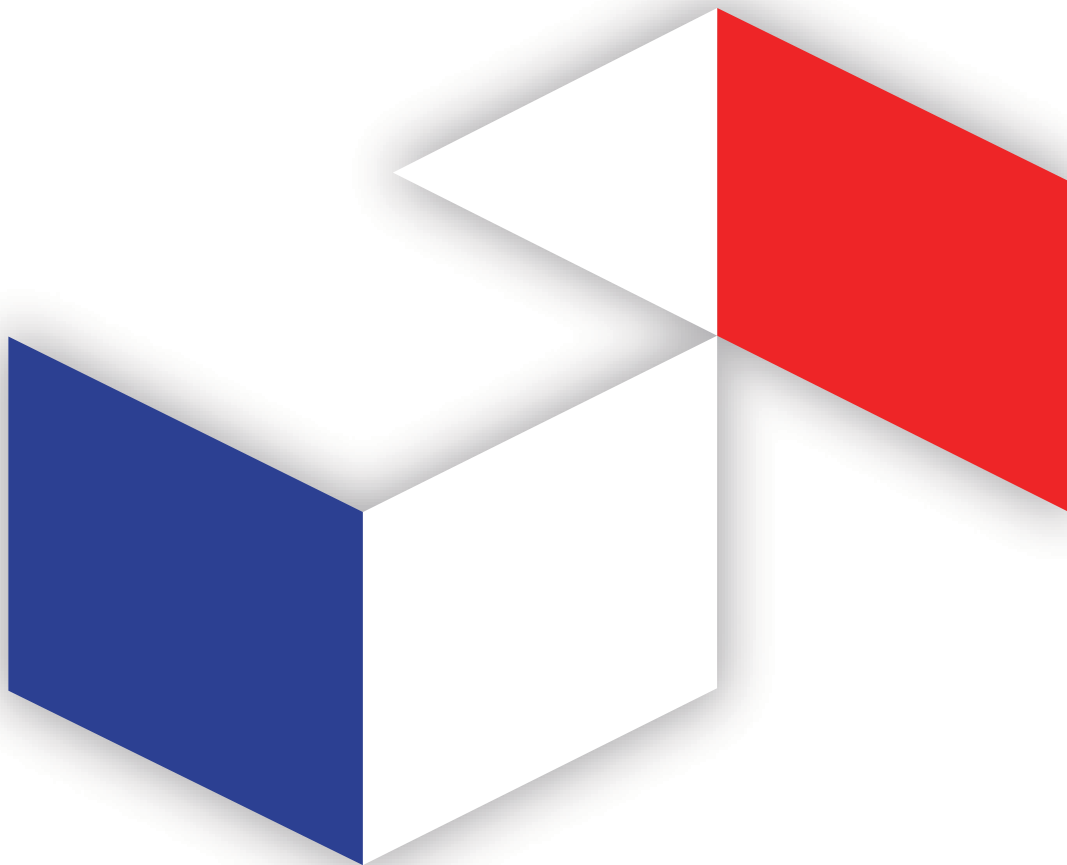
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contents

case studies

- 24 **The rules of engagement**
Lessons learned from creating an MROC for Millennials
By Robert Moran, Jennifer Myers, Allison Quigley and Sparky Zivin
- 30 **Satisfaction in action**
Pitney Bowes places a premium on soliciting and acting on customer feedback
By Michael Calderwood and Anthony Giusto

techniques

- 34 **Where do we go from here?**
Thoughts on how to address important questions about MROCs
By Bob Yazbeck
- 40 **Thriving or just surviving?**
Measuring the health of an online community
By Doug Pruden and Terry G. Vavra

- 46 **Planning for success**
Maximizing ROI for custom panels and online communities
By Bonnie Sherman
- 52 **Trusted and tested**
A look at the state of business-to-business research
By Timothy Davidson and Larry Gold
- 56 **Small business, big opportunity?**
Why research firms should stop ignoring small businesses
By Wilson Readinger

columns

- 18 **Data Use**
Statistical significance revisited
By Terry H. Grapentine
- 72 **Questions You Should Ask When...**
Selecting a Telephone Facility
By Emily Goon
- 100 **Trade Talk**
How marketers can get a reaction to their calls to action
By Joseph Rydholm

departments

- 6 In Case You Missed It...
- 8 Survey Monitor
- 10 Names of Note
- 12 Product and Service Update
- 14 Research Industry News
- 73 2011 Telephone Facilities Directory
- 98 Calendar of Events
- 99 Index of Advertisers
- 101 Letter to the Editor
- 102 Before You Go...



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news and notes on marketing and research



Discounts help assuage guilt over buying 'vice' foods

Next time you buy a pack of your favorite chocolate at a price discount, ask yourself a simple question: Would you have bought it if it was available at full price with a bonus quantity?

The old-fashioned guilt that prevents one from buying so-called vice foods with bonus quantity may actually play a role in buying vice food with price discount, according to research from Arul and Himanshu Mishra at the David Eccles School of Business at the University of Utah, Salt Lake City. Consumers seem to want to avoid eating more of their favorite guilty pleasures but can forgive themselves the indulgence if it comes at a cheap price.

While bonus quantities on virtue foods increase a consumer's likelihood to purchase, the pattern reverses for vice foods, which could impact how sales promotions are perceived by consumers and offered by retailers. In their paper *The Influence of Price Discount versus Bonus Quantity on the Preference for Virtue and Vice Foods*, the researchers explored the struggle to balance conscience and desire - in this case, how shoppers alter their purchasing choices between healthy and unhealthy foods when given varying sales promotion options such as a price discount or a bonus quantity.

The researchers explored the vice-versus-virtue phenomenon in a series of studies that included customers at a local coffee shop and hundreds of students. Participants were offered a mix of varied virtue and vice foods, prices and amounts. In the preliminary study of 98 customers exiting a local coffee store, the researchers offered the choice of the store's low-fat blueberry muffins or its rich chocolate chip cookies. Further, the cookies were offered in either a bonus quantity or at a reduced price, as were the muffins.

The results: 76.1 percent chose to buy the low-fat muffins when offered with a bonus quantity while 54.2 percent chose to buy them with a price discount. Conversely, 69.6 percent selected cookies when offered with a price discount, but only 47.9 percent chose cookies with the bonus quantity option. Subsequent laboratory studies found similar results for products ranging from identical chocolates, labeled as either healthy or tasty, to raisins, cake and fruit salad, all offered at either reduced prices or in bonus packaging promotions.

"Consumers cannot generate good justifications for buying [vice foods] with a bonus quantity since it would mean consuming more," said the paper. "However, a price discount with a vice food can be justified as a money-saving purchase and hence it acts as a guilt-mitigating mechanism. For virtue foods, the absence of both anticipated post-consumption guilt and the resulting need to justify leads consumers to prefer bonus quantity over price discount."

Americans sick of hunting for bottom-dollar grocery deals

The American public is tired of holding tight to its household food budgets, even though most continue to do so. Shoppers look back longingly on the days when their now-splurge items were enjoyed routinely, and they want some relief from the drain of deal-chasing, according to *The Lempert Report*, which was based on a finding in the National Grocers Association-SupermarketGuru 2011 Annual Consumer Survey Report that indicated a seven-point shift away from low prices as a primary determinant of where to shop for groceries.

The 2011 figures showed that just 44 percent of consumers think price is very important, down from 51 percent in each of the past two years. Indeed, the 2011 percentage reverts to the 2008 pre-recession sentiment level, which is significant because this shift away from low prices could be coming in advance of a full recovery.

Nearly half of those who say price is very important come from the three lowest income tiers - \$25,001-\$45,000 (20 percent), \$45,001-\$65,000 (17 percent) and \$25,000 or less (12 percent). A year ago, their collective percentage was 56 percent.

More evidence of the low-price-chase fatigue: While 92 percent of respondents say that items on sale or money-saving specials are very/somewhat important factors in where they decide to buy food, the composition of this figure has changed. Very important downshifted to 55 percent from 60 percent a year ago, and somewhat important rose three points to 37 percent from 34 percent a year ago.

Also, less than one-fourth of consumers think a frequent shopper program or savings club is a very important differentiator. Perhaps if supermarkets ran more targeted promotions to their cardholders, these programs would be more in demand. As it is, this four-point dip from last year signals that people want their savings and deals in a clear manner, without having to give up personal information or follow many rules.

What causes consumers to unsubscribe, unfan or unfollow?

Over half of consumers expect that liking a Facebook brand will result in marketing communications from brands, but that doesn't mean all messages are welcome. More than 90 percent of consumers have broken up with at least one brand on Facebook, e-mail or Twitter because of irrelevant, too frequent or boring marketing messages, according to *The Social Break-Up*, a study from Indianapolis marketing firm ExactTarget and its sister company CoTweet.

Online direct marketing, especially by means of social media, has become an increasingly popular way to reach consumers. But consumers are learning how to tune out the sponsored messages that flood their News Feeds, in-boxes and Twitter pages. Online mediums may give brands the power to reach their audiences en masse, but consumers also understand now more than ever that they are in control of marketers' messages and will punish irrelevant, voluminous or boring messages by cutting off marketers' means of direct communication.

The *Social Break-Up* study sought to determine the top motivations for unfanning, unfollowing and unsubscribing from marketing campaigns on Facebook, Twitter and e-mail. It found that consumers tread lightly when allowing companies to reach them via social media or e-mail. Eighty-one percent of consumers have either unliked or removed a company's posts from their Facebook News Feed and 71 percent of consumers reported being more selective about liking a company on Facebook. Seventy-seven percent of consumers reported being more cautious about providing their e-mail address to companies versus last year and 41 percent have unfollowed a company on Twitter.



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Car shoppers seek ease of use from auto Web sites

When researching cars online, a consumer's Web experience factors into the overall perception of the car brand. In addition to providing new-vehicle shoppers with adequate information that is easy to access, the most useful automotive brand Web sites must also provide a consistently satisfying experience across all points of entry, including the home page and model-level pages, according to the 2011 Manufacturer Web site Evaluation Study - Wave 1 from

model pages - such as MINI and Porsche - have navigation schemes that remain the same throughout the Web site," says Arianne Walker, director, marketing and media research, J.D. Power and Associates. "This makes it possible for Web site users to access relevant information from anywhere on the site. This certainly reinforces the fact that automotive brand Web sites need to be intuitive and should reduce the number of clicks it takes for the user to get to their desired destination."

In contrast, for some of the lowest-performing Web sites, there were significant gaps in satisfaction between users who entered the site through the home page and those who gained entry through a model page.

"Web sites that are ranked as being the least useful or satisfying tend to have home pages that offer very little model-level information, if any, as well as cumbersome or inconsistent navigation," says Walker.

Honda ranked highest with a score of 836 on a 1,000-point scale and performed particularly well in the information/content, navigation and speed measures. Rounding out the top five automotive Web sites were Mazda (818), MINI (815), Porsche (814) and Acura (813). The most improved brands in 2011 included Cadillac (which improved by 15 rank positions) and Porsche (which improved by 14 rank positions). According to Walker, much of Cadillac's improvement in 2011 came from improved navigation, which accompanied image and branding updates that were initiated early in 2010. Porsche's improvement from 2010 was primarily due to changes in navigation and design that provide

users with clearer, more readable page layouts. For more information visit www.jdpower.com.

Physicians and pharma companies struggle in communicating with Hispanic population

Poor communication with Hispanic patients could be adversely affecting the quality of care for the largest minority group in the U.S., according to a study from The Jeffrey Group, a Miami communications agency, and KCI Partners, a Weston, Fla., research firm. The study focused on uncovering barriers in Hispanics' receiving adequate treatment and measuring the effectiveness of communication vehicles in educating Hispanic patients about their health.

Among the obstacles physicians encountered in effectively treating Hispanic patients, 24 percent of physicians cited poor patient understanding of disease severity as almost always a barrier to treatment and 21 percent cited it as frequently a barrier. Other factors cited by physicians as almost always being a barrier to treatment were preconceived notions/myths (23 percent) and conflicting advice about treatment from family members (21 percent).

Despite these barriers, nearly 50 percent of respondents cited that community organizations, physicians, physician assistants and nurses are among those doing the most effective job at communicating about health care issues with Hispanic patients. On the other hand, most physicians think that pharmaceutical companies don't fully understand multicultural patient needs and therefore they don't communicate well with them. In fact, only 12 percent reported that pharmaceutical companies understand the health care needs of Hispanic patients very well. Even fewer physicians (7 percent) indicated that pharmaceutical companies are doing

continued on p. 62



Westlake Village, Calif., research company J.D. Power and Associates. The study measured the usefulness of automotive manufacturer Web sites during the new-vehicle shopping process by examining four measures: speed, appearance, navigation and information/content.

Overall, users who accessed a Web site through a model page were significantly more satisfied with their experience than those who entered the Web site through the home page. Web sites that achieved the highest levels of overall satisfaction and usability performed consistently well among both sets of shoppers.

"Certain brands that perform consistently well among users who enter at the home page and through



8:00 AM



12:00 NOON



6:00 PM



8:00 PM



10:00 PM

"Just Another Day In Paradise"

names of note

Cindy Davis has been named executive vice president, global consumer insights, at *Walmart*, Bentonville, Ark.

Adam Portner has been promoted to senior vice president, client development, of *Research Now*, Plano, Texas. Portner is based in San Francisco.

Milwaukee, Wis., research company *Market Probe* has hired **Don Ryan** as vice president, technology prac-



Ryan

Ricker

tice; **Judith Ricker** as executive vice president, brand research and consulting; **Anu Bhalla** as vice president, customer advocacy marketing; and



Bhalla

Wikstrom

Yvette Wikstrom as vice president and advocacy marketing consultant.

Cassidy Walker has been promoted to project manager at *Core Insights*, a Boulder, Colo., research company.

New York research company *Kantar Video* has hired **Andrew Latzman** as senior vice president, research; and **Aaron Manchanda** as vice president, engineering.

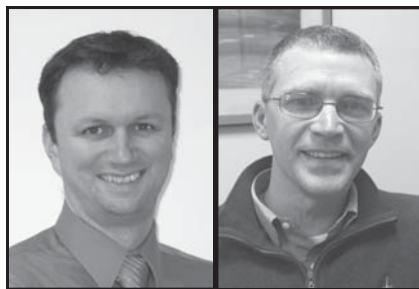
GfK Custom Research North America, New York, has named **Howard Lax** vice president, GfK customer loyalty; and **James Conrad** managing direc-

tor, GfK brand and communications. The company has also promoted **John Wittenbraker** to managing director, GfK corporate innovation.

Colleen Fahey Rush has been appointed executive vice president and CRO of *MTV Networks*, New York.

Krishna Kabra, senior vice president of *The BrainJuicer Group PLC*, a London research company, has been appointed to oversee the company's business in Canada.

Voxco, a Montreal research company, has hired **Richard Owen** as managing director. Owen will be based in London.



Owen

Urban

Olson Research Group, Warminster, Pa., has hired **David Urban** as vice president, client services.

Kevin Thompson has joined Los Angeles research company *Ipsos OTX MediaCT* as senior vice president, social media.

Marketing Research Services Inc., Cincinnati, has hired **Rebecca Hunter** as senior project director. The company has also promoted **Aaron Gulley** to senior account executive; **Betty Berling** to manager, analytical research; **Kristen Hungerford** to senior analyst; **Tina Price** to senior project director; and **Keri Glad** to associate analyst.

Dan Bernard has joined Oslo, Norway, research software company *Confirmit* as director, strategic accounts. Bernard will be based in New York.

Carol Stream, Ill., research company *StartSampling Inc.* has hired **Paul Shellenberg** as director, business development custom research. Shellenberg will be based in San Francisco.



Shellenberg

Germann

Cincinnati, research company *MarketVision* has promoted **Megan Germann** to research supervisor.

The Pert Group, a Bloomfield, Conn., research company, has appointed **Elizabeth Jaccoma** and **Julie Rippberger** to account manager, financial and industry group. The company has also promoted **Julianne Crum** to the same position.

Westport, Conn., research company *Firefly Millward Brown* has hired **Stacy Graiko** as moderator.

Long Island City, N.Y., research company *Opinion Access Corp.* has hired **Noris Medina** as director, Hispanic marketing.

Horsham, Pa., research company *TNS* has appointed **Tim Isaac** as global marketing director and **Cheryl Max** as marketing head, North America.

Gene Filipi has been named director, sales, of *Kinesis Survey Technologies LLC*, an Austin, Texas, research company.

Mary McIlrath and **Scott Hierbaum** have been promoted to partner at *C&R Research*, Chicago.

New York research company *Millward*

continued on p. 70

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product and service update

Knowledge Networks adds custom analytics to its social media offering

Menlo Park, Calif., research company Knowledge Networks has expanded its Faces of Social Media product suite to include custom analytics. Knowledge Networks has incorporated a semantic engine from Boulder, Colo., text analytics company Collective Intellect that is designed to process conversations from over 100 million authors daily and provide information regarding social media's effects on product categories and how social media conversations reveal people's feelings about specific products or topics.

The addition of custom analytics capabilities is intended to identify market trends that lead to new marketing and product tactics; determine which social media marketing activities and messages have the greatest ROI potential; diagnose how brands perform on the social media landscape; illuminate new product acceptance and reception as input to course corrections; and evaluate whether key advertising messages are being reflected in social media conversations – a marker of campaign progress. For more information visit www.knowledgenetworks.com.

Kinesis app with barcode scanning aims to facilitate purchasing research

Kinesis Survey Technologies LLC, an Austin, Texas, research company, has unveiled Kinesis MobileScan, a multifunction mobile research application with embedded barcode scanning technology. Kinesis MobileScan is a downloadable app that can be licensed to market research firms. Its built-in mobile barcode scanner is designed to capture purchase data for point-of-sale diaries and other purchase-reporting research. All barcode information (product brand, type, size) plus geolocation and timestamp information is collected.

In addition to barcode scanning,

the app provides other functional options including panelist registration, survey access, community interaction, digital image/video/audio and text collection and in-app messaging to supplement or replace e-mail and SMS communications. The app is compatible with Apple iPhone/iPod devices. An Android version is planned for release later in 2011. For more information visit www.kinesissurvey.com.

ParentSpeak brings parents and children together for MROC research

C+R Research, Chicago, has launched a shared network called ParentSpeak, designed to bring together parents of children up to 18 years old and engage them to interact while also offering insights through various means for client-sponsored research. Among its research capabilities are online immersion and advisory sessions, including online chat sessions and focus groups; bulletin boards; exploratory surveys; photo and video journals; and voice-mail shop-alongs. Traditional quantitative research is also enabled, such as concept evaluation, advertising testing and Web usability tests. Hybrid approaches can also be used. For more information visit www.parentsspeak.com.

MarketTools updates its data quality solution

San Francisco research company MarketTools Inc. has released an updated version of TrueSample, its online data quality solution that aims to ensure that survey respondents are real, unique and engaged. The new version of TrueSample is designed to chart overall panel tenure mix for survey respondents, along with how frequently individual respondents take TrueSample-enabled surveys to provide insight into how tenure on a panel and survey-taking frequency affect research results. In addition, the version includes detailed reporting to give users transparency into and con-

trol over the quality of their sample sources. For more information visit www.markettools.com.

Maponics updates Neighborhood Boundaries in U.S., Canada and Europe

Maponics, a White River Junction, Vt., location-based data provider, has released version 1.11.1 of its Neighborhood Boundaries product, which includes 120,000+ neighborhoods in the U.S. and Canada. With the update, coverage of locally-sourced neighborhoods has increased by 10,000+ polygons, with coverage expansion in more than 70 new cities; and over 1,000 neighborhoods were added to the Washington, D.C., and Miami metro areas. U.S. Census files are included at no additional charge and, starting with the 1.11.1 product release, Canadian Census files and accompanying product documentation are also included at no additional charge.

Additionally, Maponics has released its latest version of Neighborhood Boundaries in Europe, adding over 1,000 new neighborhoods in 15 new cities. For more information visit www.maponics.com.

Experian debuts Simmons OneView for insights on demand

New York research company Experian Marketing Services has launched Simmons OneView, a Web-based delivery system that combines the syndicated and custom research from Experian Simmons with analytic tools and reports to give marketers 24-hour access to consumer insights.

Simmons OneView offers instant profile reports, data-mining and cross-tabs to provide marketers with an understanding of consumer targets; formulates cross-media and messaging strategies with built-in analytic tools, including reach and frequency reports, correspondence mapping and geographic analysis; closes the loop

continued on p. 66

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News notes

MediaMind Technologies Inc., a New York advertising firm, has earned accreditation from the Media Rating Council, New York, for its unique impressions and average frequency metrics under the Interactive Advertising Bureau's audience reach measurement guidelines.

OLC Global, a Bartlesville, Okla., research company, has received national certification from the Women's Business Enterprise National Council, Washington, D.C., as a business that is at least 51 percent owned, controlled, operated and managed by a woman or women.

The Council of American Survey Research Organizations' Institute for Research Quality, Port Jefferson, N.Y., has awarded certification for the ISO 26362:2009 standard for access panels in market, opinion and social research to **M3 USA**, a Washington, D.C., research company, for M3 USA's MDLinx U.S. online panel of specialist physicians and health care professionals.

NetQuest, a Mount Laurel, N.J., research company, celebrated its 10th anniversary in January 2011.

Acquisitions/transactions

Media Monitors, a White Plains, N.Y., research company, has acquired a majority stake in Singapore research company **Brandtology**. Terms of the transaction were not disclosed.

Austin, Texas, fundraising company **Convio Inc.** has acquired Overland Park, Kan., research company **StrategicOne**. Under the agreement, Convio will pay approximately \$5 million in cash and may also pay \$1 million in cash based on successful achievement of performance targets payable over three years.

London communications group **WPP** has agreed to acquire a fur-

ther stake in **Mindshare South Africa**, a Bryanston, South Africa, media management company, from Ogilvy South Africa. Research is among Mindshare's offerings. Mindshare will become part of WPP's GroupM network of companies within South Africa.

Devon, U.K., research software company **idio** has acquired **thru-digital**, a London social media development company, for an undisclosed sum. The acquisition will provide idio a permanent client delivery location in London.

MarketShare, a Los Angeles research company, has agreed to acquire Princeton, N.J., marketing advisory firm **MarketingNPV**. Terms of the acquisition were not disclosed.

London research company **Kantar** has acquired the entire issued share capital of Saarlouis, Germany, research company **Spring Wirtz und Pischke GmbH and Co., KG**. Following the acquisition, Spring will become part of Kantar Media.

Diversified Agency Services (DAS), a division of New York marketing communications company Omnicom Group Inc., has acquired **Communispace Corporation**, a Watertown, Mass., research company.

Additionally, DAS has acquired **The Modellers**, a Salt Lake City marketing research company. The Modellers will continue to serve clients from its headquarter location.

Stockholm, Sweden, research company **Cint AB** has acquired Scottsdale, Ariz., research company **Thumbspeak LLC** for an undisclosed amount. Thumbspeak will become a Cint Group company and its do-it-yourself mobile relationship marketing platform will be integrated into the Cint Panel Exchange as a plug-in for existing and new panel owners, as well as sold as a stand-

alone licensed product under its existing brand name.

Alliances/strategic partnerships

Rochester, N.Y., research company **Harris Interactive** and Wilton, Conn., consulting firm **Top Box Associates** have formed a strategic alliance to offer clients a product forecasting solution.

London research company **YouGov** has partnered with London marketing firm **Adform** to integrate YouGov's technology with the Adform platform to create AdSurvey, an offering designed to allow customers to pre-test how one or more banner ads are received by the target group.

Ugam Research Solutions, Mumbai, India, has formed a partnership with Vancouver, B.C., research company **Techneos** to improve mobile research capabilities.

Manchester, U.K., research company **B2B International** has entered into a joint venture with its marketing and communications agency **B2B Marcomms** (formerly Frank Communications). B2B International acquired a 50 percent stake in B2B Marcomms.

Horsham, Pa., research company **TNS** has expanded in Hungary through a new joint venture with **Hoffmann Research International**. Hoffmann will be rebranded as TNS Hoffmann.

Awards/rankings

Murphy Marketing Research/Trendtown, Milwaukee, Wis., has been rated among the top 10 qualitative market research firms in the 2011 Annual Survey of Market Research Professionals conducted by market-researchcareers.com.

continued on p. 68

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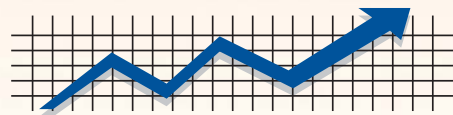
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Data Quality
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Statistical significance revisited

In their article “The use, misuse, and abuse of significance” in the November 1994 issue of this magazine, authors Patrick Baldasare and Vikas Mittel made the case that there is a difference between statistical versus practical significance. Just because a statistical test shows a 95 percent probability that the difference between two means or percentage scores is statistically significant, such a difference may not possess practical significance. For instance, this difference may lie in an attitudinal measure that does not influence consumer behavior; or in a demographic measure that has no relevance to marketing communications.

As they concluded near the end of their article: “Our logic is the

following: ... the relevance of a statistically significant difference should be determined based on practical criteria including the absolute value of the difference, marketing objectives, strategy and so forth. The mere presence of a statistical significance does not imply that the difference is large or that it is of noteworthy importance.”

Baldasare and Mittel’s discussion focused primarily on the relationships among random error, sample size and statistical significance. Their article did not examine other sources of error than can affect statistical testing and conspire to distract management from discovering meaningful differences and similarities lurking in a data set.

Therefore, I want to build on

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their observations by describing additional sources of error in survey research that make identifying statistically significant differences problematic and how large sample sizes can render moot the subject of statistical significance altogether. In particular, I discuss the effects that sampling and measurement error have in calculating statistical tests and the misleading sense of scientific precision that statistical tests project onto research reports. I conclude by offering a recommendation on how to report statistical significance in reports.

Keep in mind that statistical testing does not render a verdict on the validity of your data. On a given measure, your statistical analysis software may reveal statistically significant

snapshot

In response to an earlier *Quirk’s* article on the abuse of significance, this article explores several different kinds of error and argues that researchers should look to report managerial significance rather than statistical significance.

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differences (or not) between two or more respondent groups, but such differences (or lack of differences) could be caused by sampling biases and/or measurement error. Your statistical software assumes that your data is completely valid, which is never the case.

Two kinds of error

There are two kinds of measurement error - random and systematic. Therefore, any survey statistic will be a function of the true value of the parameter one is estimating, plus random and systematic error. Consider the following:

$$X_{\text{Mean}} = \mu + \text{Random Error} + \text{Systematic Error}$$

Where,
 X_{Mean} = mean value of X
 μ = the true but unknown mean value of X.

Random error is error variance that does not bias the data so that the expected value of X_{Mean} will be μ . For example, the particular mood of a respondent may affect how he answers a question. Presumably, when drawing a sample from a population, these various respondent moods and how they affect respondent answers to questions will be random across all respondents.

In contrast, systematic error biases statistical estimates, although the direction of the bias may be unknown. For example, if you are

measuring how much people weigh and your scale systematically subtracts five pounds from a person's actual weight, your weight measures will be biased.

These two kinds of error can come from mistakes in your sample (sampling error) or from the questions that appear or don't appear on your questionnaire (measurement error).

Sampling error

Consider the following sources of sampling error that may underlie your data: a) under coverage; b) nonresponse; and c) self-selection. Whether this error is random or systematic will be a function of how you draw your sample.

Under-coverage. This is a situation in which a segment of the target population is underrepresented. One famous example is the 1936 *Literary Digest* survey covering that year's presidential election between Franklin Roosevelt and Alfred Landon. A major portion of potential survey respondents were identified via telephone book listings which, in 1936, underrepresented lower-income, Democrat households.

We face similar sampling challenges today. Consider: a) half of heads-of-households, 25 to 29 years of age, do not have a landline phone; b) consumers who are infrequently home evenings can be underrepresented in phone surveys; and c) sampling/panel companies

may not have access to students' college e-mail addresses or telephone numbers when classes are in session.

Nonresponse. Some people are simply unwilling or not inclined to participate in a survey. A major manifestation today of this problem is consumers' growing unwillingness to participate in telephone surveys. Richard Curtin et al., report on one study showing telephone response rates declining from approximately 80 percent in 1979 to near 40 percent in 2003 ("Changes in telephone survey nonresponse over the past quarter century," *Public Opinion Quarterly*, Spring 2005, pp. 87-98).

Self-selection. One way this can occur is when a respondent can exercise control over completing a survey. For example, an Internet panel participant qualifies and agrees to take an online survey but subsequently finds that she is becoming bored with the subject matter and quits. Bias can therefore be introduced if a disproportionate share of one's sample is completed by respondents who are not representative of the population of interest (e.g., the sample has a disproportionate number of respondents who simply like the topic).

Measurement error

This kind of error can be attributable to questions that appear or don't appear on your survey, and may result in either random or systematic error depending on the particular situation.

Question interpretation. One source of data variance due to question interpretation is simply asking respondents a vague or ambiguous question such as the following:

On a scale of 0 to 10, where 0 denotes poor performance and 10 denotes excellent performance, how would you rate the Acme Company on being innovative?

Innovative is a vague term. For example, some respondents may interpret innovative to refer to service innovation and others may think it refers to product innovation. An estimate of the mean score on this attribute would be biased if the researcher intended innovative to refer to services but many respondents interpreted the term to mean tangible products.

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Respondent assumptions. Even relatively well-constructed questions will have some level of vagueness with respect to assumptions respondents make before answering a question. For example, product performance ratings can be influenced by the extent to which respondents consider the following issues prior to giving their rating: a) how much the product costs; b) how performance accords with one's forecast of product performance; c) recent experience with the product vs. one's use of the product over time; and d) whether the performance of the product being rated is being compared to similar products in the respondent's mind.

Question order. Where a question appears in a survey can affect how respondents answer it. For instance, asking an overall satisfaction question at the beginning of a survey can elicit a different rating compared to placing it at the end of a survey, where exposure to preceding questions can affect the overall satisfaction rating (e.g., the preceding questions prime either positive

or negative memories of one's experience with the product).

Method variance. I had the opportunity to analyze a restaurant chain's customer satisfaction data that were collected via two modalities - online and interactive voice response (IVR). Both surveys were identical in their questions and scales. Study findings revealed that data from the online survey had greater variance than data collected via the IVR system.

Additionally, there was some systematic bias - restaurant ratings were higher in the IVR vs. the online format over several time periods in which the surveys were administered. One hypothesis explaining the different findings was that visually exposing respondents to the survey's rating scales promoted use of a wider range of scale values and more validly reflected the respondents' views.

Attribute wording. Even the most finely-crafted attribute statements can be reworded, and doing so can affect how respondents answer them. For example, consider the following three

alternatives to the question, "With which aspect of our service were you most satisfied?"

With which aspect of our service were you most . . . ?
pleased
delighted
happy.

True, these questions have slightly different connotations. Nevertheless, many words have synonyms and sometimes it's a coin toss as to what particular wording one uses. Differently-phrased questions can produce different answers.

Omitting important questions. The most prevalent example of systematic measurement error in marketing research is omitting an important variable from your survey. For example, in a multiple regression equation, this can result in a less important independent variable being both statistically significant and judged to be the most influential, when the omitted variable would have been the most important predictor in your model had it been included in the study.



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Random or systematic error

Sometimes factors that one may think may only introduce random error into one's data set can actually introduce systematic error. Underrepresenting important members of a population could result in systematic bias in the data. If the wording of a question is such that respondents systematically misinterpret what the researcher meant by the question, systematic error will result. For example, you ask respondents what was the most important factor

influencing their recent purchase. Most respondents think of tangible attributes of the product, when, in reality, the most influential factor was word-of-mouth recommendations.

Not the same thing

Unfortunately, when one includes the results of statistical tests in a report, doing so confers a kind of specious statement on a study's "scientific" precision and validity. Precision and validity are not the same thing. A study can be very precise in its sample

design or measures, but have its validity severely compromised as a result of the factors discussed earlier.

Especially among those who are not familiar with the points made above, my experience suggests that when a layman sees that two measures are "statistically significant," it attracts the reader's attention and suggests that "this is something you need to pay attention to," when the actual case may be just the opposite.

Need to provide guidance

The above examples suggest that we never can be totally sure whether to trust our statistical tests. Yet, researchers need to provide guidance to their audience regarding whether differences one reads in a report should be taken to heart or ignored. Therefore, I share Baldasare and Mittel's recommendation of not reporting "statistical significance," but rather reporting "managerial significance." Additionally, I recommend reporting non-statistically significant results that have managerial implications.

Managerial significance.

Identify differences whose *magnitude* has *relevance* to decision making. I italicize those words for the following reason:

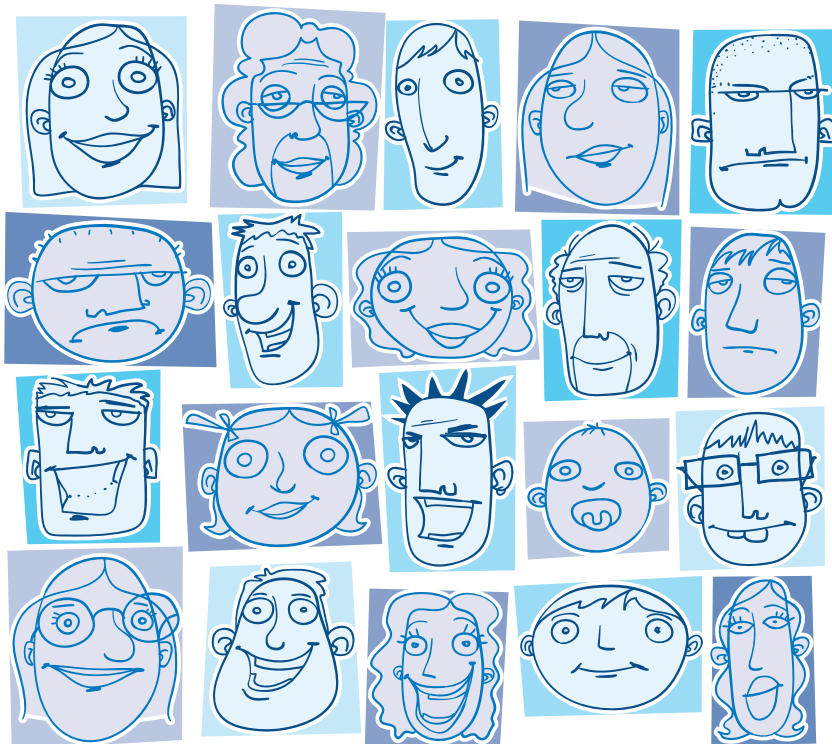
Magnitude: Virtually all crosstab statistical tests take the following form:

$$H_0 : \mu_1 = \mu_2$$
$$H_A : \mu_1 \neq \mu_2$$

With a sufficiently large sample size, you will always reject the null hypothesis. And in reality, if you take your decimal points out enough places, virtually no two μ 's are ever precisely equal.

Relevance: The managerially relevant question is not whether two means are different - they always are with a sufficiently large sample size - the question is whether the difference is large enough to matter to decision makers.

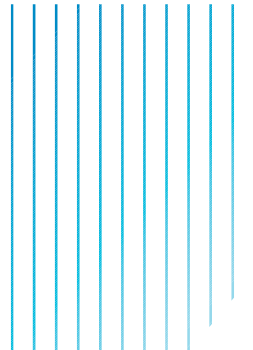
The excessive reliance placed on statistical testing in marketing research - given all the factors discussed earlier that can confound the interpretation of these tests - is told in the story of the man who invented



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Student's t-test, a test which ironically forms the basis for most of the blindly-followed statistical testing that is done in marketing research today.

William Sealy Gosset (1876-1937), creator of Student's t-test, was also a brew master for the Guinness Brewery in Dublin. He was the head experimental brewer whose primary responsibility was to understand how various ingredients could affect the quality of Guinness. Economic constraints limited the number of batches of Guinness he could brew in order to test the effects that various combinations of yeast chemistry, barley, hops, water quality and so on had on the product's quality.

Gosset knew his experimental designs were not perfect (think of our previous discussion of sampling and measurement error) and that small sample sizes could disguise important findings if he overly relied on statistical tests - even his own. He used his Student's t-test (published under the pseudonym Student) only as a tool. He relied on that tool and judgment to identify factors that

had substantive or economic significance - regardless of their statistical significance! From Gosset's book (emphasis is mine):

"I thought that perhaps there might be some degree of probability which is conventionally treated as sufficient in such work as ours and I advised that some outside authority in mathematics should be consulted as to what certainty is required to aim at in large scale work. However it would appear that in such work as ours the degree of certainty to be aimed at must depend on the *pecuniary advantage to be gained by following the result of the experiment, compared with the increased cost of the new method, if any, and the cost of each experiment.*"


Insignificance. Just because a statistical test may indicate that two populations are not statistically significantly different on a measure does not mean that your report should gloss over this finding. For example, two competing products' image attribute ratings may not be statistically significantly different. Yet, if one brand has significantly

more market share than the other, this may suggest that other factors outside of brand image may account for this difference, and such factors should be further investigated (e.g., store location, marketing communication effectiveness).

Many factors

In summary, many factors can affect the validity of our statistical testing from how we draw our samples to how we ask respondents questions. Additionally, if our sample sizes are large enough, all statistical tests will be significantly different.

When pondering how to address this issue in your next study, think of William Sealy Gosset. Use statistical tests the same way he used them to understand the chemistry of a fine beer - as a tool to discover, not to define, practical insights. | Q

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The rules of engagement

Lessons learned from creating an MROC for Millennials

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As Kit Yarrow and Jayne O'Donnell, authors of *Gen BuY*, have written, Millennials are “the largest, most diverse, educated and influential shoppers on the planet.” Substantial research has been done to understand the behaviors, values and opinions of the 71 million teens and twenty-somethings known as Gen Y or the Millennial generation, and for good reason. They are the first generation to have grown up online (so-called “digital natives”) and represent the most ethnically diverse generation ever, with a spending power exceeding \$200 billion.

As a group, they have been defined by the Pew Research Center as confident, self-expressive, liberal, upbeat and open to change, but we believe that we still don't fully understand what makes this complex and increasingly influential group tick. Previous studies, such as the Pew Center's year-long series *Millennials: A Portrait of a Generation Next*, have defined Millennials as a group rather than exploring their diversity.

The recognition that we can't box them in to neat categories sparked our desire to create a proprietary market research online community (MROC) as a way to continue the conversation with Millennials as they evolve and their influence grows. The community, called 8095 Live, was built as a joint

partnership with global communications firm Edelman. It is composed of 500 U.S. Millennials, born between 1980 and 1995, who represent a diverse group of life stages, locations and ethnicities.

snapshot

The authors detail the nuances of launching and maintaining an online community of Generation Y consumers and offer tips to marketers interested in community-building.

Become as central

Based on the increased interest in and steady adoption of MROCs we have seen from brands and marketers across all industries, it is likely that communities will become as central to the corporate insight function as the brand tracker has been historically.

Unlike traditional MROCs built exclusively for a client with the members coming from the client's target customer base, 8095 Live is cohort-centric, targeting a single demographic group. This distinction presents advantages as well as disadvantages that must be overcome by the community manager in order for the community to thrive.

Further, there are significant challenges that a community manager must address when moderating this type of community. Having dealt with the unique challenges of a demographic community, we

have come away with some helpful learnings and tips and will spend the balance of this article exploring them.

Keep people with a common age range, but not a common passion, engaged.

Building a true community - where content is co-created by moderators and community members and discussions form organically - is more difficult in a community built around a shared demographic characteristic than those tied to shared interests or enthusiasm for a specific brand or product. In the latter, the nexus between members already exists and our job as moderators is to guide the conversation. In 8095, we had the additional step of building "community" itself and the ongoing challenge of maintaining that engagement.

Fortunately, a majority of Millennials believe their generation has a unique and distinctive iden-

tity. As Pew found in its 2010 study, Gen Y has a higher level of cohort consciousness than its Gen X predecessors. When asked, "Do you think of your own age group as unique and distinct from other generations, or not?," 61 percent of Millennials felt their generation was unique and distinct. This compares to 49 percent for Gen X, 58 percent for Boomers and 66 percent for the Silent Generation.

This belief that one's generation has a unique identity serves as a community bond. Communities built around generations with lower cohort consciousness, such as Gen Xers, mean more work for the community manager in building and maintaining community identity.

Create engagements on a wide range of topics.

With a community of Millennials ranging from 16 to 31, mem-



bers represent a wide range of life stages and milestones: anywhere from getting their learner's permit, to going away to college, to embarking on their careers, to becoming parents. Despite fitting nicely into the Millennial or 8095 generation, as a group they do not have a unifying interest or hobby.

Recognizing that every engagement within the community would not appeal to everyone, it was crucial for us to create more engagements, on a wide range of subjects, than typical in a traditional MROC built exclusively for a client. We found that members will self-select in or out of activities based on their interests, so offering choices was important to help them feel invested and to entice them to keep coming back.

While a segment of community members are active across nearly all subject matters, there are also clear divisions. For example, we have come to expect to hear from different voices when asking about life insurance compared to beer preferences. Stay-at-home moms are happy to tell us about their perceptions on healthy eating but less interested in a reality TV show about a matchmaker. Community members who are eager to tell us about their experiences capturing video are very different than those concerned about protecting their privacy online.

Encourage organic content.

It is equally important for community managers to encourage organic content, especially at the outset. Managers must actively listen to what members are saying and reward those who co-create meaningful content. In 8095 Live, members don't receive incentive points (which are redeemed for gift cards) automatically when they create their own activities or respond to content posted by others. But when particularly insightful or interesting content emerges, we foster the conversation by rewarding points to the creator and, occasionally, to members.

One of the first discussion boards in 8095 Live created by a member was about a campaign by a major global company in the food and beverage space to rebuild its image. Members discussed whether the advertisements and news stories they had seen were believable and how they affected their opinion of the brand and their willingness to buy the company's products. We rewarded the creator and the first several members who responded and then turned the activity into one in which anyone who responded would receive points. This encouraged the conversation to continue and it also demonstrated to community members that we were listening to what topics

they wanted to discuss and were interested in a dialogue.

Create subcommunities.

In a large demographic community such as 8095 Live, subcommunities are an essential tool for encouraging more interactive discussions. In a single discussion board posted to the entire community, we can easily exceed 200 unique responses in a matter of hours, but we often find members are only responding to the initial post, not interacting with one another. As an alternative, we sometimes developed multiple discussion topics around a common theme and assigned members to one of those discussions. By dividing the community into a smaller group, we are better able to manage responses, ask thoughtful follow-up questions and encourage back-and-forth discussion by members.

Keep members interested with themes.

Weekly and monthly themes encourage people to keep coming back and can rekindle interest in members who had stopped participating. For example, February's theme was food, and while community activities continued to cover a broad scope of subjects, we included several food-related activities and offered additional rewards for our most active participants on the featured theme. This resulted in higher response rates not only on engagements related to food but also in other subject matters.

Size matters.

There has been a lot of debate regarding the optimal size for an MROC. Some have used Dunbar's number as one avenue of approach on this topic. (British anthropologist Robin Dunbar theorized that there is a limit - somewhere between 100 and 230 - to the number of stable social relationships people can have.) When applied to an MROC, Dunbar's number suggests that MROCs in the 150-230 range are optimal and that in larger-population MROCs it may be difficult for participants to develop much of a sense of group identity.

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Alternatively, social media consultant Jacob Morgan has argued that applying Dunbar's number to MROCs is inappropriate because we are not trying to build a tribe or fighting unit and are only attempting to get a critical mass for consumer co-creation. Similarly, some clients and prospective clients feel that limiting communities to a range around Dunbar's number (typically estimated to be 150) is too restrictive and that the size of the community should more closely resemble the sample size of traditional national surveys - 800 or 1,000 (or more).

Our perspective is that if it is important to the research that a tight-knit community develops, then Dunbar's number seems to be a guide, and traditional MROCs for brand enthusiasts, employees, etc., are best kept small.

However, when it comes to a demographic community, where a digital tribe is not critically important, the community needs to be larger to allow members to be segmented into subcommunities. Because 8095 Live asks about topics from travel to technology purchases, we need to ensure we will have a critical mass of community members ranging from working professionals to technology early adopters at any given time, and that requires a lot of people.

Community managers are key. When designing a survey, researchers aim to keep the questionnaire concise and precise to avoid respondent fatigue. However, unlike surveys, an online community is more likely to rust out than wear out. Unless the participants are being engaged regularly, the community dwindles and dies.

Therefore, the skill of a community manager, a position that some current project managers may transition to, is critical. To meet the new demand for community managers, market research and insight firms will need to go through a significant evolution in human capital. In addition to the new skill set that will be required of today's project managers, a mind-set change is needed as well. Focus group training and soft

skills, like empathy, may be helpful prerequisites for project managers transitioning to the role of community manager. No longer will researchers treat participants as fungible commodities and nameless and faceless samples in a survey; rather they will be building long-term working relationships with community members who will be partners in learning.

This is especially the case with 8095 Live, as Millennials are the most connected and digitally-

engaged generation the world has seen, and there is no shortage of competition for their attention and time online. That means we have had to work doubly hard to keep content fresh, engaging and worth a Millennial's valuable time.

Community management is not an easy job, but it is beginning to get some recognition. January 24, 2011, marked the second annual Community Manager Appreciation Day. Awareness of this role will evolve, and, in time,

The infographic is titled "connect today" in a dark red banner. Below the title is the email address "learnmore@cint.com" in a white rounded rectangle. The main content consists of six icons arranged in a circular path, each with a descriptive label below it:

- find hard-to-reach audiences**: An orange square icon with a white needle and thread.
- from all corners of the globe**: A yellow square icon with a white globe.
- with complete transparency**: A green square icon with a white window.
- using online**: A dark red square icon with a white Wi-Fi signal.
- and mobile devices**: A grey square icon with a white hand holding a smartphone.
- service based**: A light blue square icon with a white figure holding a hand.
- self-service**: A light blue square icon with a white figure holding a tool.

The word "or" is placed between the "service based" and "self-service" icons. At the bottom left is the Cint logo with the tagline "global connections. local insights." and the website "www.cint.com" at the bottom right.

best practices and industry training standards will solidify.

Four basic conclusions

Our work on 8095 Live has led us to four basic conclusions about the future of MROCs.

First, we believe that “cohort communities” such as 8095 Live can be scaled quickly and have a bright future. For example, we envision the creation of a successful MROC built around Americans born in 1951. These Americans, now 60,

have a strong generational bond as Baby Boomers. With disposable income and aging parents, as they contemplate their next act, we can expect much more from this cohort. Their purchase and investment patterns will create ripples throughout the economy.

Second, we also believe that there is room for the development of a new type of MROC through the addition of a new option to the ownership/control dimension – a shared solution. Under this model,

a firm creates and fosters an MROC based on a key demographic, life stage or psychographic profile and sells access to this community to multiple buyers for a lower cost than any one buyer would pay to build their own proprietary community. Think of it as the omnibus model applied to MROCs. We believe that under this shared-cost model, “multi-client cohort communities” show much promise as a market research tool.

Third, we feel that proprietary communities will evolve to become at least as important, if not more so, to corporations as the quarterly brand tracker or customer satisfaction tracker, because of their real-time nature and cost advantages over traditional qualitative research. And we believe that the majority of these communities will remain as “walled gardens” for competitive reasons.

Finally, our analysis of the MROC marketplace leads us to believe that massive, open communities will occupy a hybrid research and public or consumer engagement role. These communities will either rise spontaneously or they will be created or sponsored by a corporation, but their open membership and public access will make them exceedingly large. With strong text analytics tools we believe that the content of these massive communities will be mined successfully for insights. But the existence of these large communities and their dual use as both an insights tool and an engagement engine will present the market research industry with a challenge. After all, the co-creative activities of these future communities will in themselves become a consumer engagement or marketing tool.

Will the blurring line between “marketing” and “research” within this new type of community be embraced by market research or rejected by it? Only time will tell. | Q

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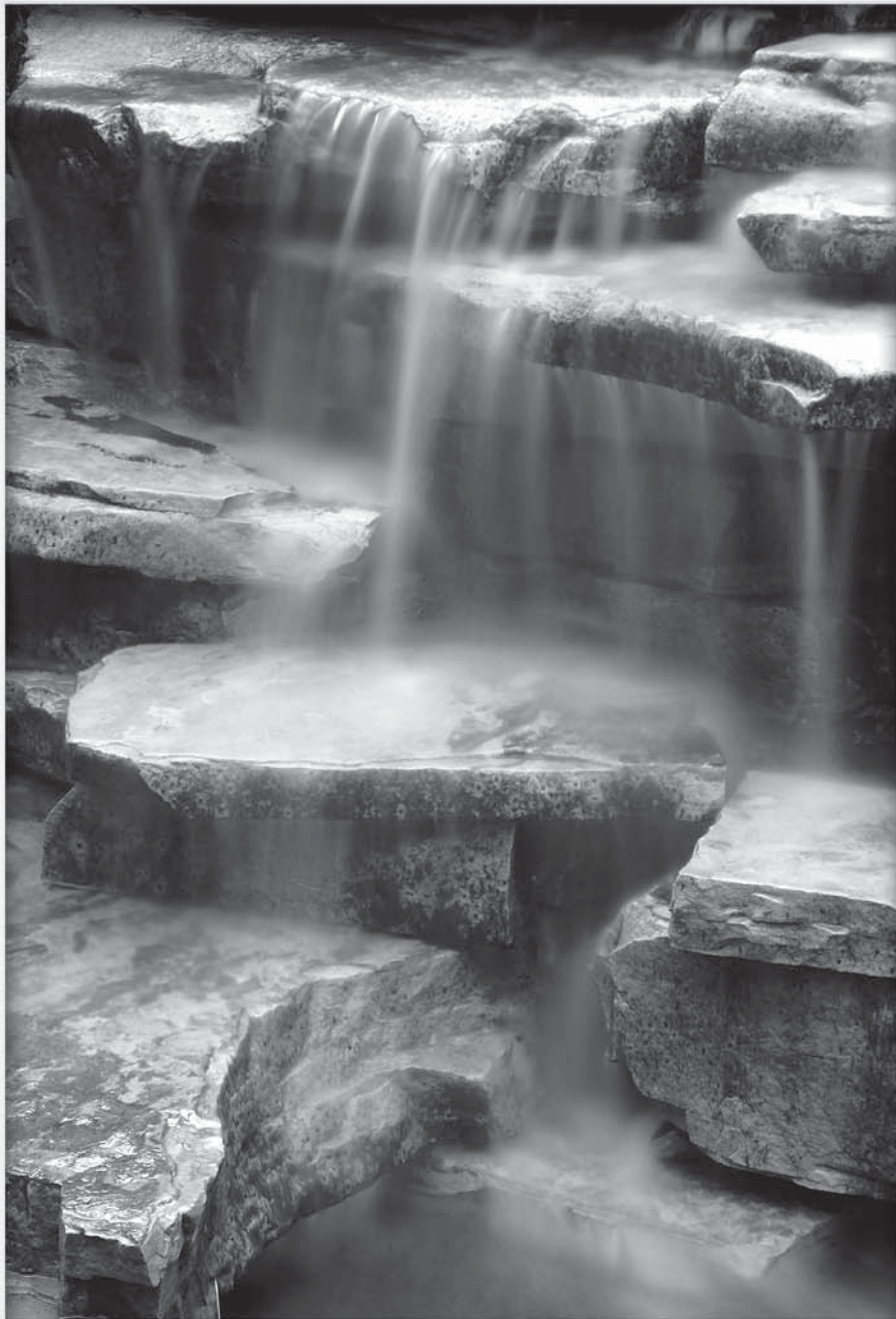
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The Fine Art of Marketing Research

Satisfaction in action

Pitney Bowes places a premium on soliciting and acting on customer feedback

In the business-to-business realm, how a vendor or technology provider measures customer satisfaction says a lot about how it will deliver satisfaction going forward. By learning more about a firm's approach to capturing and managing customer feedback, buyers can gain insight into the level of satisfaction they may expect after becoming a client.

Leaders in this discipline, including Pitney Bowes – a \$5.6 billion company based in Stamford, Conn., that provides software, hardware and services that integrate physical and digital communications channels – employ dedicated resources to measure customer satisfaction.

As a large and diverse company, Pitney Bowes does not use a one-size-fits-all approach. Customer satisfaction measurement programs are built, designed and managed around the distinct needs of customers. For instance, some divisions within the firm provide high-end, integrated multimillion-dollar systems and services. Here, dedicated sales and service executives may have close relationships with a few hundred enterprise-level accounts.

From a Pitney Bowes perspective, every single customer is vital to the organization's success. The company has in-depth conversations with multiple people in an organization to dig deep and understand their needs and con-

cerns. For example, monthly in-depth telephone surveys with multiple contacts at each customer company explore sales support, machine performance, response time, satisfaction with service reps, ease of doing business and overall satisfaction.

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snapshot

Using the practices of Pitney Bowes as examples, the authors argue that buyers of business-to-business products and services can learn a lot about a vendor by examining how it measures customer satisfaction.

If customers report that they are merely satisfied, service managers have three days to resolve problems and develop an action plan to make customers happy.

Managers review satisfaction results each week and analytic teams look for trends by region, sales rep, models, etc., to drive strategies and new programs. Reports track satisfaction but, more importantly, help uncover what drives satisfaction.

The goal is to talk about specifics but also to explore whether they would recommend Pitney Bowes and how it ranks among their most trusted providers. If Pitney Bowes is not the absolute best, it wants to find out what it needs to do to excel in their eyes.

Dramatic increase

Since reengineering its measurement program several years ago, Pitney Bowes has seen a dramatic increase

in customer satisfaction and business performance. Today, 86 percent of customers report that they are very satisfied and 96 percent of customers would recommend Pitney Bowes.

Other divisions within Pitney Bowes provide desktop applications to millions of customers who conduct millions of transactions every day. “Many of our customers purchase technology online and never actually meet with a Pitney Bowes representative, so we needed to build a robust mechanism that made it easy for us to capture, hear and analyze customer concerns,” says Gael Lundeen, vice president of customer experience for Pitney Bowes.

Highlights of this measurement program include:

- Monthly e-mail surveys that focus on 20 critical customer-facing processes. Over the past 16 months, more than 180,000

customer satisfaction surveys have been completed.

- If any customer reports that they are dissatisfied, the appropriate business units are alerted, respond and are required to report results.
- As part of the survey process, customers are also asked to contribute ideas and suggestions. To date, 25 percent of customers have responded, which has led to 44,000 new ideas.

Constantly search

Vendors like Pitney Bowes constantly search for new ways to exceed expectations and act upon the insights they collect. They understand that there are limited pools of potential customers and that satisfaction, loyalty and purchase behavior are closely aligned. These technology providers measure satisfaction on many levels and don't try to rationalize poor service scores.



Above all, they measure satisfaction for the purpose of improving the overall customer experience.

For those in business-to-business markets, the ability to identify one of these top performers before signing a technology contract is an essential skill.

In simplest terms, taking a moment to ask who, what, when, how and why can help distill the players from the posers on the customer satisfaction measurement front.

Who: When it comes to customer satisfaction, whose opinion matters?

A best-in-class measurement program will solicit feedback from more than one individual in a company. For prospective buyers, the “who” question offers a quick way to assess whether a vendor understands the nuances of a business relationship.

Measuring satisfaction in business-to-business situations is more complex than consumer technology because there are multiple stakeholders. Companies that are serious about measuring customer satisfaction will gain feedback from multiple levels:

Users work with the technology on a daily basis. Their feedback is important for vendors when it comes to monitoring ease of use, system performance and overall employee productivity.

Project managers are responsible for installation, vendor management and end results. Their input can help shape how relationships are managed and are critical to overall satisfaction.

Business heads and executives look more at the big picture. Their observations help uncover ways to improve the long-term return on investment.

What: When it comes to customer satisfaction, what does the vendor actually measure?

When a company says “90 percent of our customers are satisfied” what exactly does that mean? Actually, leading technology vendors do not measure whether or not a customer is satisfied. They only care about whether a customer is very satisfied.

While surveys and feedback mechanisms vary from company to

company, most employ a sliding scale that runs from very satisfied, satisfied and somewhat satisfied down to neutral, somewhat dissatisfied, dissatisfied and very dissatisfied. Buyers should be wary of providers who cite anything other than top-box statistics.

In many countries, including the United States, “satisfaction” is akin to cultural politeness. When a customer claims they are satisfied or somewhat satisfied, that often means there are underlying issues with the vendor that have yet to be addressed.

“Very satisfied” is the gold standard. While few companies will be able to cite numbers in the 90+ percent range when using this scale, it says a lot when vendors set this as the goal. Companies that measure themselves against this top-box standard are more likely to find ways to delight their customers over time. Another variation of the “very satisfied” measurement is a “net sat” score. Here, companies take the number of customers who are very satisfied and subtract anyone dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.

Vendors who measure customer satisfaction well dig much deeper than a single question. The specific questions a company asks will depend on the type of technology and the businesses they serve. In general, four aspects of customer satisfaction are consistent across all technology vendors: sales and sales relationship; service and service support; technology performance; and ease of doing business. It is appropriate to ask a prospective vendor how they measure satisfaction across each of these four aspects.

When: How often does a vendor measure customer satisfaction?

To be successful, a customer satisfaction measurement program needs to be ongoing, a best practice that is often misperceived. Requesting feedback from customers once a year is not enough for anyone looking to improve business processes.

Given the critical nature of technology, software and systems need to demonstrate success in the eyes of a customer every day. Business needs and market conditions may

change quickly, which is why many vendors conduct satisfaction surveys on a monthly basis.

How: How exactly do you measure and manage customer satisfaction?

When a vendor claims that their customers are highly satisfied, it makes sense to question how it has come to that conclusion. There are several valid approaches to surveying customers, so buyers will have to use judgment to assess whether the survey mechanisms make sense given the technology in question.

For mass-marketed business technologies that perform a limited number of functions, it is possible that customers do not have a specific sales or account representative. Organizations may interact with the vendor remotely, via customer care centers, correspondence and the Web. In such cases, Web and e-mail surveys are effective. Questions should measure satisfaction across different touchpoints and should always include a section to capture verbatim responses.

When it comes to specialized, high-tech, big-budget systems, however, it makes sense to go deeper than a simple check-box survey. Here, vendors are more likely to employ methods that provide opportunities for in-depth dialogue, such as telephone or face-to-face surveys.

Some people question whether customer satisfaction surveys should be conducted in-house or outsourced to a third party. In general, outsourcing does not indicate a lack of commitment. Third-party survey specialists often employ the newest technologies and customers may also feel more comfortable providing honest feedback to a third party. In-house programs can also be effective at measuring satisfaction as long as the department conducting the surveys is not the same team responsible for delivering the service.

Whether surveys are conducted in-house or outsourced, your vendor of choice should have a person or team in place to manage customer satisfaction measurement. With centrally-managed programs, ven-

dors can look at satisfaction from beginning to end. They can also coordinate when and how surveys are fielded to ensure that each customer is never oversurveyed.

Why: Why exactly do you measure customer satisfaction?

There is one main reason vendors should measure customer satisfaction: to identify gaps and improve overall service delivery.

Be cautious of any technology provider that surveys customers solely for the sake of publishing a number or issuing a report. Companies that excel in customer satisfaction look to improve future performance and not only to record past results. As a buyer, the key is to learn what vendors do with the information they receive. Do they monitor results? How do they act upon them?

Within top companies, action teams respond immediately to any customer who is not satisfied. These teams or individuals will take responsibility and own the problem

– and the solution. Instead of managing numbers, leading technology providers look for ways to manage customer needs.

Firms that are serious about customer satisfaction don't bother asking questions unless they have infrastructure in place to take action. Surveys and systems are designed so that the information gathered is actionable; and senior management will be involved in review and planning sessions.

In many ways, learning the who, what, when, how and why of customer satisfaction processes may provide more important insights than any statistics. Organizations that set aggressive goals, acknowledge shortfalls and have a plan in place to address issues may be more responsive than those who have no formal plans.

Go a long way

When organizations procure new technology, they also enter into a relationship with a technology provider. Often, the success of that

relationship will go a long way in determining whether the actual software or systems deliver as promised.

Satisfaction with technology goes far beyond system capabilities. Do sales representatives listen, care and understand? How does the company handle upgrades? Can the customer reach the right person if there is a problem? Are billing statements clear and accurate? Understanding how a technology provider measures and manages customer satisfaction can provide insight into how it delivers service on a day-to-day basis.

Act upon the information

Best-in-class vendors like Pitney Bowes regularly solicit feedback from customers and act upon the information they receive to rapidly resolve customer issues. For buyers of business-to-business products and services, taking the time to learn more about the who, what, when, how and why of a prospective vendor's approach to customer satisfaction can lead to smarter, more informed purchase decisions. | Q

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Where do we go from here?

Thoughts on how to address important questions about MROCs

Marketing research online communities (or MROCs as they've come to be called) have reached the point where they should be viewed as a permanent option in the marketing research playbook. No longer a "disruptive innovation," the basic methodology has proven sound for both marketers and researchers across multiple consumer-facing industries. As with any widely-adopted approach, MROCs continue to evolve. It seems that every time a question is answered, a new one appears. And rightly so. The expectations are higher than ever for what MROCs can, and should, be able to achieve.

In this article, I will recommend approaches for dealing with four emerging issues that are worth addressing from a methodological perspective. While many questions exist around the topic of MROCs, I will focus on the critical ones that are part of our responsibility as researchers to delve into.

Does size impact engagement?

First, a little MROC history lesson. When communities began, they were exclusively qualitative in nature. This was due to the assumption that members needed to be limited to a few hundred in order to maintain member engagement. And, due to technological limitations inherent in early community platforms, activities tended to rely on open-ended questions. Even with this initial approach, it was clear that communities could provide insights beyond traditional qualitative methods.

Quickly, expectations grew for MROCs to provide an even more holistic view of the consumer. The methodology and platform proved itself flexible enough to deliver the best of both worlds - words and numbers. While retaining the richness of information, communities evolved to produce a layer of statistical rigor around results.

But going from a few hundred to a few thousand members requires extra effort to maintain the richness of member engagement - the lifeblood of any community. Dynamic approaches to sustain member engagement include the following:

Assign two site moderators. Use one to focus on "the research" and the other to focus on member engagement. It's just as important to personally encourage members and empower "host buddies" as it is to

snapshot

As MROCs move from being a novelty to being an established, viable research option, the author examines topics such as community size, branded vs. unbranded and the effects of conditioning. He also looks at some potential developments on the horizon.



By Bob Yazbeck

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deal quickly with unruly members.

Break members into small teams.

This can be done on a temporary or permanent basis, to promote teamwork when it comes to co-creating concepts.

Seed “common” areas of the site.

Planting conversation starters allows members to congregate around topics of interest and will serve as a catalyst for member-generated discussions.

Create subcommunities.

Leveraging economies of scale allows moderator(s) to have unique conversations with targeted members within the community.

All in all, the main advantage of a large-scale community is flexibility. In addition to activating a large quantitative sample, niche samples are ready to respond to targeted issues. This means one community can address the research needs of several functional areas within an organization. Marketing, product development, consumer and/or shopper insights can all have their slice of the community pie.

To brand or not to brand?

One of the first decisions when developing a community is whether to incorporate the client’s brand. It’s tempting to brand a community right at the outset, as MROCs can be powerful research and brand-building tools. However, introducing the brand immediately creates bias, which may limit the type or variety of research conducted in the community. Therefore, careful consideration must be made when deciding if you’re going to brand.

While logic seems to point an either-or approach, there is also a hybrid option. Below are ideal scenarios for each:

An unbranded or blinded community is best for conducting exploratory research, brand and product comparisons, understanding consumer wants and needs, and upstream concept development.

A branded community is needed for understanding brand perceptions, and testing packaging, positioning, point-of-sale, advertisements and other marketing materials. It is also necessary for product placements. Additionally, the co-creation process

The pros and cons of branding a community

Pros:

Brand advocacy. Members can become loyal, passionate and enthusiastic fans of the brand. Consistently, members’ brand scores increase after being a member of a branded community.

Better participation rates. By knowing who is sponsoring the research, participants are more willing to join, as they perceive that like-minded individuals will also be participating.

Potential cost efficiency. Due to brand recognition, MROCs can be easier to recruit, saving money on incentives and sampling costs.

Cons:

Irreversible. Once the MROC is branded, you can’t go back, unless completely starting over with a fresh set of members.

Brand bias. Results may be skewed due to preconceived notions about the brand.

Group think. Since like-minded individuals might be drawn to the brand, members may lack a measurable difference of opinion.

Negative opinions. You have to take the good with the bad; you may hear some unfavorable opinions.

Filtered responses. Due to their affinity with the brand, consumers may not want to risk being removed from the community and so they may hold back their honest responses.

Brand management. Since community moderators are the face of the brand, they must be extra vigilant to ensure the brand’s essence is maintained at all times.

means members are being asked to think like “outside insiders,” so internalizing the brand is necessary.

Starting unbranded, then revealing the brand allows us to assess consumer wants and needs with no risk of bias, before moving into brand-specific research. It can also provide pre-post measures of the impact of the brand on consumers at different points in time. For this approach to work, a comprehensive research plan that covers the life of the community is essential.

There are two very important items to note when managing a branded community. If members have an established relationship with the brand, like participation in the brand’s loyalty program, the site moderator becomes an extension of the brand and must act accordingly. Otherwise, there could be risk of alienating customers.

The other concern is that of intellectual property rights. Knowing that their brand is exposed, client partners must be protected from any claims

on creative rights. This is easily controlled by requiring members to sign an agreement waiving these rights before they can begin participating in the community.

Will conditioning occur with overexposure?

Rightfully so, researchers are concerned that community members may become conditioned from overexposure. This is especially an issue in communities with repetitive activities or a narrow research focus.

Let’s look at an example where members are frequently asked to assess and narrow down large numbers of concepts. The assumption is that members are less critical with their feedback over time. While this assumption is natural, we have actually found that members become more critical through greater exposure to research in the community environment. When evaluating concepts in a community environment, we typically include a “control” concept to measure the effect of

exposure. In doing so, we have found that the scores for the control concept continue to lower over time. Thankfully, we also found that the directional results don't change – the “winners” remain consistent.

That being said, as researchers we must be able to assess the tipping point when members are no longer considered to be objective. Using the measures below, and citing our concept evaluation example, we can diagnose if overexposure is significantly affecting the research:

Volume and mix of activities. If most or all activities involve concept evaluations or other repetitive activities, there is a high probability that members will become overexposed in as little as three months.

Variety of concepts evaluated. Members who evaluate a greater variety of concepts, or more complex concepts, become overexposed less quickly.

Control concept scores. If scores for control concepts are starting to show a significant decline, this indicates that members have become too critical.

While mixing up activities will prevent overexposure, sometimes adding variety is not possible due to community objectives and client demands. In these situations, more intensive steps need to be implemented. These include the following:

Replace all community members. If bias cannot be addressed through natural turnover, then consider replacing all community members. This is typically done on an annual or bi-annual basis. For example, in a community where members are evaluating concepts weekly, we found it necessary to replace the entire member base at the end of each year. Obviously, this is an expensive and time-consuming course of action, due to recruiting all new members and enduring a ramp-up period of an additional one to two weeks.

Replace deadbeat members. Not only does periodic replacement of inactive members keep response rates high, but it mitigates the impact of potentially overexposed members. This compromise approach can prove effective, as there is no time lost shutting down and clearing out existing members, and instead the member

base is actually strengthened.

Implement factoring. This one is a little tricky, but creating a factor that adjusts scores based on the measured changes in responses can be applied to results to normalize scores. While there is no additional time or expense needed to recruit new members, the obvious drawback is that this requires some very careful implementation.

To summarize, there is no standard formula for diagnosing when a community's member base has been overexposed. But, by periodically assessing the situation, you can predict when a corrective course of action becomes inevitable.

Can mobile communities be representative?

Mobile is the logical extension of the online experience. As communities become mobile, sophisticated apps will allow members to participate in activities through smartphones and other devices. This opens up a world of research possibilities, such as in-the-moment responses, as well as multimedia adding depth to those responses. It's no wonder that there is an incredible desire to move quickly into this space.

Much like the Internet changed the way data was collected, we need to understand how mobile responses differ from non-mobile responses. Thorough research-on-research is necessary to understand the inherent biases among the current base of mobile respondents. In the interim, beta-testing has shown that compared to the Internet, respondents tend to skew younger and male, with a higher level of income and education.

Thus far, when it comes to the depth and quality of mobile responses we've been pleasantly surprised to find that respondents:

- are providing reasonably thoughtful qualitative responses, although extra coaching is needed;
- are not using shortened or “texting” language;
- are more willing to share video and images to support their quantitative or qualitative responses; and
- enjoy the experience overall.

Despite these initial positive find-

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ings, below are accommodations and compromises for conducting research with members who respond via their mobile devices:

- In general, activities should be more concise because members tend to respond in a more spontaneous, on-the-go manner.
- Surveys should be shorter (closer to 10 minutes versus 15-20 minutes for Internet).
- Scales need to be limited to five points or fewer due to limited screen size.
- Qualitative questions should be simple and straightforward, without multiple supplemental or clarifying questions.

While representativeness is a hot-button issue right now, with the current rate of smartphone adoption in the U.S., it won't be for long. In fact, it will be a challenge for community platforms to keep pace with mobile technology. More than ever, researchers need to be where consumers are, or they may find themselves

missing out on a highly desirable and growing sample.

On the horizon

The most progressive communities today are dramatically different than communities of the recent past. Advances in the methodology are being driven by a healthy mix of technology improvements, platform enhancements, a handful of ambitious thought leaders and growing client demands.

Presently, the following developments are on the horizon of the community marketplace:

Next-generation mobile.

Geolocation, barcode scanning and QR code scanning will allow members to participate in MROCs while they are in the moment.

Communities within communities. The demand for quantitative and multiple-targeted samples means MROCs will need to push the boundaries of community sample size.

MROC as an internal omnibus. More client-side researchers


view MROCs as a foundation for multiple research initiatives. Other methodological tools, such as focus groups and surveys, are then utilized on an ad-hoc basis. By taking a "build it and they will come" approach, other functional areas within a client organization will leverage this quick, effective and inexpensive way to field research.

In-sourcing. More than ever, MROC providers need to be flexible enough to shift between in-sourced and full-service offerings - and every place in between - as their client partners' needs change.

Be dynamic

In closing, communities as a research methodology will continue to be dynamic - offering both opportunities and challenges along the way. Keeping pace with change requires researchers to be nimble. As a methodologist dedicated to advancing the health and efficacy of communities, I look forward to tackling new issues and continuing to refresh my research playbook. | Q

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Thriving or just surviving?

Measuring the health of an online community

More and more businesses are looking to form private online communities among their customers to promote dialogue and/or collect valuable information and insights from them. But in their race to exploit this new tool, organizations are devoting resources and potentially risking their brands' credibility without disciplined scrutiny of the effectiveness of these communities. We believe that in much the same way as businesses recognized early in the development of modern advertising that they needed to track the effectiveness of their advertising spending, so too will today's organizations begin to understand their obligation to carefully and objectively evaluate the effectiveness of their forays into social networking.

As with any new trend, there are specific reasons for customers to become involved and specific needs they expect from online communities. It appears that in their rush to capitalize on this new avenue of communication, business organizations may have failed to carefully assess their customers' needs. Instead, they seem consumed with their own needs and the opportunities these communities may offer them.

Most important needs

Based on our work in social communication, we've conceptualized customers' most important likely needs (Pruden and Vavra 2004). Accepting these needs, we offer some key determinants of whether a community will succeed or fail based on whether these motivations are addressed or overlooked.

Perceived value of participation. First and foremost, sponsors of private online customer communities must recognize that the only reason a customer might continue to participate in a community is if they feel they are receiving some form of value in return for their involvement. We believe that customers are relatively rational in accord- ing attention or participation to activities. They choose to participate in activities that in some way enrich their lives by adding value.

Ease of use. Customers will not "endure pain" to participate in a community. This means the portal and all aspects of participation must be as easy to use as possible. Not only must they be easy, but interaction with them - a major determinant of the customer's experience - should be painless or even enjoyable.

Learning. Many of the custom-

snapshot

Companies that create an online community without also considering ways to gauge how well the community fulfills its members' needs risk wasting money and - potentially worse - damaging their brand.



By Doug Pruden
and Terry G. Vavra

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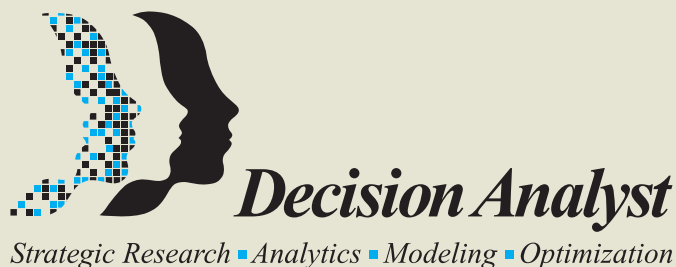
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ers who volunteer to participate in a private online community will be doing so in the hope of learning – learning more about a product or brand, becoming experienced users of a technology or product category. Their ultimate goal might even be to become “power users.” And so they will look to their participation in the community to further this learning objective. The community sponsor needs to ask itself, “How much information have we transferred over to community members to answer this need?”

Part of the inner circle. There can be something quite exclusive about participating in an online community. Members can be made to feel like they’re part of the action. This is especially true of communities in which members are asked their opinions or advice on product planning or development. And being involved with specific glamour brands can also serve as a substantial motivation. Imagine the ego boost of receiving personal e-mails from corporate giants like FedEx or Nordstrom! In apparent recognition of this, Neiman Marcus has, for some time, branded its communications with its best customers as “The Inner Circle.”

Making friends and acquaintances. Social networks are all about making new friends – often, many of them – in cyberspace. And, in a very unique way private online communities fuel this need by enforcing some degree of similarity among the members, making the sense of community even more desirable. An imported automobile manufacturer’s community of Gen Xers is a good example.

Esteem. Most humans look to one another for acceptance and respect. Joining an online community can be perceived as an important way to gain esteem. Being invited by a major manufacturer and then accepted within a community can be a real ego trip. It is critical that sponsors understand and feed this need.

Seem oblivious

Strangely enough, many community sponsors seem oblivious to these motivations (Nedelka 2009), being content with milking their

customer-participants for involvement, ideas and time without any thought of what they are giving in return or how they can enhance the experience for their participating customers. Exploiting customers’ participation is a surefire recipe for early decay of a community. There is absolutely no reason for customers to continue to participate in a community if their experience is neutral or, worse yet, unpleasant.

Because of this disregard, attrition – once the bane of many subscription industries (pagers, cellphones and cable TV) – is quickly becoming a challenge to the social networking industry. We believe the genesis of this attrition is organizations’ blasé attitudes toward enriching the experiences of community members. Even those sponsors who worry about attrition lack the tools to properly understand the reasons for member defection.

Despite the intense interest in using private online communities, little has been discussed about how to assess their true contribution to an organization’s marketing plan (Paine 2007). To answer the need for accountability in the management of online communities and to foster better management on a real-time basis, we propose the following community engagement index.

This research and planning tool summarizes the current participation of community members; measures community members’ attitudinal connection with the community; predicts future participation levels; and identifies which management tactics are working best.

The measurement tool builds from our writing and experience in relationship management, monitoring of word of mouth and our conceptualizing in person-to-person advocacy (Pruden and Vavra 2010).

Oversight of private online customer communities provides all sorts of participation-based information. The statistics that can be collected on members’ visits and involvement (e.g., frequency of visits, duration of visits, and “quality” of visits – degree of contribution) are readily available yet are often treated as discardable. Rarely are they properly

interpreted for the insight or trends they might yield.

But this plentiful information also poses problems. The items provide a look in the rearview mirror rather than a projection of where a community is heading. They describe reality but fail to provide an understanding or explanation for the behavior that’s being observed.

To overcome these hurdles, the ideal engagement index should complement observable data with attitudes collected directly from community members. These data points, which we call “emotionals,” add considerable value to the observables through their ability to help explain movements and trends within the observables. For example, consider a community in which the number of active members is decreasing. Observables can only report that attrition is increasing; they can’t tell us why. But, if the proper emotional measures are also being collected on a periodic basis, the sponsor will have considerable information from which to diagnose problems and from which to quickly make remedial changes in the management or tasking of the community.

Not recognized to have value

Most managers of private online customer communities have available (or already collect) a wealth of behavioral information. However, in most cases this information is not recognized to have the value it really offers. Instead, this information is considered a by-product by the technical staff who are managing the communities. Their goal is to improve the functionality of the community; they are not held responsible for anticipating problems or for improving experiential components of their communities.

Typically the following will be available:

Population. The total number of members enrolled/empaneled in the community at the time of formation.

Defection/Defectors. To appropriately derive this measure, active and lost members need to be precisely defined. Community members failing to exhibit the described activity (e.g., must have participated

in at least two of the previous four events) should be considered lost, inactive or defectors.

Replenishment/Replacement.

The cumulative number of new members actively recruited by the sponsor or manager to replace members lost through attrition. This will be reported on a percentage basis.

Attraction. The cumulative number of new community members who appeared through member referral or other word-of-mouth recommendation through an observation period.

Participation. Implying a measure of activity, participation can be derived by dividing the number of unique logins by the current population.

Involvement. This construct suggests a measure of global productivity. It is usually defined by a count of the total contributions from all members of the community as a whole during a reporting period. Total contributions is composed of: total chats + total poll responses + total posts/submissions + total ratings + total comments + total votes. Community members may be counted multiple times within this measurement based on participating in numerous ways.

Interest/Dedication. While involvement is a binary measure (did or didn't happen), interest is a more quantitative measure implying commitment to the community. It is generally defined as the average length of time per login for all members of the community.

Number of sponsored events. A tally needs to be maintained of the total number of sponsored events/invited activities conducted during the report time period.

Qualitative feelings

What most managers of private online communities lack is more diagnostic information about the qualitative feelings of customer members who are participating in the communities. Our emotional measures deliver that feedback. Linked with the behavioral measures, they offer an explanation for the behaviors and can provide real direction for how situations can be improved upon. The only drawback is that emotional measures need to

be consciously collected in conjunction with other interactions with the community. In this respect they ask more of community members. Sometimes community managers will worry that the additional burden will be too much. However, considering the value of the information, the inconvenience imposed on members is more than justified.

Here are our emotional measures:

Value. Continued participation in any community is going to be strongly influenced by the extent to which its members perceive value accruing to them for participating. Far too many communities are an egotistical exercise by a company or brand that fails to understand the necessity of providing value to the members as well as to itself.

Intellectual engagement. While perceived value is necessary, the ideal community will stimulate thinking about the sponsor's product, industry or reputation.

Enjoyment. Value and intellectual stimulation can occur in a relatively sterile environment, so we believe it's also desirable to measure the entertainment value of a community.

Trust. In an era in which many consumers feel their privacy is being compromised by information that's being collected over the Internet, the prudent community sponsor will track community members' comfort with providing information to the community.

Usability/Ease of use. Navigability and ease of use substantially impact interaction with online communities. It's valuable to know from the member's perspective how easy it is to use and interact with a community Web site/portal.

Advocacy. Some online communities may be created purely to collect information. It would be difficult to conclude that these communities should have any positive impact on feelings for the sponsor, the sponsor's brand(s) or the sponsor's industry. Yet other communities may hope that positive associations from participation will transfer to the sponsor. The most beneficial form of positive impact would be for a community member to talk positively about the

sponsor or sponsor's brands to friends or acquaintances. We refer to such behavior as advocacy.

Help develop hypotheses

Ideally, reports on the behavioral and emotional will be developed monthly or weekly depending on the expected life of the community and the frequency and volume of community events. Trends emerging among the behavioral and emotional should help community sponsors develop hypotheses about successes or failures. Most importantly, by projecting unfortunate trends and understanding their probable causes, the astute community manager will be able to correct problems and reverse the trends.

Beyond the monthly diagnostics, the measures are combined to form a single index. This index provides a useful measure for community managers with which to easily compare the performance of numerous communities. In doing so, successful management techniques and managerial practices can easily be identified.

In an ongoing process the weights of the individual measures (building to the index) will be constantly evaluated using a success criterion as a dependent variable. Weights are expected to vary by community and by industry.

We believe that the most important use of the index should be in helping to improve the customer experience in maintaining active, healthy participation of customers in the community.

To demonstrate the insight provided by the community engagement index, Figure 1 presents data illustrating what three typical communities (Alpha, Beta and Gamma) might look like. First, the communities may be compared using the cumulative 12-period index to get a sense of their comparative health. Community Alpha has a 6.8 cumulative index, Community Beta a 5.5 and Community Gamma a 7.0 cumulative index. From this comparison, it would be concluded that Community Gamma is, overall, the healthiest, based on the total components of the engagement index (the observables and the emotionals).

A second way to use the engage-

Figure 1: Three Communities' Engagement Indices

Community Alpha														
Observables	Period	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Avg.
Population		500	490	485	502	470	482	499	500	487	501	489	474	
Defection/Defectors		0	10	15	-2	30	18	1	0	13	-1	11	26	
Replenishment/Replacement		0%	2%	5%	5%	11%	14%	14%	14%	17%	17%	19%	24%	
Attraction		3	0	12	7	23	21	14	35	23	8	13	5	
Participation		59%	30%	90%	61%	97%	84%	57%	46%	81%	83%	83%	58%	
Involvement		743	590	946	1234	875	1842	1575	1236	2135	1875	2780	2135	
Interest/Dedication		3.5	2.8	4.4	3.5	4.8	4.6	3.8	3.7	4.5	5.1	4.3	3.8	
Number of Sponsored Events		1	1	3	1	2	3	1	2	2	1	3	1	
Emotionals														
Value		7.7	7.7	8.3	7.9	8.5	8.0	7.9	8.4	8.2	7.9	8.5	8.2	8.1
Intellectual Engagement		6.6	5.8	7.2	7.0	7.4	7.8	7.5	7.4	7.8	7.9	7.7	7.5	7.3
Enjoyment		8.1	7.5	8.3	7.6	6.8	7.7	8.0	7.9	8.5	8.2	9.2	8.8	8.1
Trust		8.3	8.1	8.0	8.4	8.2	8.2	8.0	8.3	8.7	8.2	8.8	8.7	8.3
Usability/Ease of Use		6.7	7.3	6.9	6.7	6.3	6.8	6.1	6.6	6.9	7.2	6.8	6.8	6.8
Advocacy		5.1	5.4	5.3	6.2	6.3	6.7	6.4	7.4	7.0	7.4	7.8	7.7	6.6
The Engagement Index (by Period)		5.2	4.5	5.9	6.2	5.8	7.6	6.8	6.1	8.3	7.8	9.6	8.0	
(Cumulative)		4.9	5.2	5.5	5.5	5.9	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.3	6.4	6.7	6.8	
Community Beta														
Observables	Period	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Avg.
Population		500	481	478	495	482	482	490	485	491	510	493	488	
Defection/Defectors		0	19	22	5	18	18	10	15	9	-10	7	12	
Replenishment/Replacement		0%	4%	8%	9%	13%	16%	18%	21%	23%	21%	23%	25%	
Attraction		0	3	8	11	17	16	20	28	18	12	5	17	
Participation		65%	35%	83%	76%	79%	67%	36%	45%	57%	35%	51%	31%	
Involvement		920	1034	788	645	505	1020	1105	1450	1548	1125	980	855	
Interest/Dedication		3.5	2.8	4.4	3.5	4.8	4.6	3.8	3.7	4.5	5.1	4.3	3.8	
Number of Sponsored Events		1	2	2	1	1	3	1	2	1	3	1	1	
Emotionals														
Value		7.5	7.7	7.9	7.3	7.2	7.5	7.1	6.7	7.6	7.7	7.5	7.3	7.4
Intellectual Engagement		7.9	7.2	7.6	6.5	6.9	5.6	7.0	5.8	6.1	5.4	5.6	5.0	6.4
Enjoyment		8.3	7.5	7.3	7.1	6.7	6.9	5.9	5.4	4.9	4.4	4.3	4.7	6.1
Trust		7.9	8.2	8.1	8.4	8.1	7.9	7.9	8.3	8.0	8.2	8.6	8.1	8.1
Usability/Ease of Use		6.8	6.9	7.0	6.4	6.3	7.1	6.9	6.5	7.0	6.9	6.7	6.9	6.8
Advocacy		5.7	5.2	5.7	5.5	6.0	6.1	5.3	5.5	6.0	5.9	6.1	6.0	5.8
The Engagement Index (by Period)		5.7	5.5	5.5	5.0	4.8	5.7	5.4	6.1	6.5	5.5	5.2	4.7	
(Cumulative)		5.6	5.6	5.4	5.3	5.4	5.4	5.4	5.5	5.6	5.6	5.5	5.5	
Community Gamma														
Observables	Period	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	Avg.
Population		500	471	490	485	492	490	500	473	488	483	488	499	
Defection/Defectors		0	29	10	15	8	10	0	27	12	17	12	1	
Replenishment/Replacement		0%	6%	8%	11%	12%	14%	14%	20%	22%	26%	28%	28%	
Attraction		3	0	12	7	23	21	14	35	23	8	13	5	
Participation		58%	40%	86%	124%	79%	137%	101%	111%	148%	137%	104%	94%	
Involvement		743	590	946	1234	875	1842	1575	1236	2135	1875	2780	2135	
Interest/Dedication		3.5	2.8	4.4	3.5	4.8	4.6	3.8	3.7	4.5	5.1	4.3	3.8	
Number of Sponsored Events		1	1	2	3	2	3	3	2	4	2	2	2	
Emotionals														
Value		7.7	7.7	8.3	7.9	8.5	8.0	7.9	8.4	8.2	7.9	8.5	8.2	8.1
Intellectual Engagement		6.6	5.8	7.2	7.0	7.4	7.8	7.5	7.4	7.8	7.9	7.7	7.5	7.3
Enjoyment		8.1	7.5	8.3	7.6	6.8	7.7	8.0	7.9	8.5	8.2	9.2	8.8	8.1
Trust		8.3	8.1	8.0	8.4	8.2	8.2	8.0	8.3	8.7	8.2	8.8	8.7	8.3
Usability/Ease of Use		6.7	7.3	6.9	6.7	6.3	6.8	6.1	6.6	6.9	7.2	6.8	6.8	6.8
Advocacy		5.1	5.4	5.3	5.1	4.8	4.5	4.8	3.9	3.6	3.8	3.5	3.3	4.4
The Engagement Index (by Period)		5.2	4.6	5.9	6.7	5.6	8.1	7.1	6.4	8.7	8.0	9.5	8.1	
(Cumulative)		4.9	5.2	5.6	5.6	6.0	6.2	6.2	6.2	6.5	6.6	6.9	7.0	

ment index is to help determine what may be going wrong in a community. Community Beta has the lowest cumulative engagement index (5.5). Reviewing the behavioral measures across the three communities, it becomes evident that Community Beta's participation rates are the lowest. Further, its participation rates are declining rather substantially (from 65 percent-35 percent-83 percent in the first three periods down to 35 percent-51 percent-31 percent in the last three periods). The supervising management team may have some thoughts on how to explain the decline. But with the emotional measures of the engagement index, there can be a more objective explanation. Looking down the average scores for the emotionals, the low scores (6.4 and 6.1) for intellectual engagement and

enjoyment suggest a possible cause: The community is apparently not providing an engaging, enjoyable experience to its members.

A third use for the engagement index is to track a certain outcome or property of a community. As an example, some clients and community managers believe that hosting a community can have a very real benefit to the sponsoring brand or company through the positive word-of-mouth that's created. Looking at Community Gamma, the healthiest of the three communities (a cumulative engagement index of 7.0 compared to Alpha's 6.8 and Beta's 5.5), it has one conspicuous weakness: It is far lower in the emotional measure of advocacy. Despite its overall success, Gamma's scores for advocacy have dropped steadily throughout the 12-period life of the

community. At a period-12 rating of 3.3, Community Gamma's advocacy likelihood is approximately half the other two communities (7.7 for Alpha and 6.0 for Beta). While it may be entertaining its members, it's not as successful in generating word-of-mouth for its sponsoring company or brand as the other two communities. This is an enlightening discovery for management that wouldn't have been evident given a more traditional examination of just the observables.

Whichever of these three analytical perspectives management employs, the engagement index holds great potential to foster more proactive oversight of private online customer communities through the data it can provide.

Disciplined monitoring program

Private online customer communities have tremendous potential as a part of a company's or brand's marketing program. To be truly successful, and fully support the brand and the customers, a disciplined monitoring program that tracks both observable usage information as well as emotional responses from participating customers must be part of the process. With the insights gathered through such a monitoring program, communities can be better managed and populated with content and activities that meet the specific needs of community members, thus insuring the long-term success of the community and maximizing the benefits the sponsor receives. | Q

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Planning for success

Maximizing ROI for custom panels and online communities

Over the past five years the market research industry has seen significant growth in the use of custom panels and online communities, and for good reason. There are many strategic benefits of online panel communities in terms of speed, cost and flexibility. Companies collect critical demographic and profiling data up front, and are able to build upon this knowledge of their customers, prospects or stakeholders with each new survey they field to the panel.

Panelists are available 24/7 and access to them is generally free of sample charges. This allows companies to deepen customer and shareholder relationships while building a better understanding of important attitudes, beliefs and behaviors. Online panel communities allow for the use of such diverse methodologies as ad hoc surveys, trackers, online forum discussions, instant polls, diaries, syndicated research and focus groups. And, with today's technology, companies are able to take advantage of mobile and Web-based tools allowing for real-time communication with their panelists using text, pictures and video.

End up frustrated

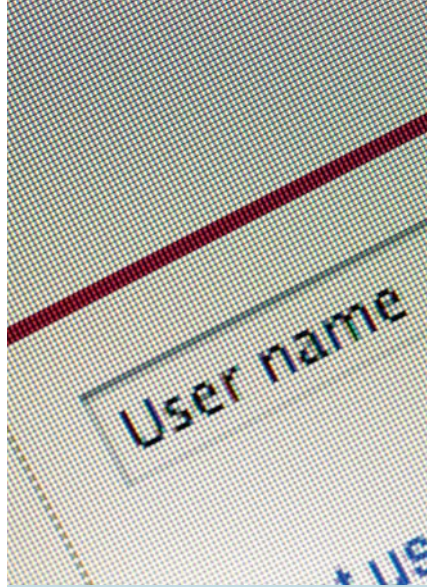
The many research and cost benefits of custom panels and online communities are clear, yet getting the very most out of these assets requires careful planning. In order to garner a high return on investment and client satisfaction, outlining expectations and needs with one's market research vendor is vital to success. Despite the advantages of custom panel communities, companies can end up frustrated and dissatisfied if there is a lack of planning and communication with the vendor. The best way to avoid this situation is to follow a carefully thought-out plan.

Having a vendor partner that fully understands a company's research goals will help determine custom panel recruitment methods, target groups and panel size. A good vendor will endeavor to ascertain the research objectives before providing recruitment costs and timing. Here are some common questions and issues that come up during the development process:

- If a company wants a custom panel of customers and has a high-quality list, recruiting using

snapshot

This article explores how close cooperation between vendor and client can help ensure that custom online communities achieve research goals while also respecting members' time and rewarding their effort.



By Bonnie Sherman

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outside sample sources may not be required. However, if a company wants to also better understand prospective customers and competitors' customers, a list of current customers alone won't suffice.

- Does the company need to draw samples that are representative of its customers or representative of a geographic area? If so, it will be vital to set up quotas within the panel recruitment to ensure an adequate mix of panelists.
- If a company wants to survey particular target groups more frequently than others, it's important to recruit greater numbers of these highly-valued panelists.
- Before building a custom panel community, determine if research needs justify the investment. If a company only needs to complete a handful of studies with a particular sample, it can be more efficient to purchase a sample when needed rather than to build a custom panel.

To the greatest extent possible, it's important to specify ingoing assumptions regarding panel usage. The more that is known about the number of desired studies, required sample sizes and types of research to be fielded, the better job a vendor can do to ensure that their custom panel is the correct size, the correct mix of panelists and the correct mix of activities. If a company needs to field weekly surveys that require thousands of completes, a larger panel will be required than if the frequency of contact and desired completes are smaller.

Size and frequency of replenishment

Another element of planning that drives costs is panel replenishment. The composition and usage of an online panel community will determine both the size and frequency of replenishment. For example, a panel that is composed mainly of middle-aged women, who tend to be good survey responders, will generally require less purging and replenishment than a panel composed of young males or business

executives, who tend to respond at lower levels and opt-out at higher levels. Similarly, if panelists are contacted two to three times a month they will tend to require less replenishment than if they are contacted more frequently or less frequently.

Engagement strategies and incentive plans also impact panel replenishment costs. To the extent that panelists are able to engage in interesting forum discussions, participate in instant polls and read brief news articles about surveys in which they may have participated, they will tend to stay on the panel longer and participate at higher rates. Likewise, panelists who can participate in regular draws, earn points or receive individual incentives for burdensome studies will tend to stay committed. Incentive costs must be weighed against replenishment costs to achieve the proper balance.

The design of the recruitment questionnaire requires a clear understanding of a company's research objectives and targeting needs to ensure that the proper data elements are collected. Most important is that the questions on the recruitment survey reflect the variables that are most important for a company's sampling needs. While nearly all companies will need to select samples based on gender and age, some companies will need to collect more detailed demographic and/or profiling data than others in order to draw appropriate samples. If the research objectives include comparing new customers to longer-term customers, then this data ought to be collected up front as part of the recruitment process. Additional profiling data can be collected once a panel is built, and only the most critical variables need to be included in the recruitment process.

Follow best practices

With the right plan in place, an online panel community ought to provide a very good return on investment. Once a company has worked through the planning process and specified its needs, the next step is to follow best practices for panel management to ensure a successful panel for years to come.

In terms of recruitment strategies and practices, assuming that one needs to recruit at least in part from sources other than in-house lists or databases, there are a variety of recruitment sources and suppliers available. Companies should make sure that their vendor works with reputable suppliers who have a proven ability to deliver panelists accurately and on time. Recruitment suppliers need to be able to set up quotas, meet all targeting needs and have access to sufficient numbers of potential panelists.

The goal of panel recruitment is a specific call to action – join my panel – and not a general advertising or marketing campaign. This needs to be kept in mind in developing e-mail invitations or online advertisements for custom panel recruitment purposes. Effective, concise communication regarding the benefits of joining the panel will help drive panel join rates, and thus lower recruitment costs. Perhaps the most important factor influencing join rates is survey length. Remember that only the most critical variables need to be collected during the recruitment process; strive to keep recruitment surveys around five minutes. Lengthy recruitment surveys lead to lower survey completion rates as well as a lower propensity to complete the double opt-in process, increasing costs and timing.

In general, offering some sort of incentive for joining the panel will pay for itself in increased join rates. Appropriate incentives include draws for cash or prizes, or points that can be applied toward earning rewards. While incentives are important, communicating to potential panelists about less-material reasons for joining a custom panel is critical, whether they be an opportunity to influence public policy, affect what new products are developed or join a community that is meaningful to respondents. Panelists who join because they want to participate and be heard will be better responders than those who join solely for material reasons.

Over time, a company will want to ensure that recruitment data is



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refreshed and that panelist information is current. Many custom panel Web sites let panelists update their contact and demographic/profiling data on an as-needed basis from the member site. Panelists log on to the site and can update their contact information, such as a new e-mail address, as well as critical demographic and profiling data, such as their marital status. Additionally, recruitment surveys should be re-fielded to the entire panel regularly to ensure that all panelists have up-to-date data.

Ensure a cooperative panel

In today's digital environment, opportunities for effective engagement with a custom online panel community are plentiful. Taking advantage of new technologies and environments will help to ensure a cooperative panel with relatively lower replenishment needs. Surveys, by necessity, constrain panelists' ability to say things in the way that they wish. Real-time, multi-thread forum discussions allow panelists to communicate about topics that interest them in their own words, and to hear back from others with similar interests.

An online panel community may include a variety of discussion topics available at any one time. Companies can present pictures or online video to panelists within a forum and request feedback, or ask panelists to take pictures or submit videos that enrich companies' understanding of panelists' values, thoughts, attitudes and behaviors. Instant polls may also be part of a forum environment, allowing panelists to compare their answers with others immediately using charts and graphs.

Within a member site, panelists also enjoy reading about the findings from surveys they may have participated in and how these findings will be applied to real-world decisions. Reading about recent sweepstakes winners may also keep panelists motivated. Before programming begins on a panel site, the company and its vendor need to determine the different areas of the Web site, such as: FAQs; privacy policy; about

the panel; and recent news. They should then create copy and determine a basic look and feel, colors and a logo, if desired.

Incentives play an important role in panel management and cooperation levels. While there are no one-size-fits-all solutions, incentive programs should generally be designed to motivate panelists over time while also rewarding them more immediately for long and burdensome studies. Some ideas include:

- Quarterly draws for cash or prizes to keep panelists engaged, particularly when they are able to view pictures and read brief information about previous winners.
- Allowing panelists to earn points for study participation, which can later be redeemed for gifts, money or charitable donations.
- Immediate, individual rewards for panelists who complete a study that is lengthy and cumbersome, such as an online gift card that can be redeemed instantly.

Best practices for sampling are important for achieving maximum return on investment for an online custom panel or community. In general, panels respond best when they are contacted on a regular basis but not overcontacted. When panelists are contacted once a month or less, they tend to become disengaged or even forget that they joined a panel. On the other hand, if panelists are contacted more than four or five times per month, they may become burned out on the process and stop participating. Contacts for engaging activities, such as invitations to join forums or providing links to new member site postings, tend to elicit positive feelings about panel membership, whereas frequent contact for long, difficult or repetitive surveys tend to elicit a more negative response.

Awareness and tracking of usage

While following the best practices laid out above will help ensure success for custom panels, active panel management is also critical. Active panel management involves awareness and tracking of panel usage and

participation levels. A quality vendor will be able to provide companies with tools and reports that are available 24/7 and allow tracking of usage and participation levels for the panel overall, as well as by specific demographic and profiling variables. In other words, with the click of a button a company can quickly understand panel performance over time and work with its vendor to determine timing for purging and replenishment of panel members.

Vendors should track the success of various recruitment methods and partners to maximize replenishment dollars and ensure that replenishment efforts result in a desirable panel composition. Active panel membership tends to work best when it is a partnership between a company and the vendor, with both parties monitoring panel performance. One's custom panel can act as a living laboratory in which new methods are tried and tested while tracking the results of these methods in terms of panel recruitment effectiveness, participation and longevity.

A company's custom panel or online community vendor should be able to provide quick, easy training on all panel tools and ought to support ongoing questions and requirements. As well, a qualified vendor will be available to discuss panel strategy, management and planning in an effective manner without charging additional fees for the consultation. This type of conversation is vital for the success of a custom panel community.

Maximum research value

By following the above best practices and by taking the time to plan and consider all aspects of community building and maintenance, you and your vendor will ensure that the community yields maximum research value and return on investment and - most importantly - meets the needs of community members. | Q

Keep house panels in order

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A look at the state of business-to-business research

Business-to-business research has come into its own in the past several years, with twice as many firms increasing their use over the last three years compared to those who have reduced use, according to findings from the 2009 edition of the Market Research Provider Quality/Value Study, which has been conducted annually since 2004 by Prevision Corporation. Among 56 percent of corporate research departments that do business-to-business research, it represented nearly 25 percent of all the projects conducted in the year under study.

In 1911, a pioneer of market research, Charles Coolidge Parlin, recognized that the systematic polling of individuals and statistical applications could reveal market potential and the promise for a new product or service. That idea led over the years to business-to-consumer (B2C) research, namely the collection of responses to questions related to a product's marketing mix (e.g., its price, promotion and advertising) by marketing departments of major companies offering consumer products or services. Great emphasis has been placed on the use of advertising research to identify effective ads and to provide a means to measure their impact on sales.

Rarely benefited

At first, these B2C market research applications helped the marketing function of business but rarely benefited the sales organization. Since the 1980s and 1990s, the sales departments realized the value in understanding that the opinions and interests of their own customers who were retailers or wholesalers and not the end user. Up to this point, this information was casually passed on to senior levels of the sales department decision makers from the sales force.

There was a growing belief that gathering hearsay information about the retail marketplace from a biased sales force was not as reliable as using a proven market research process. If representatives of the retailers and wholesalers were polled regarding issues of customer service, product placement, revenue margins, etc., the leadership of a manufacturer's sales department would have a better idea of how to achieve greater sales and profits for their part of the business. This is the origin of business-to-business (B2B) research.

Have to be modified

But the statistical theory that



By Timothy Davidson
and Larry Gold

snapshot

The authors draw from a study of business-to-business research to examine the prevalence of B2B research and which techniques and methods are preferred.

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underpinned the consumer research process would have to be modified somewhat for business-to-business research in which there may be a population of a few thousand retailers vs. a population of 300 million consumers. Because there are a lot fewer retailers and wholesalers than there are consumers, polling metrics had to be changed, especially with regard to sample selection and size.

As business-to-business research became more popular among manufacturers, other practical problems soon appeared. For example, getting the ideal respondent in a retailing/wholesaling business to answer a questionnaire or telephone interview was a much greater challenge than finding a few hundred consumers willing to complete a survey. Thus the cost of business-to-business research is typically a multiple of B2C research.

Business executives and professionals command much greater incentives for their cooperation, especially those who are either hard to reach or few in number. There are specialized sample firms devoted exclusively to finding them and creating samples. Also, higher-skilled interviewers are required to conduct these interviews, many with college or advanced degrees, who are paid handsomely to talk with their peers.

More recently, social media has gained in importance to business executives as a means to interact with each other. But like B2C, business-to-business research has been struggling to make both sense and use of it. Little has been accomplished so far in understanding its impact and whether researching unsolicited opinions or facts has much value.

Estimated the size

Prevision Corporation has estimated the size and the nature of the business-to-business research market in the United States as part of the Market Research Provider Quality/Value Study, covering 2009.

Of the market research departments represented by the study, well over half (56 percent) reported doing some business-to-business research, demonstrating its widespread use in the business marketplace. Typically, these surveys are among their own firms' business clients, though top-level executive interviews for strategy purposes among non-related firms are not uncommon.

Its usage has been growing, despite the recession and cutbacks in market research budgets. Thirty-six percent of the study respondents reported having increased their use of business-to-business research over the past three years vs. 18

percent reporting using it less. This is not the case with consumer surveys, which experienced decreasing use pretty much across the board during the same time period, though some few have increased use. Still, the level of commitment to business-to-business surveys is there, having stayed at about the same level for the past three years in 46 percent of the cases, despite the recession.

The study also looked at current business-to-business research use in other ways:

Share of use: On average, business-to-business research represented 22 percent of all the research projects done in 2009 among the 56 percent of respondent firms that do some business-to-business work. Several industries reported much higher levels of projects. Over twice as many in health care products and services, or 45 percent, were business-to-business projects. In the financial (banking, insurance, credit card) and technology industries, business-to-business accounted for 34 percent and 37 percent, respectively, of the total projects done in 2009. These industries typically have a relatively high proportion of their customers as businesses or those businesses wield more leverage with their own customers and thus need to be better understood.

By contrast, other industries used business-to-business much less. Just 4 percent of projects were business-to-business in the CPG industry. And in retail (e.g., stores, restaurants) it was less than 1 percent. Business-to-business projects are essentially non-existent here, given the preponderance and importance of end consumers in these industries coupled with relatively few business customers.

Category use: This varies widely. Among users of business-to-business research, about two-thirds of respondents reported using business-to-business for attitude and usage studies (66 percent) and for customer satisfaction studies (66 percent). Half of the respondents used it for early-stage concept testing (50



“The U.S. Government has begun to use PRC as a qualifier when choosing researchers for projects.”

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percent), for later-stage concept and product testing (48 percent) and for ad/brand tracking studies (48 percent). About one-quarter also used business-to-business for brand equity/market structure studies (28 percent) and for ad copy testing (20 percent).

These research category use levels are not dramatically different than the research categories used in conventional or B2C research. The exceptions are for customer satisfaction, where business-to-business research is used significantly more than consumer research and for ad copy testing studies where business-to-business is use significantly less.

Methods of use: Online sample use is widespread in business-to-business research, given the across-the-board adoption of the Internet use in business organizations. The data collection methods used most often in 2009 were a mixture of phone and online (42 percent of respondents), with surveyors realizing that a combination of both will produce a more representative sample. Online use only was a close second, at 37 percent of the respondents, reinforcing the notion that it is easier to reach respondents online rather than phone, though representation may suffer. Telephone-only use is relatively small at 13 percent, and even smaller still with 4 percent in-person and 1 percent by mail.

About 15 percent of all do-it-yourself projects conducted in 2009 - without the assistance of third-party research suppliers - were business-to-business surveys. This is relatively small compared to B2C projects and typically reserved for "quickie" projects or where projectability to a business population is not a critical issue. This figure is significantly higher for respondents in the health care industry and somewhat higher for respondents in the financial services industry.

Quality: Half of the respondents had differing views on quality. In asking about the quality of business-to-business research in comparison to con-

sumer or B2C research, 27 percent said that they felt business-to-business research quality is higher than consumer studies, with 5 percent of the respondents saying it was much higher. In contrast, 22 percent thought the quality of business-to-business is lower, with just 3 percent saying it was much lower-quality than consumer research studies. The near equal size of these two divergent opinions, with little strong opinion prevalent, together with

the remaining half (51 percent) saying quality is about the same in either type of research, suggests quality is not a critical issue in business-to-business research. | Q

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Small business, big opportunity?

Why research firms should stop ignoring small businesses

When my small business was born, I thought I was doing something special. In the years that have passed since my company's birthday, though, I have learned that starting a business is not an uncommon activity at all; actually, the numbers are staggering. There are almost 30 million companies in the United States, and 99.7 of those are small businesses (for our purposes here, defined as having less than 500 employees). Small businesses employ more than half of all workers in the U.S., and account for 44 percent of the national payroll. Sixty-four percent of all new jobs are in small businesses, and 627,000 new businesses are born every year¹. That is equal to more than one new business being created every minute of every day, in the United States alone.

So, whether or not my pride was justified, it certainly was not unique; there are a tremendous number of small businesses being formed every day. But how many of the individuals reading this article have ever executed a research project for this half of our potential nationwide clients? We, as researchers, have thus far done a poor job of serving this market - to their detriment, as well as to the detriment of the research industry.

With this in mind, my experience has placed me in a somewhat unusual position in the space of market research firms, in that mine is a small business itself and also has the explicit goal of serving other small businesses in their research needs. Thus, we have acquired a perspective on the issue from both sides: that of the business manager struggling to understand his market and that of the consulting agency hearing the wants and needs of other business owners, themselves engaged in that struggle. This has taken place through working relationships as well as informal conversations with several small business owners and employees.

In this article, I hope to use these insights to expose some of the ways in which market researchers are missing an opportunity to benefit from this underserved market, some reasons why this may be taking place and a suggestion or two for ways in which this situation can be improved.

Three important reasons

Why are small businesses not currently more active purchasers of research services? Their marketing dollars have increased, corresponding to several factors including the



By Wilson Readinger

snapshot

The author, himself a small business owner, argues that marketing research firms need to do a better job of helping small businesses with their research needs.

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availability of more user-friendly campaign approaches such as Google AdWords and the set of social media advertising opportunities. Franchises such as the PRstore have appeared on the national landscape, geared exclusively toward small business marketing efforts. But research expenditure has not followed suit. I suggest there are at least three important reasons for this condition.

First, many small business owners are not aware of their need for market research insights. The “you don’t know what you don’t know” problem is not unique to small business owners, but it is particularly acute in this case. Small businesses tend to be new businesses and new businesses often do not have the benefit of years of experience in a particular consumer market, geographical area or product category. Relatedly, the decision makers in these businesses may not be aware of the wealth of information that well-executed market research can uncover. Their need for it, along with its potential value to them, may be obscured.

Of course, some small business owners certainly do overcome this level of unawareness and decide they could benefit from research services. They will attempt to do the work in-house (and we will consider this situation later). But those who have a question they need answered, or have information they would pay to have, may not know where to turn. If our hypothetical business owner is aware of the existence of many of the large research agencies, she would (rightly, I think, in most cases) assume that

her needs were of a scale too small for their attention. More likely, though, she would search online or ask colleagues or mentors for recommendations. In the larger metropolitan areas, many options exist; in less-urban locations (where many small businesses exist), the choices are significantly fewer. In any case, selection of a firm is difficult. How many research firms specialize in working with small businesses or even explicitly state that they welcome inquiries from such entities?

Finally, at the root of this issue (like so many others) is money. If our most resourceful and persistent small business owner has sourced some firms and requested bids for her project, she will probably find that the costs are beyond her means (or, at least, more than she hoped to pay). Among the individuals who have shared their opinions on this topic, the most common complaint (by far) is that market research is too expensive for most small businesses. Owners and decision makers agree that a professional could do a better job than they could do themselves and they tend to believe that there are techniques and methods of which they themselves are simply unaware or unable to execute efficiently. But even for the best imaginable results, the cost simply cannot be justified. This sentiment is echoed in a common refrain among this group of individuals: “I would LOVE to be able to spend that kind of money on research.”

Must reach out

How can research firms respond to

this? In general, I do not believe it is a question of simply being less expensive. Awareness, value and efficiency, though, are the keys. This begins with a “soft” solution; research must reach out to small businesses. The first critical step is to make decision makers aware of the fact that we recognize their need for reliable, actionable information, and we are willing and able to help them reach their goals as their business grows. In this regard, the market research industry has tremendous room for growth, mirroring exactly that growth that this set of potential clients hopes to realize.

Partnering with marketing firms is one way to overcome some of these obstacles. In these cases, awareness of the need for research is often present, as the professionals in charge of creative, media buying and advertising and other marketing efforts will know when the intelligence they have (or their clients have) is insufficient. This has the added advantage for the business owner of creating an integrated team of marketing and research that can work together on their behalf, without the need for them to serve as messenger or middleman.

Research firms must also be able to prove their worth, in a variety of different ways. Case studies and professional references are an important part of this point, as small business owners will recognize that other businesses have had similar problems or needs and have benefitted from professionally-executed market research. At least as important,

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though, is quantitative data regarding the benefits of research. While this is notoriously difficult to obtain, its importance cannot be overstated. Imagine two statements: 1. “A market segmentation study was conducted and led to the creation of an effective targeted marketing campaign.” 2. “A market segmentation study was conducted and led to the creation of a targeted marketing campaign that increased revenue by 55 percent over three months and immediately reduced advertising spending by 25 percent.” Our clients should demand the second sort of statement from us, and most small business owners I have dealt with, indeed, do. If we want their business, we must be prepared to furnish that sort of support for our claims of research value and effectiveness.

Pushed too far

There is, however, an even more important step that can be taken with regard to how many research firms do business. Custom research is appropriate for many occa-

sions but the concept is sometimes pushed too far. Indeed, not all research must be custom research. For example, large parts of questionnaires can often be reused and repurposed for multiple studies without reinventing the wheel for every client. Online surveys can easily be constructed to include questionnaires that are relevant to more than a single project, thus enabling clients to share the costs of recruiting and incentives, without any sacrifice of data quality or quantity. Similarly, grouping projects together and extending qualitative sessions to include two consecutive one-hour focus group sessions with the same participants, for instance, can lead to savings (as we may offer incentives of \$40 per participant for a one-hour session, and just \$50 for two hours). In general, we researchers tend to view our work on a project basis and thus we construct methods and instruments consistent with this notion. But each project does not have to be an island; in fact, there

is much to be gained by adapting and creating new methods to take advantage of savings such as those hinted at above.

Find significant reward

Many of those individuals who start their own businesses do so because they recognize an unserved or underserved market. From the standpoint of professional market research services, these individuals themselves represent such a market, as in many cases they have the need, the desire and the ability to afford our services. Through an examination of how we do business, and some changes to that standard model, enterprising research firms may find significant reward in targeting the market research needs of small businesses. This small business owner, for one, would welcome such a change. | Q

¹ U.S. Small Business Administration, Office of Advocacy; U.S. Dept. of Commerce, Bureau of the Census; U.S. Dept. of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics.



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Survey Monitor

continued from p. 8

an adequate job in communicating with Hispanics about solutions to their health care needs.

Most physicians agree that one-on-one time with staff and printed educational materials in Spanish are the most important and effective ways to communicate with these patients. Furthermore, physicians agree that media plays a key role in informing patients. Seventy-one percent of physicians cited that, outside of their offices, television stories are a very or extremely effective communication vehicle to help educate these patients. For more information visit www.kcipartners.com.

IT pros prefer forums over Facebook as a resource

Social media has been all the rage in pop culture and personal networking but it has yet to catch on in certain tech-savvy circles. Three-quarters of IT professionals still turn to non-social sources like IT trade publications, IT vendor Web sites and specialized IT online user forums/communities when looking for work-related information, according to a study from Boston research company Chadwick Martin Bailey.

For IT professionals, broader social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn are currently much less commonly used for discovering new products or brands, purchase evaluation or post-sales support within the technology space. When it comes to using social media as a resource, 73 percent go to online communities and IT online forums. Sites like LinkedIn (45 percent), Facebook (28 percent) and Twitter (19 percent) ranked lower on the list of information resources IT professionals turn to.

Specialized online IT communities are the most used and most trusted social forum for the exchange of product recommendations and troubleshooting advice. But many key conversations among IT professionals who know each other happen through non-social (i.e., private one-to-one) communications (e.g., corporate e-mail, Web

e-mail, phone calls, face-to-face conversations, meetings at in-person trade shows, etc.).

Additionally, the study found that when IT professionals use social media, they are much more likely to be active participants than the general consumer online population, which skews more toward lurkers. For example, of the 73 percent of IT professionals who use online user forums/communities as an information resource, 60 percent also actively participate in or contribute to these types of sites. For those that who look at online reviews (61 percent), 40 percent of those people also participate by posting reviews online. For more information visit www.cmbinfo.com.

Americans gladly take the good with the bad in social media

Social media has opened the door to numerous ways for people to interact with others, customize their online experiences and receive benefits from their activity therein, but according to a study from Rochester, N.Y., research company Harris Interactive, it isn't all fun and games. Along with perks like great product recommendations and new-employment leads come offensive posts or harsh consequences from sharing TMI.

Two in five Americans say that they have received a good suggestion for something to try as a result of their use of social media; 15 percent say they have made a connection regarding a job opportunity; and one in 10 say they have found a new apartment or house through their social media use.

While a majority of U.S. adults are using social media (65 percent) and a similar number say they have received a positive benefit from its use, adoption is not consistent across the board. Rather, younger Americans claim positive benefits as a result of their social media use much more often than older adults. For example, a majority of echo Boomers (those ages 18-33) say they have received a positive suggestion for something to try from their activity on social media (59 percent), compared to 44 percent of

generation Xers (those ages 34-45); one-third of Baby Boomers (those ages 46-64); and just one in five matures (those ages 65+).

Similar numbers say they have suffered negative consequences from this activity, such as the 43 percent of social media users who say they have been offended by posts, comments or pictures they've seen and the 26 percent who say that unintended persons have viewed links or comments they've posted. Fewer social media users say they have suffered the more serious consequences of getting in trouble with school or work or losing a potential job opportunity because of comments or pictures they posted online (7 percent for both). Despite younger Americans receiving benefits from social media use more often than older adults, younger Americans also suffer the consequences of social media use at a greater rate.

When social media users were asked if potentially negative experiences can be prevented through the use of privacy settings, over three-quarters agreed that they can be, with 28 percent strongly agreeing. In addition, 71 percent of social media users are confident that their own privacy settings operate in the way they intend, but only 18 percent say they are very confident. While a quarter of social media users are not confident in their privacy settings (25 percent), it seems that almost all social media users are at least trying to use these options for security assurance - only 5 percent of social media users say they do not use any privacy settings at all. Similar to the other areas of social media explored, younger adults who use social media feel more strongly both that privacy settings can prevent negative consequences (82 percent of echo Boomers say this, compared to 70 percent of matures) and that they are confident in their own privacy settings (78 percent of echo Boomers, compared to 61 percent of Baby Boomers). For more information visit www.harrisinteractive.com.

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many adults, that's a tight squeeze to fit into comfortably and relax, but to a child it's a colossal, bubble-filled wonderland of adventures waiting to happen - at least until they switch from baths to showers. Interested in learning a bit more about the habits surrounding this water playground for the pint-sized set, Moen Incorporated, Olmsted, Ohio, queried both parents and their kids about children's bathing habits, including questions about how often they bathe, for how long and with whom.

On the bath-versus-shower topic, many children take both baths and showers. However, not surprisingly, according to adults, a bubble bath ranks highest with the younger set: 85 percent of 6-to-8-year-olds take baths versus 77 percent who take showers. Nearly all tweens take showers rather than baths: 97 percent of 12-to-14-year-olds take showers versus 55 percent who take baths.

Ironically, when children were asked whether they take baths or showers, the results differed significantly. Fifty-five percent of children ages 6-8 said they took baths (versus adults, who said their children took baths 85 percent of the time) - a 30 percent difference in responses. Seventy-one percent of tweens said they took showers (versus adults, who said their tweens took showers 97 percent of the time) - again a nearly 30 percent difference between children's responses and adults'.

When asked how often their children bathe or shower, parents stated that their children (particularly those in the 12-18 age group) bathe or shower every day. Children and parents agree - children are four times more likely to take a bath in the evening than in the morning. They also agree that more than half of the showers taken by children in a week occur in the evening.

While most adults prefer to bathe solo, three in 10 parents report bathing children together. Those who bathe multiple children would stop doing so for boys and girls together at around five years old; and for siblings of the same sex at approximately seven years old. Most young children are allowed to bathe or shower unsupervised at around seven

years old. Seven in 10 adults with a child 6-8 years old report that their child bathes or showers unsupervised.

Some unexpected finds? Children spend about 23-25 minutes lathering up and playing in the bath versus 16 minutes in the shower. (A previous study by Moen found that adults spend an average of 13 minutes in the shower.) Also, one in five children report taking baths/showers away from home, averaging nearly three per week. The notion is that many of these children are in middle- or high-school and they likely shower before/after sports and after-school activities. For more information visit www.moen.com.

Mobile phones not replacing pure navigation devices anytime soon

Mobile phones with sophisticated navigation features are becoming increasingly available but it seems that their presence in the portable navigation device market is as a supplement to - instead of replacement for - devices designed solely for navigation purposes. Consumers in Germany, France and the U.K. don't see them as wholly interchangeable and find each useful in its own right, according to data from Nuremberg, Germany, research company GfK Retail and Technology.

Whether strolling in an unfamiliar part of town or cruising across the continent, consumers tend to choose a navigation device best suited for the task at hand rather than consistently favoring one over the other. This suggests that there will be room for both mobile phones and pure navigation devices to maintain their place in the market in the future.

Pure navigation devices, which include portable products and devices that are permanently integrated into a vehicle, score points with the size of the screen and the variety of different map formats. Consequently, 89 percent of respondents in the three countries surveyed clearly prefer these types of device to mobile phones for car journeys. In fact, almost 70 percent of those who currently use only a mobile phone navigation system would

prefer to use a portable or permanently integrated navigation system in the car. Respondents believe that pure navigation devices meet their requirements significantly better than mobile phones, particularly for longer journeys at the weekend or on vacation. Just under 80 percent declare themselves satisfied with portable or in-built devices for vacation trips, whereas only 66 percent say the same for mobile phones.

However, navigation is not limited to cars. For example, electronic orientation aids are becoming increasingly popular as city guides or location finders. Around 70 percent of all respondents would prefer to use portable navigation solutions via their mobile phones as pedestrians, and almost 60 percent of those who currently only use a portable navigation device would prefer to be guided by a mobile phone with a navigation feature when on foot. For more information visit www.gfk.com.

Americans consider health and quality when dining out, not calories

Americans are looking for more healthful options at restaurants and other food-service outlets but define healthy eating based on quality features rather than fewer calories, according to a report from The NPD Group, a Port Washington, N.Y., research company.

A significant share of food-service traffic is driven by healthy eating behaviors and one of the top motivations for more healthful eating is to feel healthier. The feature most important to consumers seeking healthy menu options is quality, such as fresh, natural and nutritious ingredients. Fewer calories were among the least important features.

In addition to defining healthful eating, the report also addressed consumer attitudes about the importance of the taste. Consumers place a high importance on taste regardless if they are eating healthfully or not and some consumers equate healthier foods as not being as tasty. The majority of consumers expect to pay the same for healthier foods as those considered less healthy. For more information visit www.npd.com.

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Product and Service Update

continued from p. 12

on marketing activities by measuring campaign and ad effectiveness with weekly updates on nearly 60,000 consumer data elements via Simmons DataStream; and provides dashboards and automated alerts and other features and role-based access. For more information visit www.experian.com/simmons.

Employment Index aims to track recruitment trends

San Ramon, Calif., employment consulting company eQuest has created an Employment Index designed to provide a monthly analysis of job posting trends and how effectively online advertisements are performing based on candidate responses to those ads. The company intends to review thousands of opportunities gathered from its corporate customer base, index the responses by job classification and location and provide a synopsis of online recruitment activity. The eQuest Employment Index will also report on the spending patterns of the Fortune 500, including job posting volumes based on activity over the prior month. For more information visit www.equest.com.

Vovici releases its sixth-generation EFM platform

Dulles, Va., research company

Vovici has made available Vovici 6, the next generation of its enterprise feedback management platform, featuring over 25 major feature enhancements including a new user interface for survey design, distribution and analysis. Vovici 6 aims to help novice-to-expert users drive the quick adoption of a centralized customer feedback platform across all aspects of the enterprise.

Features and enhancements include drag-and-drop survey organization; inline help, tips and videos; report theme builder; interactive reporting charts; ability to annotate charts; ability to test invitations and profiles; and dashboards for survey design, distribution and analysis. For more information visit www.vovici.com.

20|20 brings Webcams to QualBoard; offers online European training course

20|20 Technology, a division of 20|20 Research Inc., Nashville, Tenn., has updated its bulletin board platform QualBoard to include Webcam capability. The feature is intended to allow study participants to answer questions using Webcams. QualBoard with Webcams also includes EasyClip, 20|20's video editor.

Finally, 20|20 Technology has added a training class to its Webinar and training series on online qualita-

tive research. QualBoard Training for European first-time users will be offered in English every Wednesday at 6 a.m. EST; 11 a.m. London time; and 12 p.m. Paris time. For more information visit www.2020research.com/webinar-eu.

New data capture tool aims to provide the FACTS

Optimum Solutions Corporation, a Lynbrook, N.Y., research company, has introduced FACTS (Fast Accurate Capture Technology Solutions), a data capture technology designed to limitlessly mine the preferences of a company's audience. FACTS' capabilities include the following: telescoding (telescopic coding) to allow marketers to create a tree's-eye view of any defined subject area; foreign-language data entry using ExoForms to transcribe verbatims in any language supported by Microsoft Windows; audio coding; three-pass entry for quality assurance; and dynamic survey processing for generating custom surveys geared toward each individual respondent and processing those surveys within FACTS without requiring template definitions. For more information visit www.oscworld.com.

New tool AMPS up Web site performance

SiteSpect, a Boston research company, has debuted SiteSpect AMPS (Automated Multivariate Performance [Optimization] Solution), a Web and mobile performance optimization solution that employs multivariate testing and behavioral targeting intended to determine causal relationships between individual performance-enhancement techniques and end-user experience. AMPS aims to accelerate site performance and improve the end-user experience and Web marketers' key metrics, such as conversion rates and engagement.

Its behavioral targeting capabilities also aim to tailor the blend of performance optimizations based on user profile, browser type and an array of mobile device targeting options.

The SiteSpect AMPS is available as an on-premise enterprise application and a private, cloud-based ASP

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version. For more information visit www.sitespect.com.

Briefly

Fresno, Calif., research company Decipher Inc. has developed an interactive dashboard designed to allow clients to view and manipulate their market research data on the fly; review data in any variety of combinations; track projects; and create what-if scenarios. For more information visit www.decipherinc.com.

Research Panel Asia Inc., Tokyo, has released a Japanese consumer behavior database in its LifeStyle Index. Adding this to the existing Chinese database, LifeStyle Index aims to provide users data access on values, consumer attitudes, preferences and purchase behavior of Japanese and Chinese consumers, along with comparative data between the two. For more information visit www.researchpanelasia.com.

Automated Media Services Inc., Allendale, N.J., has developed a shopper tracking technology dubbed FlowScan, which is intended to record in real-time the precise flow of a shopper's path in the retail environment. FlowScan is designed to generate time-based flow analytics based on shopper location data, captured moment-by-moment as shoppers journey the store. The data is expected to aid in shelf messaging, placement and packaging. For more information visit www.3gtv.com.

Accelerant Research, Charlotte, N.C., has begun offering BlogNog, its online qualitative research platform, free of charge to students and faculty for academic-related purposes, including project coursework, journal publication, thesis or dissertation. For more information visit www.blognogresearch.com.

Miami research company eCGlobalPanel has re-launched its U.S. Hispanic Panel after a two-and-a-half-year hiatus to focus on its Latin American panel. For more information visit www.ecglobalpanel.com.

ESOMAR has debuted Research

World Connect, an online platform for sharing trends in market research. RW Connect is designed to serve as a podium for open debate and discussion from ESOMAR members and will feature both original and archived content from the print issue in addition to open submissions from the research industry at large. For more information visit www.esomar.org.

Columbus, Ohio, research company iPinion LLC has released its smartphone survey platform iPinion for Android users. The mobile platform runs on all Android 2 operating systems. The company plans to release BlackBerry and Symbian apps later in 2011. For more information visit www.ipinionsurveys.com.

IMS Research, Wellingborough, U.K., has debuted its Strategic Market Assessment service, designed to provide objective, detailed and clear recommendations for the best markets to focus on to achieve profitable business growth. For more information visit www.imsresearch.com.

Borderless Access, a Bangalore, India, research company, has extended its panel service to Mexico. For more information visit www.borderlessaccess.com.

Louisville, Ky., research company Sedulo has introduced its ClarityQMR service to support physician surveys, focus groups and other qualitative market intelligence services on behalf of pharmaceutical clients. For more information visit www.clarityqmr.com.

Nuremberg, Germany, research company The GfK Group has added cell phone sampling to its Super OmniTel telephone omnibus in the U.S. The update will make it so that 200 are people called and interviewed by cell phone for every 1,000 interviewed. For more information visit www.gfk.com.

Yahoo! Inc., Sunnyvale, Calif., has launched Yahoo! AdLabs, a group focused on providing scientific leadership and accelerating innovation in digital advertising products through Yahoo!'s research organization Yahoo! Labs. For more information visit <http://labs.yahoo.com>.

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, research company Pulse Group PLC has debuted its Pulse Connect Facebook and LinkedIn apps designed to allow users import their profiles into www.planet-pulse.com, its online research community portal. For more information visit www.pulse-connect.com.

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Research Industry News

continued from p. 14

Mumbai, India., research company **Ugam Solutions** has been included in the Deloitte Technology Fast 500 Asia Pacific 2010, a ranking of the 500 fastest-growing technology companies in Asia-Pacific.

Vancouver, B.C., research company **Vision Critical** has been named by **Canada's Top 100 Employers** as one of the Top 55 Employers in British Columbia. The company was recognized for providing employees with development opportunities; support in maintaining

work-life balance; financial benefits like profit-sharing and bonuses; and encouraging green commuting.

New accounts/projects

ForeSee Results, an Ann Arbor, Mich., research company has been selected by **British Airways**, Harmondsworth, U.K., to measure customer satisfaction and make improvements to its Web site www.britishairways.com.

Portland, Ore., research company **Rentrak Corporation** has signed a multi-year agreement to provide its StationView Essentials local television ratings measurement service with **Bonten Media Group Inc.**, New York.

Additionally, **Starcom Mediavest Group**, New York, has expanded its agreement with Rentrak to use Rentrak's StationView Essentials as one of its resources for local TV planning and buying across 20 major and mid-sized markets throughout the U.S. At the same time, Starcom renewed its commitment to Rentrak's national TV measurement service, TV Essentials.

Finally, Rentrak has expanded its multi-year StationView Essentials agreement with **Sinclair Broadcast Group Inc.**, Hunt Valley, Md. The agreement extends Sinclair's 2011 commitment to 21 stations in 12 markets.

Framingham, Mass., research company **Kadence International** has added Stamford, Conn., research software company **FocusVision's** focus group video technology to its facility in Singapore. Kadence has been awarded partner status with FocusVision as a result.

Television Industry Committee, Kiev, Ukraine, has agreed to prolong the terms of its agreement with Kiev research company **GfK Ukraine** for television audience measurement research until December 31, 2014.

Vancouver, B.C., research company **Vision Critical** has begun its Research on Research initiative to allow a team of researchers, respon-

dent engagement specialists and software developers to offer information, determine best practices and issue practical recommendations.

Fresno, Calif., research company **Decipher Inc.** has been selected by **Davis, Hibbitts and Midghall Research**, Portland, Ore., to develop custom online research panels at www.dhmresearchpanel.com.

New companies/new divisions/relocations/expansions

Dulles, Va., research company **Vovici** has expanded its European presence with a datacenter in London.

Additionally, Vovici has announced plans to relocate its headquarters to Presidents Plaza I, 196 Van Buren St., Herndon, Va.

Voxco, a Montreal research firm, has opened a London office.

Paris research company **Ipsos** has expanded its **Ipsos in Malaysia** operation with an office in Kuala Lumpur.

Milwaukee, Wis., research company **Market Probe** has opened an office in Hong Kong.

Researchers Helen Nuki, Alexa Arrowsmith and Helen Law have launched **Monkey See**, a U.K. research company. The firm is online at www.monkey-see.co.uk.

IFF Research in the U.K.; **CSA** in France; **Advira** in Spain, **Mafo-Institut** in Germany; **Unicab** in Italy; and **IMAS** in Austria have collaborated to form **RedRay International Research Partners**, a pan-European network to conduct international research projects and provide senior-level support throughout international projects. The network is online at www.redray-international.com.

The Marketing Group of New England Inc., Boston, has begun offering a focus group service to its residential development clients.



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Research Now, Plano, Texas, has relocated its Seattle office to 1375 Northwest Mall St., Suite 9, Issaquah, Wash. The location is the former Seattle Peanut Labs office.

Research company earnings/financial news

Harris Interactive, Rochester, N.Y., announced its second-quarter fiscal 2011 financial results. Total revenue was \$44.9 million, compared with \$44.6 million for the same prior year period. Operating income was \$0.9 million, compared with operating income of \$0.6 million for the prior-year period. Net income was \$0.3 million, compared with net income of \$1.3 million in 2010.

Rentrak Corporation, Portland, Ore., announced financial results for its fiscal third quarter ended December 31, 2010. Consolidated revenues rose 3 percent over the prior-year period to \$23.7 million.

Vovici, Dulles, Va., reported record sales growth, customer

renewal rates and profitability in 2010. Compared to 2009, in 2010 Vovici experienced a 35 percent increase in worldwide sales; a 70 percent increase in EMEA sales; an 83 percent increase in \$100k+ deals; and a 15 percent increase in average deal size.

Arbitron Inc., Columbia, Md., reported results for the fourth quarter and full year ended December 31, 2010. Net income for the fourth quarter 2010 was \$15.6 million, compared with \$12.6 million for fourth-quarter 2009. Net income for the full year 2010 increased to \$44.5 million, compared with \$42.2 million in 2009. Revenue was \$395.4 million, an increase of 2.7 percent versus revenue of \$385 million for full-year 2009.

ComScore Inc., Reston, Va., announced financial results for the fourth quarter of 2010. In the fourth quarter of 2010, comScore achieved record quarterly revenue of \$51.2 million, an increase of 52 percent

over fourth-quarter 2009. Operating profit rose by 34.7 percent to 119.5 million euros in 2010 and the operating margin settled at 10.5 percent.

Ipsos, Paris, reported total 2010 of 1.14 billion euros, up 20.9 percent over 2009. Revenues increased by 8.3 percent on a like-for-like basis and at constant exchange rates.

Kinesis Survey Technologies LLC, Austin, Texas, announced record revenue growth for 2010 and its seventh consecutive year of sustained profitability.

Kadence International, Framingham, Mass., reported insight-driven revenue of \$1.4 million for the last six months of 2010, a 98 percent increase compared to the same period in 2009 and a 46 percent revenue rise compared to the first half of 2010.

Cambiar, Phoenix, reported a 120 percent increase in revenue in 2010 over the previous year.



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Names of Note

continued from p. 10

Brown has appointed **Larry Schack** as chief client strategist, Millward Brown North America; **Ronald D. Markham** as CIO; and **John Svendsen** as senior vice president and global brand director, global media. The company has also formed a global client advisory board, including Markham, **Eileen Campbell**, **Mary Ann Packo**, **Fabian Hernandez**, **Travyn Rhall**, **Tim Wragg**, **Elaine Holland**, **Gordon Pincott**, **Dave Sandberg**, **Paul McClean**, **Scott Spence** and **Sue Elms**.

Quick Test/Heakin, a Jupiter, Fla., research company, has appointed **Hilda Garcia** as manager. Additionally, **Gregory Jones** has joined the company's MVL IT team.

Maritz Research, St. Louis, has promoted **Keith Chrzan** to senior vice president and CRO. **Jim Stone** has been named executive vice president.

Angela Zavila has been named vice president, research services, of *KL Communications*, a Red Bank, N.J., research firm.

Ipsos in India, a Delhi, India, research company, has hired **Sonia Pall** as country manager and CEO.

Digital Research Inc., Kennebunk, Maine, has promoted **Jane Mount** to president, digital research; and **Stephanie Fraone** to associate research director.

Pauline Draper-Watts has joined *Prime Research*, Ann Arbor, Mich., as senior vice president, North America.

Ipsos in Malaysia, a Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, research company, has appointed **Steve Murphy** as country manager.

Jonathan Majors has joined Houston real estate company *Transwestern's* Atlanta office as regional marketing research analyst, Southeast.

GfK HealthCare, a Blue Bell, Pa., research company, has named **Camm Epstein** vice president, market access,

U.S. practice lead; **Heinz Ohde**, division manager, global syndicated services; and **Marco Rauland**, head of pricing and reimbursement. Ohde and Rauland will be based in Nuremberg, Germany.

WorldOne, a New York research firm, has promoted **Matt Champion** to president, North America. *Sentient Decision Science Inc.*, a



Champion

Zhang

Portsmouth, N.H., research company, has hired **Yi Zhang** as behavioral scientist and director, subconscious research lab.

London research company *Truth* has appointed **Michael Carlon** and **Sharon Walsh** as directors at *Strategic Truth Inc.*, the company's New York offshoot. Additionally, **Claire Parham** has been appointed to lead *Truth's* business in Asia.

Taesun Kim has been hired as senior market research director at *Tango Management Consulting LLC*, a Dallas technology solutions firm.

Stamford, Conn., research company *InsightExpress* has hired **Jill Colt** as director and **John Dickerson** and **Kevin Dobrosky** as account executives, all within the company's custom marketing research team.

Abt Associates, a Bethesda, Md., research company, has added **Carol Bloomberg** and **Katherine Flaherty** to its domestic health division.

Brian Condon has been named executive vice president, commercial development, of *Scarborough Research*, New York.

MMR Research Worldwide, Oxfordshire, U.K., has made the following appointments: **Ian Horritt**,

director, qualitative; **Frances Pirie**, associate director; **Rob Hack**, **Anna O'Connell** and **Nick Chancellor**, research manager; **Ronita Ghatak**, sensory panel leader; **Helen Torrens-Burton** and **Bridget Chatley**, trainee survey creator; and **Paul Tinworth**, senior research manager, HRW.

Thomas Fratacci has joined London research company *Added Value's* Paris office as managing director.

New York research company *Kantar Health* has appointed **Susan J. Suponic** as senior vice president, global market access.

San Francisco research company *EmSense Corporation* has hired **Meinhard Hausleitner** as vice president, market research, shopper insights; **Andrew Kennelly** as director, research, package/concept/advertising testing; **Lynn Sarnoff** as director advertising research, advertising/communications; and **Valerie Gauthier** as research manager, pharmaceutical.

Portland, Ore., research company *Rentrak Corporation* has appointed **Chris Wilson** as president, national linear television.

Columbia, Md., research company *Arbitron Inc.* has extended President/CEO **William T. Kerr's** contract through January 10, 2013.

San Mateo, Calif., research software company *Satmetrix* has appointed **Robert Salvoni** as managing director, international.

GfK Custom Research, Nuremberg, Germany, has appointed **Debi Basu** as regional director, customer research, Asia-Pacific and the Middle East; and **Jean-Christophe Salles** as regional director, custom research, Latin America. Additionally, the company has appointed **Debra A. Pruent** to its custom research business in China and Japan.

Paul Edwards has been named European CEO of New York research company *Hall & Partners*. Edwards will be based in the company's London office.

Tara Miller, PRC, on MRA's Community

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questions you should ask when ...

selecting a telephone facility

The basics

Is the facility able to scale appropriately between small and large projects? What kind of contact services are provided? Do you have inbound and outbound calling capabilities? Do you provide additional contact capabilities (e.g., Web, mail, e-mail, etc.) for multimode research? Do you have international/multilingual reach?

The staff

What are the required qualifications for interviewers? How are interviewers trained and what ongoing training is provided? What is the supervisor-to-interviewer ratio? What percentage of interviewer completes is monitored?

Available technology

Does the telephone research facility have clear remote-monitoring capabilities to adequately monitor projects as they first go into the field? What ability will I have to do live monitoring of active interviews? Can you record interviews? If so, how would I receive the recordings? How do you handle states where two-party consent is required? Do you have cost-saving technologies like interactive voice response and predictive dialing? Do you provide online real-time reporting capabilities on survey data? Does the CATI software ensure that no data or sample is stored on the local interviewer computer in the call center? Does the CATI software provide separation of data for each project dialed? Does each project have its own database?

Standard operating procedures

How are interviewers incentivized? What times do you normally dial business and consumer studies? How do you oversee interviewer dialings/completes? How are cell phone numbers handled, if at all?

Quality control

What are your quality-control procedures? Is there a secure on-site server? If so, how often is it backed up? How do you keep track of monitorings and validations? What percentage of phone calls is actively monitored for quality? How is the quality of a phone call measured and reported? What metrics are used? Do interviewers read verbatim or are they allowed to paraphrase if a respondent does not understand the question?

Your deliverables

During and after the telephone interviews, what are the deliverables? What time are my reports ready each day and how do I receive them?

Special thanks to Thoroughbred Research Group, Louisville, Ky.; Opinionology, Orem, Utah; and DataPrompt International, Chicago, for providing input on the questions.

2011

Telephone Facilities Directory



The 2011 Directory of Telephone Interviewing Facilities was compiled by sending listing forms to firms we identified as having permanent telephone interviewing facilities. This year's directory lists nearly 700 firms, arranged geographically. In addition to the company's vital information, we've included a line of codes showing the number of interviewing stations, the number of stations that use computer-aided interviewing (CATI), and the number of stations that can be monitored on-site and off-site.

A searchable version of this directory is available on our Web site at www.quirks.com.

Codes - (e.g. 25-10-25-10)

1. STATIONS - No. of interviewing stations at this location
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3. ON-SITE - No. of stations which can be monitored on-site
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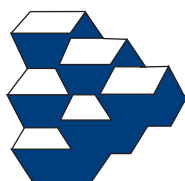
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115-115-115-115

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info@themsr.com
www.themsr.com
Rob Noha, V.P. Public Opinion Polling
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Omaha, NE
Ph. 402-391-7734
mary_arkfeld@wraresearch.com
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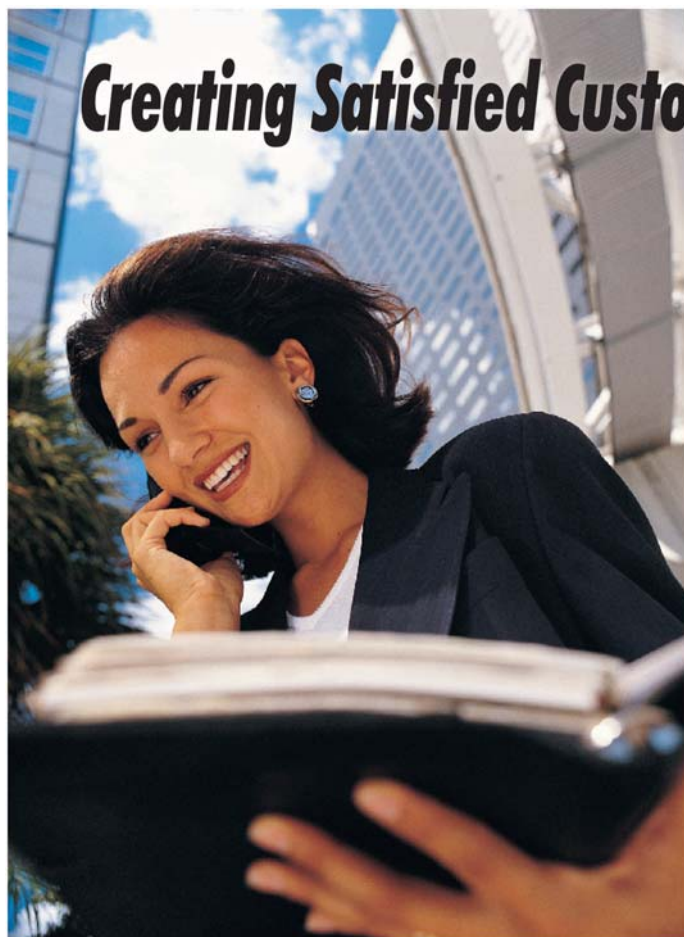
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Arun Vishwanath, Research Consultant
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John Sessions
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jim@consumeropinionservices.com
www.consumeropinionservices.com
Jim Weaver, Vice President
18-14-18-0



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info@mdcresearch.com
www.mdcresearch.com
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Greg Surovick, President
25-25-25-25



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Ph. 800-482-3550
info@strcenter.com
www.strcenter.com
Gregg Kennedy, President
60-60-60-60

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James Lee, President
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Allan Geller, President
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Morris Davis, President
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www.easternresearch.com
Kean Spencer, President
400-400-400-400

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Robert Thomas, Executive Vice President
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Miina Rafinski
25-25-25-25
(See advertisement p. 33)

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bogrzek@reckner.com
www.reckner.com
Barbara Ogrizek, Director
10-10-10-10

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(See advertisement inside front cover)

Survey Technology & Research Center (STR)
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www.strcenter.com
Daniel Schmitt, VP Sales & Marketing
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Kelli Best, Director Field and Fulfillment
25-4-25-20

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Kevin Edwards, Project Manager
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Cynthia Thrasher
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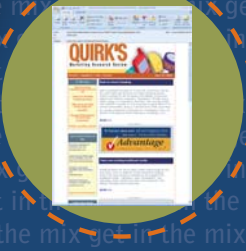
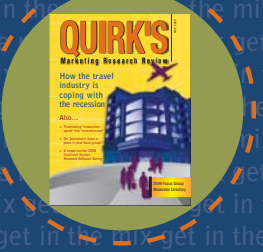
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QUIRK'S
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calendar of events

Featured Events



TRC Market Research will hold a conference, themed “Frontiers of Research” on **May 3** at the Yale Club in New York. The day will include speakers from Yale, NYU, Wharton and Temple and topics will range from neuroscience applications to social media. For more information and to register visit www.trchome.com.



Vision Critical will host a complimentary 45-minute Webinar, themed “Profile of a Winning Panel,” on **April 7** at 2 p.m. EDT. Selena McLachlan, marketing and research manager at MEC, and Jacquie Gaudette, director, business development at Vision Critical, will present. To register visit <https://visioncriticalmeetings.webex.com/visioncriticalmeetings/onstage/g.php?t=a&d=924029123>.

Globalpark will hold its annual mobile research conference on **April 18-19** at The May Fair Hotel in central London. Register with code FF-Quirks to save 20 percent. For more information visit www.mobileresearchconference.com.

IIR will hold a conference focused on technology in market research on **May 2-3** at The Allerton Hotel in Chicago. Register with code TDMR11QUIRK to save 20 percent. For more information visit www.iirusa.com/tdmr.

The Society of Competitive Intelligence Professionals (SCIP) and Frost & Sullivan Institute will host SCIP’s annual international conference and exhibition on **May 9-13** at the Buena

Vista Palace Hotel and Spa in Lake Buena Vista, Fla. For more information visit www.scip.org.

The Qualitative Research Consultants Association will hold its first symposium on excellence in qualitative research on **May 12** at the University Club of Chicago. For more information visit www.qrca.org.

The American Association for Public Opinion Research will host its annual conference on **May 12-15** at the Arizona Grand Resort in Phoenix. For more information visit www.aapor.org.

The Pharmaceutical Business Intelligence and Research Group will hold its annual general meeting on **May 15-18** in San Antonio. For more information visit www.pbirg.com.

The Council of American Survey Research Organizations will hold a management conference on **May 16-17** at the Hyatt Regency in Chicago. For more information visit www.casro.org.

IIR will hold a conference focused on innovation and collaboration, themed “A New Front End: The Era of Collaboration,” on **May 16-18** at the Seaport Boston Hotel and Adjacent World Trade Center in Boston. For more information visit www.iirusa.com/fei-usa/fei-home.xml.

The annual text analytics summit will be held on **May 18-19** at the Radisson Hotel in Boston. For more information visit www.textanalyticsnews.com/text-mining-conference/index.shtml.

The Marketing Research and Intelligence Association will hold its annual conference on **May 29-31** at the Delta Grand Okanagan in Kelowna, British Columbia. For more information visit www.mria-arim.ca.

The Life Insurance and Market Research Association will hold its annual marketing and research conference on **June 1-3** at the Renaissance Boston

Waterfront Hotel in Boston. For more information visit www.limra.com.

The Council of American Survey Research Organizations will hold its annual technology conference on **June 2-3** at the Millennium Broadway Hotel in New York. For more information visit www.casro.org.

The Marketing Research Association will hold its 2011 annual conference on **June 6-8** in Washington, D.C. For more information visit www.mra-net.org.

IIR will hold a conference, themed “Measure Up,” on **June 6-8** at the Hyatt Harborside Boston. For more information visit www.iirusa.com/measureup.

The Cable and Telecommunications Association for Marketing will hold its annual research and insights conference on **June 15-17** at the Palmer House Hilton in Chicago. For more information visit www.ctam.com.

IIR will hold a conference, themed “Shopper Insights in Action,” on **July 10-13** at the Swissotel in Chicago. For more information visit www.iirusa.com/insights/shopper-home.xml.

The American Marketing Association will hold its annual marketing research conference on **September 11-14** at the Hilton Bonnet Creek Resort in Orlando, Fla. For more information visit www.marketingpower.com.

ESOMAR will hold its annual congress, themed “Impact - Research Reloaded,” on **September 18-21** at Westergasfabriek in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. For more information visit www.esomar.org.

To submit information on your upcoming conference or event for possible inclusion in our print and online calendar, e-mail Emily Goon at emily@quirks.com. For a more complete list of upcoming events visit www.quirks.com/events.

index of advertisers

Affordable Samples, Inc. p. 37
800-784-8016 | www.affordablesamples.com

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800-280-7200 | www.analyticalgroup.com

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410-583-9991 | www.baltimoreresearch.com

Burke Institute p. 5
800-543-8635 | www.BurkeInstitute.com

Burke, Incorporated p. 29
800-688-2674 | www.burke.com

C+R Research Services, Inc...... p. 47
312-828-9200 | www.crresearch.com

Cint USA, Inc...... p. 27
404-992-7943 | www.cint.com

Creative Consumer Research..... p. 88
800-234-9646 | www.ccrsurveys.com

Decipher, Inc...... p. 57
800-923-5523 | www.decipherinc.com

Decision Analyst, Inc. p. 41
817-640-6166 | www.decisionanalyst.com

Discovery Research Group..... p. 89
800-678-3748 | www.drgutah.com

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[44] (972) 9 767 8998 | www.dooblo.net

Eastern Research Services..... p. 35
610-543-0575 | www.easternresearch.com

EFG, Inc...... p. 3
866-334-6927 | www.efgresearch.com

Esearch.com, Inc. p. 58
310-265-4608 | www.eseach.com

Fieldwork Network Back Cover
800-TO-FIELD | www.fieldwork.com/

Focus Groups of Cleveland..... p. 85
800-950-9010 | www.focusgroupsofcleveland.com

Group Dynamics in Focus, Inc...... p. 23
866-221-2038 | www.groupdynamics.com

I/H/R Research Group p. 83
800-254-0076 | www.ihr-research.com

Lightspeed Online Research, LLC p. 15
908-605-4500 | www.lightspeedresearch.com

Marketing Research Association, Inc...... p. 71
860-682-1000 | www.mra-net.org

Marketing Research Association - PRC..... pp. 20, 26, 54, 66
860-682-1000 | www.mra-net.org/prc

MRA - Annual Conference pp. 60-61
860-682-1000 | www.mra-net.org/ac

Marketing Systems Group p. 45
800-336-7674 | www.m-s-g.com

MAXimum Research, Inc. p. 87
888-212-7200 | www.maximumresearch.com

McMillion Research Service pp. 16-17
800-969-9235 | www.mcmillionresearch.com

Morpace Inc...... p. 28
800-878-7223 | www.morpace.com

Nebu USA p. 21
917-628-2273 | www.nebu.com

Olson Research Group, Inc. p. 33
267-487-5500 | www.olsonresearchgroup.com

Opinionology p. 53
801-373-7735 | www.opinionology.com

Panel Direct Online..... p. 56
215-367-4100 | www.paneldirectonline.com

PhoneBase Research, Inc. p. 76
970-217-4883 | www.pbresearch.com

Precision Opinion..... p. 51
800-780-2790 | www.precisionopinion.com

Quick Test/Heakin..... p. 67
800-523-1288 | www.quicktest.com

Radius Global..... p. 19
212-633-1100 | www.radius-global.com

Readex Research..... p. 39
800-873-2339 | www.readexresearch.com

Research Now p. 49
888-203-6245 | www.researchnow.com

Schlesinger Associates, Inc. Inside Front Cover
866-549-3500 | www.schlesingerassociates.com

Schmiedl Marktforschung GmbH p. 94
49-30-235096-11 | www.schmiedl-marktforschung.de

Scientific Telephone Samples..... p. 65
800-944-4STS | www.stssamples.com

Strategic Marketing Research & Planning..... p. 59
763-441-7780 | www.smrp.net

StrategyOne p. 38
202-326-1772 | www.strategyone.net

Toluna USA..... p. 13
800-710-9147 | www.toluna-group.com

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818-524-1218 | www.usamp.com

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How marketers can get a reaction to their calls to action

Every marketer wants to draw a response of some kind from the consumers who view their ads. Buying the product or service being advertised would of course be ideal but there are many other possible (and desirable) actions that a viewer can take in response to an ad. This is especially true in the online ad realm, where they can be directed to a Web site to obtain more information; download a coupon; or locate a store near them.

No matter the type of call to action an advertiser uses in its online ads, it's important to set goals and assumptions at the outset, says Amy Fayer, research director, at New York research firm Dynamic Logic.

The firm groups the calls to action into five categories: offer-based (i.e., "Click here for a coupon"); time-based ("Sale ends October 1"); create your own ("Build your custom dream car"); find something ("Enter your zip code to find a restaurant in your area"); send something ("Share this with a friend").

Drawing on findings from Dynamic Logic's MarketNorms database - which spans over 6,000 online campaigns as well as the firm's experience in measuring the effectiveness of mobile, video, social media and other platforms - Fayer offers several tips for

marketers who are considering adding these types of ads to their online mix.

In general, Fayer stresses the need to keep the overarching marketing objectives in mind. For example, what type of ad, with what type of message or call to action, will get you the response you are looking for? And, don't forget to consider the consumer's mind-set. When they see your ad, where might they be in the purchase funnel? You may be placing your ads on sites that have a broad general audience - and hence may be seen by a lot of consumers - but would it be more effective to target niche sites that may reach potential customers when they are closer to buying?

Further, simplicity is king. "Our research has shown that that having simply one or two messages is better from a branding perspective," Fayer says. "If there are several calls to action within a single campaign, and you are trying to do too much with one ad execution, we have seen that fail from a branding perspective. In the online environment, you are competing for the consumer's attention. There are so many things on the page and if frequency hasn't had a chance to build up, a respondent may not take away all the different messages you are trying to convey."

Repetition is also effective, she says. "With any given campaign you might have two or three objectives - drive sales, increase agreement with a brand perception, boost product awareness. We have seen that ads that convey the main messaging throughout most of the frames of the ad rotation tend to do better than those that don't. So, in the case of an ad for a cleaning product that kills 99 percent of germs, it would have the product name and mention the antibacterial elements and a 'learn more' call to action. These elements should be featured throughout, so that the online user has a better opportunity to see who and what the ad is for no matter what frame they tune into."

Lost in the clutter

Fayer says many CPG clients assume that placing a coupon or an offer for a free sample in an ad is the best approach for increasing purchase intent but Dynamic Logic's research has shown that with so many CPG firms featuring coupons, those types of offers may be getting lost in the clutter.

What has been working better lately, she says, are the ads that promote charitable efforts, where consumers' actions can translate into donations by the CPG firm to a

worthy cause. These types of appeals, being relatively new and different, may stand a better chance of performing well, a finding that the research has confirmed, she says. “We’ve found that some kind of charity messaging was more likely to be persuasive for the category. This connected to some previous research we did where we tried to link copy testing performance to in-market performance. One thing we’ve seen in validation research is that a lot of times what drives purchase intent is an ad’s ability to communicate unique and distinct information. So that finding is good context for why a coupon offer may not be persuasive enough. There might be some other new elements or something more distinctive that might make an ad persuasive in the online environment.”

‘Liked’ by the masses

Asked about the flood of ads urging consumers to like a brand on Facebook as another type of call to action, Fayer says that these ads can be effective but marketers need to keep their expectations in check and realize that their brands won’t instantly be “liked” by the masses. Instead, for targeted audiences – say, moms choosing to like the maker of their preferred diaper brand – these ads can be effective at getting a consumer to engage with a brand.

Speaking of engagement, Fayer says that she and other researchers are seeing more and more rich-media “create and send” ads that invite consumers to make a video or some other creation and send it to friends. These types of ads are scoring well on persuasion because of their interactive nature, she says. “When you look at purchase intent, the harder-to-move metrics are those that are more persuasion-oriented. An ad may do very well on awareness but it might not do so well on persuasion because there are a lot of factors that go into persuasion – a brand might not be relevant, etc. Despite that, we have seen that ads with a viral nature, where consumers create and send something, have done very well on persuasion and we connect that back to the social media element. If someone is sharing your content, if they are sending it to someone, it’s likely you’ve engaged them very well.”

But, she cautions, the decision to go interactive and add, say, a game to an ad needs to be made carefully. While women are known to be big fans of online games, an ad won’t succeed just because it has a game in it. “That is something that involves research. You need to make sure the content is relevant and something that they are going to like. You don’t want to just stick a game in an ad and assume that all women 18-to-34 love gaming. You still want to make sure in your testing phase that among your specific sweet spot in that demographic that they find the content relevant and useful. That makes it more likely it will have a viral element to it.”

Only increase

As technology advances, the use of call-to-action ads will only increase. But just because you can add a call to action doesn’t mean you always should. Nor should you rely on a single metric to gauge their effectiveness, Fayer says. “Many marketers are still clinging to behavioral metrics as a measurement of success – how many people clicked on the ad? Having that call to action is a way to elicit that desired response, whether it’s a click or some other kind of interaction. But keep in mind that a majority of people don’t click on ads. In fact, less than 1 percent click. So an overreliance on the behavioral measures is not good.” | Q

Letter to the Editor

2010 not a bad year for focus groups

In the February issue’s Trade Talk column [p. 108], I’m not quite sure where you got your information that “2010 was a bad year for the focus group.” This statement just doesn’t hold true for my firm. From the opinions I’ve gathered, other top-tier facilities also report an “above-average, very respectable” 2010.

While belt tightening was certainly the order of the day, so too was intense attention to detail, expansion of contemporary technology and acute communication with clients. These initiatives all made for increased efficiencies, fewer costly errors and more dollars to the bottom line.

Additionally I’m convinced that print advertising on a monthly basis helped boost our sales.

Now taxes – that’s another story, for another time.

Jay Stewart White Sr.
CEO
Baltimore Research

Coming in the May issue...

The qualitative collage goes 3-D

Read Susan Fader’s advice on how to incorporate 3-D elements into focus group collaging exercises.

Go in-depth with tele-depth

Tom Donnelly of Double Helix explores the pros and cons of Web-assisted tele-depth interviews.

What’s doing in research software?

Tim Macer checks in with his report on the 2010 Globalpark Market Research Software Survey.

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Help Quirk's donate \$50,000 to Haitian relief efforts

Quirk's will celebrate its 25th anniversary in October 2011. We owe a great deal of gratitude to our readers and advertisers and feel very fortunate to have reached this milestone. We want to spread our good fortune by helping those in dire need. For each of the following actions readers take in 2011 Quirk's will donate \$1 toward Haitian relief, up to \$50,000: click the Like button on any page of quirks.com, quirks.com/MyQuirks or quirksblog.com; recommend Quirk's on LinkedIn; share a Quirk's link on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn or another social network; follow Quirk's on Twitter (@QuirksMR); or subscribe to our blog (quirksblog.com) or comment on a post. If we surpass our goal of \$50,000 for 2011, we will donate the additional money in 2012! For more information visit quirks.com/2011gift.aspx.



Marketing research job scene heating up

As of March, Quirk's free online job posting board had over 520 jobs listed. This beats any period in 2010 and is an improvement over the 2009 average of 200 postings.

The postings are still not back to the height of 2008 when active postings averaged 700 but we believe the industry is well on its way to recovery! Because Quirk's offers online job postings free of charge to all companies with marketing research-related openings, our posting levels serve as an indicator of job-market trends. To view all the active job postings or to post a position of your own visit quirks.com/jobs.

Are you following the Quirk's blog?

For every story we publish in our magazine or e-newsletter, there are dozens of items that don't make the cut and there are even more conversations, interviews, survey findings and industry news locked away in our brains. Our blog is designed to shed light on this inside information and to have a little fun while we're at it. Check out these recent posts at quirksblog.com: "How not to respond to a customer complaint"; "The media, Madison and misappropriation: co-opting the research language"; "Focus groups are killing Spider-Man!"; and "Is love blind to Valentine's Day premiums?"



cover-to-cover

Facts, figures and insights from this month's issue



Twenty-four percent of physicians cited poor patient understanding of disease severity as almost always a barrier to treatment among Hispanic patients and 21 percent cited it as frequently a barrier. Other factors cited by physicians as almost always being a barrier to treatment were preconceived notions/myths (23 percent) and conflicting advice about treatment from family members (21 percent). (page 8)



If it is important to the research that a tight-knit community develops, then Dunbar's number of 150 seems to be a guide, and traditional MROCs for brand enthusiasts, employees, etc., are best kept small. However, when it comes to a demographic community, where a digital tribe is not critically important, the community needs to be larger to allow members to be segmented into subcommunities. (page 27)



"Very satisfied" is the gold standard. While few companies will be able to cite numbers in the 90+ percent range when using this scale, it says a lot when vendors set this as the goal. Companies that measure themselves against this top-box standard are more likely to find ways to delight their customers over time. (page 32)



Within a member site, panelists also enjoy reading about the findings from surveys they may have participated in and how these findings will be applied to real-world decisions. Reading about recent sweepstakes winners may also keep panelists motivated. (page 50)

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