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This issue of the CASRO Journal is dedicated to Bob Cohen, a longtime friend and supporter of CASRO who passed away in July, 2011.

Bob served as Publisher of the CASRO Journal in 2000 and 2001. Sensitive to the rapidly changing research environment and the desire among research practitioners to learn from and support one another, Bob, with the help of a volunteer committee and the CASRO staff, worked tirelessly to compile two of the Journal’s most comprehensive issues.

Bob was the President and CEO of Scarborough Research, a long-time CASRO member firm. Active in CASRO for many years, Bob’s was a familiar face at CASRO conferences. He served on CASRO’s Board of Directors from 1999 – 2004 and was Board Chairman in 2002. He later served as a member of CASRO’s Research Career Development Committee. He will be missed.
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The Darkside to Crowdsourcing in Online Research Communities

by Niels Schillewaert, Managing Partner InSites Consulting & Marketing Professor Vlerick Management School, Tom De Ruyck, Head of Research Communities at InSites Consulting, Stephan Ludwig, Ph.D. Candidate, University of Maastricht, Moritz Mann, Master student, University Maastricht

Niels presented at the CASRO Technology Conference, June 2-3, in New York City.

INTRODUCTION

Research has changed from asking questions to having conversations with consumers. With the rise of social media, Online Research Communities have proven to be a viable environment to engage with an audience and stimulate insighting on an ongoing basis. What makes research communities unique is that they assemble a crowd in an asynchronous, long-term setting by applying social media techniques. Companies outsource certain tasks to that crowd (e.g. product and service creation and testing) in an open call in order to bring consumers into organizations all the way up to the boardroom (Nambissan and Baron, 2009). Hence, research communities are a form of “crowdsourcing” (Howe, 2006). The strength of crowdsourcing is the extent of social interaction, namely the combination and exchange of knowledge (Nahapiet and Ghoshal, 1998) – which is stimulated in online communities. Many studies have looked at and pointed to the effectiveness of crowd sourcing (Nambisan, 2002; Algesheimer, Dholakia et al. 2005; Howe, 2006). Each online research community supplier has their own methods and approaches to communities. Based on our research and experience we have come to learn that sample sizes of 50 (for three-week communities) to 150 participants (for three-month communities) are sufficient (Ludwig, De Ruyck and Schillewaert, 2011). These communities generate greater qualitative insights with good engagement between company and consumers in a cost efficient manner.

While many practitioners focus on the quantity of opinions and postings, past research thus far neglected a potential pitfall of crowdsourcing methods pertaining to decreasing marginal returns in terms of post quality in lengthy crowd discussions. More specifically, our study provides evidence that, on average, community discussion threads optimally encompass 30 posts. Beyond that amount, discussions can become dysfunctional due to social dynamics. This paper empirically highlights the inefficiencies of an excessive focus on the quantity, rather than the quality, of crowdsourcing contributions and assesses the drivers of relevant, on-topic community posts.

THE STUDY

We draw on behavioral data from three similarly run research communities with a total of 817 participants, which generated 6874 user posts spread over 332 threads. The three com-

1 Taking into account the duration of a community, the participation and drop-out rates and providing adequate recruitment, participant briefing and high level engagement and moderation.
Communities were varied in topic: a Ben & Jerry’s Brand Fan community, an ING Banking community and a Food community for Heinz.

Following the method prescribed by Cacioppo and Petty (1981) to derive the quality of cognitive qualitative comments, all posts were classified by two coders. The posts were coded as either ‘on-topic’ (remarks contributing towards the initial research question of the discussion thread) or ‘off-topic’ (remarks unrelated to the initial research question) and whether the post was just a reaction to the initial topic or (also) an interaction between other members of the community. As such we could assess the quality of community posts as illustrated in Figure 2. In the coding of the data care was taken for adequate inter-coder reliability (lowest Krippendorf’s α was 0.89).
Finally we send out a survey to measure satisfaction with the community, community identification, perceived informational and social benefits of participating in the research community and identification with the facilitating brand. Of the 817 community members across all three communities 331 completed the survey, yielding a response rate of 40.5%. The survey data allow us to assess the drivers of on-topic arguments and insights into how researchers can manage them.

THE RESULTS

Our results indicate there is a ‘dark side’ to crowd sourcing in research communities. Specifically, we found a decline in the quality of individual contributions over the course of time. This is illustrated in Figure 2. As the number of posts in a discussion thread increases, the average number of on-topic and relevant arguments in these posts decreases after peaking between 20 and 30 posts. Past this amount of posts per threads our analyses show a significant decrease in the number of relevant posts per discussion thread. Consequently, community managers who focus only on driving high quantities of posts potentially waste research time which is better spent on other crowdsourcing tasks.

Having outlined the importance of considering the posts’ content, we investigated what the perceptual drivers are of actual on-topic posts\(^2\) (see figure 3) by means of a Poisson regression analyses. The analysis shows that when participants are involved with the brand under study they are much more likely to post on-topic. Having brand fans in a community enhances insights attainable. Not all research objectives are geared towards brand fans, however. But even then researchers have to play on the intrinsic motivation of participants as the same holds for the involvement with the topic. If people are engaged with the information posted (e.g. they lose track of time while reading through the content or devote a great deal of attention to it), they also contribute more heavily and with more relevance.

Overall interaction between community members showed to be detrimental to the relevance of thread posts. At first sight this finding was counter-intuitive as learning through interactive discussions represents a key benefit of communities as they are inherently social. Therefore, we analyzed whether posts were merely loose interaction or tied to the original question\(^3\). We found only one type of interaction promotes substantive posts. When interaction in a community is embedded into the original discussion question it does generate significantly more new and on-topic information compared to having no interaction at all. However, if people interact on loose ends it weighs on the quality of the discussion thread. We further analyzed if the drivers of on-topic posts changed over time within a thread. In doing so we found that relevant posts that come late in a thread where driven by

\(^2\) A random selection of 331 participants who generated 2840 posts across all three communities was made. The Possion regression was robust and had good predictive validity with a Nagelkerke \(R^2 = 0.85\).

\(^3\) This was done by other coders than those who classified the on-topic posts to avoid common method variance.
brand identification, information engagement and is hindered by loose interaction only.

CONCLUSIONS & BEST PRACTICES

Setting up an online research community is technically easy, but in order to make interactions useful and effective researchers need adequate processes and moderation skills. First of all, researchers are advised to screen for brand fans or consumers who show an interest in the topic when recruiting for research communities. If not naturally present, engagement has to be created.

Moderators also need to be aware that community discussions can last for too long and moderators need to pay attention to steering interaction. There is an important role for researchers and community moderators in building identification with the community, keeping up the engagement with the topic to keep the discussion going while not letting members over-socialize and drift away from the researchers’ agenda. Too strong social relations among members of a research community can be counterproductive as they lead to irrelevant discussions.

All of this has important implications for managing communities:

- **Adapt the context and environment to the target group.** For example, let participants choose colors and the name of the community or put topics and questions on the discussion agenda. Foresee a social corner (next to the actual discussion space) where participants can interact “off topic”. If needed moderators should guide participants to such a social corner. In doing so the community is for and by members.

- **Build the community.** Once participants are screened and recruited, “kick off” sessions are important to build engagement on a social as well as informational level. In such sessions, the research agenda and objectives are discussed, the client is presented and participants get acquainted.

- **Moderators should develop the C-factor – the “C” of community manager.** Good moderators have good writing skills, are creative and “social medial” in human interaction.

- **Do not let communities last longer than they should.** Depending on the research objective, research communities can last a couple of weeks or months or be ongoing – they can have 50 or hundreds of participants – it depends. But one needs to be aware that longer and larger communities need higher engagement and require more resources. Lurking can increase with too many participants or an overwhelming number of posts. A paradox? Not really. When participants see too much information they disconnect because they are convinced their opinion has already been voiced and adds less or no value.

- **Engage as many stakeholders as possible.** Engaging members of the marketing team, senior management or a well-known expert from the industry or academia to participate in the discussion spurs activity levels tremendously.

- **What you do to people is as important as what you ask them.** Give participants tasks to perform and play games with them which generate insights. In doing so researchers play on the engagement and brand relation of participants. Allow participants to do what they like, surprise them with something special and check out their reaction.

In short, participating in a community should be an experience in which social ties and information efforts are crucial for a community’s well-being: in online research communities people are the heart as well!
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Tom De Ruyck
Tom is Head of Research Communities at InSites Consulting and responsible for InSites’ global activities in terms of ‘community research’: thought leadership, steering innovation and business development. InSites builds over 100 private online research communities a year for global clients like Heinz, Unilever, Danone, Philips, Vodafone, Heineken, Red Bull and many more. Tom is a frequently invited speaker at international marketing & research conferences, has published several articles and white papers, and is an influential blogger/tweeter on industry trends and online research communities. Tom is Adjunct Professor at IESEG School of Management (Lille, France) & EHSAL Management School (Brussels, Belgium), where he teaches ‘Contemporary Marketing Research Management & Techniques’. He is Co-founder & President of the Belgian research association BAQMaR and on the board of several other professional bodies: ESOMAR’s Fringe Factory, MO-Abouts’ Program Committee, FTO & Lonbono.
Widening the Net: A Comparison of Online Intercept and Access Panel Sampling

by David G. Bakken, Ph.D., Senior Vice President and Chief Science Officer, KJT Group LLC
In collaboration with: Reena Nawani, Director, Operations, Authentic Response, Inc.

David presented at the CASRO Online Research Conference, March 3-4, in Las Vegas.

INTRODUCTION

“A perfect survey is a myth. Some surveys are of course better than others, but even the best surveys contain imperfections. It must not be supposed, however, that all surveys are worthless because all have errors.” W. Edwards Deming, Some Theory of Sampling, 1950

Marketers have been making decisions based on data obtained from samples of consumers at least since Charles Coolidge Parlin founded the first market research organization at Curtis Publishing Company in 1911. Subsequent developments in sampling theory (e.g., Deming, 1950) established the probability sample as the standard against which all other samples should be compared, but even Deming acknowledged that probability samples are subject to errors. The main advantage of probability samples is that the magnitude of these errors could be calculated, and the effects would be random and unbiased.

Probability sampling addresses (in theory, at least) one key source of survey error: selection bias. But even probability samples are subject to several other sources of non-random error, including:

- Failure to define the problem clearly
- Measurement error
- Non-response (unit and question level)
- Coverage errors
- Estimation and statistical conclusion errors

The number of surveys conducted online has grown rapidly over the last 10 years due to speed and cost advantages compared to the traditional offline methods. This growth has been supported by a group of online panel and data collection companies that have relied on recruiting survey respondents into double opt-in panels and a few additional firms that rely on other sourcing strategies (e.g., intercept or “river” sampling). However, the growth in online research has been accompanied by serious concerns about the quality of data obtained via online surveys. From the outset, both marketers and research agencies recognized the potential for selection and coverage biases. When household Internet penetration was relatively low, much of the concern focused on coverage in general and the ability to...
reach certain demographic groups (older age groups and minorities, for example) and, especially in the case of opt-in panels, on selection biases. More recently the industry has focused on quality problems stemming from respondent behavior (such as belonging to many panels, giving fraudulent answers to screening questions and “speeding” through survey questions).

Given the nature of the market research industry, it is difficult to obtain data that might help to quantify the magnitude of these different quality problems, especially across the industry in total. One notable exception is the “Foundations of Quality” initiative launched by the Advertising Research Foundation (ARF). ARF sponsored an investigation of panel consistency and mode differences that involved a number of online panel providers. Similarly, Gittleman (2009) has conducted an extensive study (known as the “Grand Mean” project) of consistency in results across panels.

While use of online surveys has increased dramatically over the last decade, declining participation and response rates have made the acquisition, conversion and retention of online survey respondents more difficult. This in turn increases the potential for selection and non-coverage biases in any one online access panel. Some desirable consumer and B2B respondent populations have shown little interest in joining traditional online panels. Online panel and data collection companies have little choice but to develop new acquisition strategies, thus augmenting the traditional double opt-in model to ensure that the depth and breadth of participating respondent pools are sufficient to support industry growth. As these new strategies are developed, there is a corresponding need to better understand their downstream impact on research results and managerial decision making.

One strategy for reducing the effect of panel-specific coverage limitations is to “blend” respondents from different access panels into a single sample. If, as an example, some selection or coverage biases are introduced into a panel because of the specific sourcing and recruitment procedures used by the panel, and other panels have different biases arising from differences in their processes, then combining respondents from different panels should, in theory at least, “smooth out” the different biases. However, unless we can measure the different biases in some way, it is difficult to determine just how to blend various respondent sources to reduce their effects. Fallig and Allen (2009) propose classifying potential respondents (i.e., the members of an online community or opt-in panel) on the basis of several intrinsic characteristics (demographics, personality traits, personal values, and the like) using latent class regression and selecting respondents so that the overall mix of classes resembles the mix obtained using some “gold standard” sampling procedure, such as a national sample recruited by telephone. Lorch, Cavallaro and van Ossenbruggen (2010) tested a similar approach using somewhat different intrinsic characteristics and a different analytical method.

Understanding the relationship between respondent characteristics and online survey behaviors (such as willingness to participate, frequency of participation and so forth) offers a way to estimate and possibly to control the degree of bias introduced by different respondent pools. A major drawback of the approaches described above, however, is that respondents must be classified prior to sampling so that the classification information can be used in selecting a bias-minimizing sample. Moreover, pre-classification of respondents is more difficult when, as in the case of “intercept” or “river” sampling they are not part of an existing respondent panel or community.

To the extent that some of the potential biases arising from opt-in panels are due to differences in the distribution of these intrinsic characteristics (as suggested by Fallig and Allen, for example), blending respondents from one or more panel sources with respondents captured through “intercepts” of website visitors may be one way to reduce the bias arising from these distributional differences, assuming that such characteristics are distributed differently among the respondents sourced through intercepts.
STUDY OBJECTIVES

Authentic Response has developed a “river” or “consumer intercept” sampling capability. This research was conducted to help Authentic Response better understand the impact this methodology has on survey results, compared to sampling methods based on opt-in panels of survey respondents.

In particular, the research was designed to compare intercept sampling with two different methods of sampling from the opt-in panel: targeted sampling, in which panelists receive a direct invitation to participate in a specific survey, and dynamic routing in which panelists receive a general invitation (or visit the hub website on their own) and are screened for multiple surveys.

We sought to answer three specific questions:

- How different are the results obtained from these different sampling methods?
- To what degree would differences in the results across the three methods lead to different managerial decisions?
- Does the inclusion of intercept respondents reduce potential coverage bias?

STUDY DESIGN

The research was designed to yield samples of 2,000 completed interviews from the double opt-in panel methods (1,000 router and 1,000 “traditional” opt-in panel respondents) and 2,000 completed interviews from the consumer intercept sampling method. Because the purpose of this study is to compare sampling methods under circumstances that would be typical for market research, we established specific U.S. Census-based targets (quota groups) for age and gender. Additional screening criteria included country of residence (United States) and age (18 years or older).

For the traditional direct targeting method, a random sample of members of the Authentic Response double opt-in panel was drawn based on the screening and quota variables. These panelists received an e-mail invitation with a direct link to the test survey. For the router method, a different sample of panel members received an e-mail invitation with a link to the router site. Once they arrived at the router, qualified panelists were re-directed to the test survey.

For the intercept sampling method, respondents were captured from the stream of visitors to a number of partner websites. These respondents did not receive an immediate survey invitation via pop-up window. Rather, they were given an opportunity to click through to “additional offers” from the partners of a website. Once at this page, one of the offers included survey participation in return for some form of incentive relevant to the partner’s website.

The research questionnaire was designed specifically for this study and included questions about Internet usage, technology ownership, household characteristics, and personal demographics. We also included questions about purchase interest in the Apple iPad tablet computer, which had been released a few weeks before the survey fielded, to reflect the types of questions that a marketer might ask.

Among the questions tapping into household characteristics and personal demographics, we attempted to duplicate the format of the questions found in either the 2010 U.S. Census (home ownership, for example) or the American Community Survey.

The survey was fielded from April 29 through May 11, 2010.

RESULTS

Overall, we found high consistency in the responses to the key marketing research questions in the survey but differences in some demographic variables:

- Survey responses were highly correlated across the three sampling methods.
- The majority of differences between samples were smaller than one percentage point in magnitude.

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2 The test survey for this research had highest priority in the router queue, so that all qualified respondents were directed first to the test survey. Panelists who were not qualified based on age and country of residence or who fell into a quota group that was already filled may have been offered additional survey opportunities.
Intercept respondents were somewhat less likely to have participated recently in another online survey.

The intercept sampling method did a better job of reaching younger respondents, males, and those with fewer years of education.

**Consistency Across Sampling Methods**

We began our analysis of the survey data by asking the question, “Can we tell which sample a respondent is from based on his or her answers to the core survey questions?” With samples of 1,000 to 2,000, even small absolute differences in responses to individual survey questions may be “statistically significant” so simple item-level comparisons do not tell us how different any two samples are from one another. For that reason, we performed a discriminant analysis\(^2\) using 30 key survey measures as the independent variables and sample type as the dependent variable. A key test of discrimination is the ability to predict group membership on the basis of the independent variables that went into the analysis. This test revealed that, overall, the three samples are very similar. While 85% of the river sample cases were predicted correctly, only 22% of the router and 8% of the targeted panel samples were classified correctly. In effect, most of the opt-in panel members look like the river sample respondents.

We also looked at the degree of correlation in the responses across the samples, another indication of similarity. Figure 1 shows that the responses from any one sample are highly correlated with the answers from the other two samples.

![Figure 1: Correlation of Survey Responses across Samples](image)

We also looked at the magnitude of the differences at the individual item level. Since even small differences could be statistically significant, we wanted to look at the degree to which differences might have managerial significance, and so we examined the distribution of the size of the differences.

As Figure 2 reveals, most of the differences in proportion of respondents selecting a particular answer between any two of the samples are less than one percentage point.

![Figure 2](image)

**Some Key Differences Between Samples**

Despite the fact that the samples are very similar in terms of key measures\(^3\), there are a few notable differences between the intercept sample and the double opt-in panel respondents. Differences that reflect a possible association between either the sample source or propensity to respond and one or more survey measures are most important. For example, intercept respondents are more likely to play online games and less likely to have participated in another online survey in the previous week (Figure 3). Respondents (regardless of sample type) who play online games are twice as likely to say they are “very

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\(^{2}\)Discriminant analysis (DA) and logistic regression are two multivariate statistical methods for determining the overall difference between two or more groups compared on several variable simultaneously. Either method can be applied to this case. DA revealed two components (or discriminant functions), but all of the item-level coefficients are small, indicating that none of the items included in the analysis discriminate between the three samples.

\(^{3}\)These survey measures included household composition, technology ownership, social networking, awareness of iPad advertising, and measures of website visitation, online game-playing, and past survey participation.
interested” in purchasing an iPad as respondents who do not play online games (15% and 7%, respectively). If we consider the results from only one of our three sample types we might under or overestimate purchase interest in the iPad.

Comparisons to External Benchmarks

It is common practice in survey research to statistically “adjust” the results by post-stratification or weighting of the survey data. The rationale for weighting lies in the presumption of an association between one or more of the survey measures and one or more variables that define the sample (e.g., age, sex, education and income) such that deviations from the population distribution for these variables will lead to biased estimation of the population values. For example, if the proportion of self-identified Republicans in the population is 40% and the sample proportion is 50%, any measure of opinion-based on the unweighted sample is likely to be biased in the direction of the Republican point of view. If there is no association between a sample characteristic and the survey measure of interest, then weighting has no impact on the estimate of that measure. However, weighting does impact the statistical power of the sample.

We did not apply any weights to our data, but we did set quotas so that the samples would reflect the U.S. population with respect to age and sex. Had this been a sponsored market research study for a client, we may well have applied weights to some of the other demographic variables, such as education or race, to minimize bias in our estimates. Because the size of the weight for any one characteristic depends on the magnitude of the difference between the sample and population values for that characteristic, we compare the characteristics of our samples with population estimates based on either the U.S. Census or the American Community Survey.

Overall, differences between the three online samples are small compared to the differences between the online samples and key external benchmarks. In particular, these online respondents are better educated, less likely to be African American, and somewhat less likely to be married than are members of the general U.S. population. The difference is most notable with respect to education; 45.6% of U.S. adults have a high school diploma or less, compared to only 20.5% for the combined online sample. It’s worth noting that the river sample has a higher proportion of individuals in this category (27.7%) than either the router (18.7%) or panel (21.8%) samples. Comparisons to total U.S. for selected characteristics representing education, marital status, race and income are displayed in Figure 4.

Consumer intercept sampling appears to tap into slightly different demographics from the opt-in panel, but there are differences in the samples that result from the two different opt-in methods as well.

The 2008 American Community Survey (ACS) imputes income for respondents who refuse to provide this information. In our survey, approximately 8% of all respondents chose not to provide income (the proportion was highest—11.5%—for intercept respondents). Had we imputed income in the same way as ACS, our estimates would be closer to those for total US from the ACS.
Potential Impact of Blending

Because we have multiple sample sources, the best solution may be to blend the results by combining the samples. For example, we asked respondents if they owned a Blu-ray high definition DVD player. For the intercept sample, 18% answered “yes;” 24% of router sample respondents and 20% of the traditional panel sample answered “yes.” A simple weighted blending of the three samples gives us an overall estimate of 20% for Blu-ray penetration (Figure 5). Moreover, based on a bootstrap analysis we performed, we know that there’s a good chance (at least 60%) that the penetration for Blu-ray DVD is between 19% and 21%.

While we did not test the effect of different blending mechanisms, we did perform a small scale bootstrap analysis of the intercept and router samples, drawing 20 separate random subsamples of 500 cases from each of the full samples. In bootstrapping we treat the survey sample as if it is the population for purposes of estimation and then draw repeated samples from this population to estimate standard errors. There are many varieties of bootstrapping and re-sampling. For simplicity, we sampled at random without replacement.

Our analysis suggests that most of the estimates based on smaller samples would fall within a fairly narrow range. However, we were somewhat surprised to see that even with random samples from a defined population many of the bootstrap samples yielded estimates that fell outside the 95% confidence interval that classical sampling theory would predict. Based on classical theory, we would expect only one of the twenty random samples to exceed the 95% confidence interval for that measure whereas, depending on the survey question, we saw as many as 50% of the bootstrap samples providing values outside the 95% confidence interval. Of course, by drawing many more bootstrap samples we would expect the results to look more like classical sampling theory predicts. However, this finding does suggest that a small number of true probability samples from a known population may exhibit considerable “inconsistency” in some measures due solely to random sampling error.

IMPLICATIONS FOR ONLINE MARKETING

Implications for Decision Making

The true test for any comparison of sampling methods is whether the results obtained from the different methods would lead to different managerial decisions. We found that, for the most part, differences in answers to the survey questions are small (less than one percentage point for frequency measures), suggesting that in most cases each sample would lead to the same conclusion or decision.

Implications for Online Sampling

There’s no question that online survey research is here to stay, and no question that a variety of sampling methods, including consumer intercept/river, opt-in panels and online communities are needed to meet the emerging and future needs of market researchers. This research should increase confidence in the results obtained from different online sampling methods. Additionally, the results indicate that blending samples obtained by different methods is one way to reduce some of the coverage limitations associated with any single sampling method or source. Blended sampling offers a solution to a variety of sampling challenges. In particular, the inclusion of intercept respondents can mitigate panel capacity and geographic limitations.

This experiment by necessity was limited in scope. We
could not test alternative methods of implementing intercept sampling (comparing diverse sets of website partners, for example) or alternative schemes for dynamic routing of the double opt-in panel respondents. Differences in the set of partner websites or the means of assigning respondents to a survey in the router might introduce additional sampling variation. This is another strong argument in favor of blended sample. At the same time, it is important that the market research industry in general and online sampling and data collection firms in particular continue to conduct research into the impact of alternative sampling sources and procedures.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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David recently joined KJT Group, LLC as Senior Vice President and Chief Science Officer. Previously he was Executive Vice President and Chief Scientist at Harris Interactive, where he headed the marketing science and research methodology teams and served on the firm’s senior management team.

David specializes in the design and implementation of fact-based solutions in the areas of innovation, pricing, and customer experience for clients in a wide variety of industries including FMCG, automotive, healthcare, technology, and financial services. David is an expert in survey design, a recognized thought leader in marketing research and a frequent presenter at conferences sponsored by ESOMAR, AMA and the Advertising Research Foundation. He is on the editorial review board for Marketing Research and recently served as chair of the program committee for the Advanced Research Techniques Forum. David writes a blog, The Customer Knowledge Advantage, devoted to the practice of turning customer insights into competitive success.

In addition to KJT Group and Harris Interactive, David has held senior positions at Stratford Associates and the Gordon S. Black Corporation. He began his market research career at AT&T. David earned his doctorate in Social Psychology at Boston University and a B.A. in psychology at the University of Michigan.

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Onboarding for Success

by Camille Nicita, Chief Operating Officer, Gongos Research

Camille discussed Gongos Research’s approach to onboarding at the CASRO Management Conference, May 16-17, in Chicago.

Talent attraction and retention are arguably two of the most important aspects in running a business. They are part of an engine that must continuously churn in order to fuel the growth of an organization. Now, imagine needing to kick that engine into overdrive because your business is growing at a faster pace than what your employee base and recruiting process can manage. Great problem to have, right? The answer is “yes,” but not without the risk of client dissatisfaction and employee burn-out.

Throughout the past 18 months, Gongos Research has personified this kind of growth dilemma. We had added 35-40% capacity to our employee base to align with our ever-increasing project demands. However, as many managers know, an influx of new people is not an immediate fix in a situation where revenue is growing in tandem. In fact, adding new employees during a time of escalating sales can actually be a conflicting force for an organization because the time needed to train the newcomers places more responsibility on an already over-worked staff and adds a risk of losing talented and more seasoned people. In addition, we realized that we were spending considerable time and money on recruiting “just the right people,” but that we had nothing formal in place and no consistency when new employees arrived to begin working with us.

But from challenges, new ideas are often born.

“I began my marketing research career at a small company—just me and the owner—so going from a company of two to 100+ was a huge adjustment. Our onboarding phase not only helped me adjust to the dynamics of working with a much larger group of people, but it put me in an advantageous position to grow individually and excel within the company.”

– Dave Loney, Senior Project Coordinator

From Left: Danielle Brinker, Senior Project Coordinator, Financial & Diversified | Curtis Kaisner, Director of Qualitative Research | Dave Loney, Senior Project Coordinator, Transportation & Technology
Because we didn’t have a formal or centralized structure in place—and no continuity with each employee’s first 90 days, we sought another route. We created an official role of an Onboarding Manager to put rigor around those first crucial days of employment.

Our objectives were simple:

■ Accelerate the learning curve for each new hire.

■ Ensure consistency for new employees no matter where they land within the organization.

■ Gain efficiencies by centralizing training with a single manager while simultaneously lifting the burden of training from current employees.

■ Ensure that we preserve our core values and culture amid the flood of new personalities entering our company.

While a role such as onboarding may traditionally be thought of as a Human Resource function, for us it was not. An experienced fellow researcher and tenured colleague with a passion for training, who exemplified our company values, became our answer to this need.

THE COMPROMISE

For Gongos Research, a role such as this comprises roughly 30-60% of a typical work week, depending on our hiring situation. Of course, a company must be willing to sacrifice critical billable hours to support an onboarding function. For us there was a clear advantage—this person had walked in the day-to-day shoes of our researchers—and that’s very important.

THE EXPERIENCE

The onboarding experience is a great balance between learning and doing. Like most companies, it’s not effective to have employees solely “in training” for any great length of time – and most new employees do not want that, either. Prior to an employee’s start date, an Onboarding Manager works with the employee’s designated team to identify initial work assignments for the new hire. Once the employee starts, he or she spends a good portion of the first few days in in-depth, on-site training. After that, this training becomes a backdrop to more team or disciplinary-specific training that is matched to the work assignments given. Of course, there are times when new employees are brought in midstream on a project. In this case, the goal becomes to provide specific training—to be quickly followed by an opportunity to apply it—in order to increase comprehension.

An Onboarding Manager is also responsible for establishing and facilitating mentoring opportunities for each new employee. Our objective is to be proactive in order to accelerate learning, so identifying an initial mentoring opportunity occurs prior to the employee start date. That mentorship involves pairing a new employee with an experienced peer and identifying shadowing opportunities. The mentor trains the new employee through every step of his or her first project. In turn, the Onboarding Manager regularly monitors the relationship to ensure the process is working and the new employee is getting the feedback necessary for growth.

THE RESULTS

We have had this system in place for a little over a year now, and early feedback tells us that our onboarding process is working. When new hires begin with us, they can feel the pre-planning that went into preparing for their arrival. We continue to hear unsolicited feedback that this proactive effort is resulting in a consistently positive experience for new employees.

In addition, the impact of designating an individual whose sole mission is to train, manage and mentor new employees to their 90-day potential is clearly efficiency. Project staff can focus on producing rather than closely monitoring and coaching the new employee, or coordinating and facilitating training.

Our onboarding role has allowed my team to focus on our top priority—serving our clients. Plus, it gives me great peace of mind. I can count on the fact that each employee is receiving consistent training and messaging relative to our culture and processes—which provides added harmony and efficiencies for my team and the company as a whole.

– Cheryl Halverson, Vice President, Retail & Services
There is another key benefit: peace of mind. We now are ensuring that our most precious resource is being handled with care and attention during the critical first 90 days of employment.

MORE RESIDUAL BENEFITS

Longitudinal learnings from a single perspective make possible the anticipation of roadblocks and/or challenges, as well as adjustments in processes and trainings in an effort to get new people over the hurdle more quickly.

- Speedier and more consistent assessment of new employees’ post-hire fit within the company.
- An immediate feeling of “team” and camaraderie aids in the focus to help new employees build relationships with each other, and learn the ropes of working with current employees.
- Preservation and perpetuation of a strong company culture, as new employees witness it and have a better chance of modeling these new behaviors themselves.
- Perceived reality by new hires that they are a significant addition to our company, and that they have an internal champion whose goal is to help them become successful in their new role.

While a decision to add a company position like this requires planning, collaboration, and cost investment, it’s surely a means of “short-term pain for long-term gain.” And until the option of cloning our best employees becomes a reality, we’re willing to make this trade-off.

As business owners and leaders forging new growth in marketing research, I hope you, too, can find ways to think outside the proverbial box. Get that “think engine” running and continue pondering ways to foster employee growth and company culture to meet the challenges of our ever-evolving industry.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Camille Nicita

Formerly head of the Retail & Services group, Camille’s philosophy of managing to people’s strengths created a model for success throughout the entire company. Promoting collaboration, consistency, and synergy among cross-functional teams, Camille has worked to optimize the company’s capacity and performance for our clients. In 2008, Camille began to drive an even more progressive approach to fostering talent within the company. Forging new practices in recruitment, development and retention helped to further support organizational growth. As a member of the Leadership Team, her contributions to Gongos Research include providing insight on company strategy. As a leader, she helps propel the company to a position of strength in the marketing research industry. As a practitioner, she understands client needs and works with the teams to enhance the scope of the client-team relationship. Camille’s passion for the research industry is evident through her collaboration with industry peers to help shape a new Master’s level program at Michigan State University, and through supporting the University of Michigan’s Institute for Survey Research. She is also a frequent speaker at industry events for IIR, PDMA, QRCA, and CASRO. She earned her BBA at the University of Michigan and her MBA at Wayne State University.
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20th century marketing (may it rest in peace) was largely about being on-message, about getting talking points consistently right. Or at least that’s how corporate clients tended to view things. Agencies went along to one degree or another. In contrast, 21st century marketing will be very different. With ever gathering force during the past two decades, breakthroughs in brain science have confirmed what we all instinctively know in our gut but often don’t admit to in business: people are primarily emotional decision-makers. This book is about how 21st century marketing can realize success by being on-emotion, first and foremost. Being on-message remains a vital but secondary strategy, a way to plug in just enough “facts” that the rational mind, searching to justify a choice, can find them in the marketing and, therefore, feel confident about the purchase.

What do I mean by being on-emotion? I mean creating the right emotions for a particular person, at the right time, and in the right way to fit the positioning of a given offer (whether it be a product, service, or experience).

By degrees here, I’m trying to tell you what this book is about and what you, my reader, will get from it. Let me do so, first, by telling you the basis of my authority to write this book. I’m no genius, but I do enjoy the advantage of being a Marxist, or more precisely: a Groucho Marxist. I’ll explain; in an old Marx Brothers movie, Groucho says to his stuffy dowager nemesis, Margaret Dumont, “Who are you going to believe: me or your own eyes?” If you’ve been on earth for more than a few days, I think you’ll agree with me that “your own eyes” is a better way to go than traditional market research, which depends on verbal “lip service” input.

People lie, consciously or unconsciously. But fortunately you will become privy to a natural, non-invasive (no sensors) way to figure out people’s true emotional reactions. Then your company can market to consumers more effectively. This non-invasive system is called facial coding, and it consists of reading people’s emotions through how the muscles on their faces move in combination to reveal seven core emotions. Facial coding goes across cultures; even a person born blind reveals through their facial muscle movements their emotions in the same way you or I do. Given a “wow” like that, it’s no surprise that facial coding has entered popular culture through books like Malcolm Gladwell’s Blink and a TV show like Fox’s primetime hit, Lie to Me.

For over a decade now, my company, Sensory Logic, has used this unique research tool to get at how people feel their feelings, rather than think their feelings by answering survey questions.
Is there value in what I’m offering? I think so. The upheaval in the marketing realm is so great that columnist Bob Garfield of Advertising Age has described it as a profession that “doesn’t even know what it is anymore.” The Age of Interruption is over. The Digital Revolution, led by social media, is upon us, and amid all the technology, the gadgets, the new digital wiring, few of us know for sure what to do anymore. I am here to reassure you that through measuring and managing emotions, there is, indeed, a way forward.

Let’s begin by understanding how people make decisions, because, as you will come to understand, at the deepest, most profound level, creating an emotional connection first provides the solution. From engagement to brand loyalty, everything is feelings based. Think of this book as an advocate for combining the new digital wiring with some really old wiring. I’m talking about the human brain. But in truth I should be talking about human brains, plural, because we have three of them. As scientists have known for decades now, there’s the original sensory (reptilian) brain, an emotional (mammalian) brain (both millions of years old) and finally, since some 100,000 years ago, a rational (human) brain, where our verbal abilities reside.

In business terms, this means that first-mover advantage rests overwhelmingly with the older, sensory-emotive way in which your marketing connects with consumers. Creating a strong sensory-emotive connection is at the heart of making money. In contrast, a rational, on-message approach is vital, but secondary in that it provides the intellectual alibi. By that I mean: give people a way to be interested (leveraging the sensory brain), a reason to care (leveraging the emotional brain), and then and only then a confirming reason to believe (leveraging the rational brain).

Although I love Luke Sullivan’s book on advertising, Hey, Whipple, Squeeze This, I’m simply too curious to entirely accept his verdict: “Why most of it stinks remains a mystery.” What follows in About Face is why it’s no longer as much of a mystery to me. Using 10 rules to guide you, the book addresses the following key questions: how to create interest, from increasing your brand’s stopping power to establishing a powerful brand personality; how you can lock in interest, enhancing recall and consideration; and finally, how you can seal the deal, affirming the value and trust you’ll need for your marketing to be persuasive.

About Face: Ten Secrets to Emotionally Effective Advertising

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The Seven Question Meeting

by Christopher J. Frank, Vice President of Business-to-Business and Communications Research, American Express
Paul Magnone, Vice President of Business Development and Alliances, Openet Telecom

Chris and Paul presented at the 36th Annual CASRO Conference, October 19-21, Palm Beach, Florida.

We’re business people first and authors second. We know what it’s like to work on the front lines—making decisions, leading teams, and juggling multiple priorities. We realize that your time is limited, and that you have to shift your focus frequently throughout the working day. Like you, we have had to sit in a conference room trying to follow a presentation when twenty minutes into the meeting the presenter finally makes it to slide 4 of a 32-slide deck. At least you can read this one, unlike the others, which were crammed with numbers, graphs and charts. We have all looked around wondering if anyone else is following the presentation...another ‘spray n’ pray’ meeting ... the presenter sprays a lot of slides and prays there is one relevant piece of information. If you ever felt like this, you are not alone.

For many of us, we find ourselves in these types of meetings every day and this is just the beginning. We have sales and profit numbers, forecasted business trends, projections, investment cases, public filings and thick strategy decks. Beyond that, Twitter, Facebook, Google+ and countless other networks give us direct access from potential and current customers.

We certainly do not lack information today, but the irony is we feel less informed. We work in a culture that worships numbers and rightly so – facts and figures hold weight. But to quote one of our favorites, “people use statistics as a drunken man uses lampposts – for support rather than for illumination” (Andrew Lang).

We have become a world of data hounds. It does not matter what size the entity is: Small business or large, well-funded start-up or garage business—they all have one recurring theme. Just about everyone these days suffers from information overload. We have seen innovations missed, opportunities passed by and customers lost because people do not know how to discover the relevant facts, develop insights and deliver them with impact.

We said enough is enough. There must be a better way.

The challenge isn’t how to stop all those emails, meetings, conference calls and fat reports; that’s impossible. The question is what to do with them. How do you find the truly essential nuggets of information and use them with confidence to make decisions and effectively lead your teams. The answer ironically enough is found in asking questions.
1. What is the essential question? Reveal indispensable information.
2. Where is The Customer’s North Star? Illuminate the unexpected.
6. Who are Our Swing Voters? Revive the customer conversation.

We must have considered hundreds of questions before settling on this short list that forms the backbone of our approach. And although each question asks for a different set of facts, a common thread connects them all: the search for the one critical piece of information you need to move the project, or your business, forward. Toward that end, the questions are designed to let you know what the customer really wants, what the end user will buy, and how you will provide it.

We live in a time when information is exploding and often feels invasive or intimidating. In reality, we are fortunate to have this staggering amount of information at our finger tips, but we need to master the fire hose of information. We developed seven basic questions – not complex analytical questions we heard in B-school, but a product of our combined business experience working at IBM, American Express, Microsoft and a few startups. By answering them together, we will ease the frustration of anyone who has wasted time reading reports that create more questions than they answer.

At the end of the day, there are a select few who understand the power of data, know the questions to ask, connect it to their larger business strategy and use it to engage customers and achieve revenue objectives.

Adapted from *Drinking from the Fire Hose: Making Smarter Decisions Without Drowning in Information*, published by Portfolio/Penguin. Copyright Christopher J Frank and Paul F. Magnone, 2011.

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ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Christopher J. Frank

Chris is vice president of business-to-business and communications research at American Express, where he is responsible for advertising, brand, and business-to-business research. He is a respected speaker and leader in market research and advertising worldwide. Prior to joining American Express, Chris spent ten years at Microsoft, as senior director of corporate research. His tenure included worldwide initiatives in customer satisfaction, public relations, brand, naming, image, and communications research. Chris has won industry awards for his accomplishments in analyzing the swing voter consumer, developing a framework for effective branding, and building a social media measurement system. As a recipient of the Wall Street Journal Achievement Award, Chris has been recognized for his entrepreneurial vision, drive, and innovative approach within the technology, consumer, and service industries.

Paul Magnone

Paul is director of global business development and alliances at Openet Telecom, a global telecommunications software and consulting firm, where he is responsible for executive leadership of Openet’s global partner initiatives. Prior, he was a senior leader at IBM for 21 years driving growth programs including the launch of four new global consulting businesses. He has been recognized for his ability to build and manage strategic alliances with Fortune 100 organizations and with US, European, and Israeli venture capital firms.
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Scanning various industry conferences and blogs, it’s clear that researchers are finally thinking about mobile as an important channel for research. This comes as no surprise, as the CDC’s National Center for Health Statistics reported in December 2010 that during the period January – June 2011, 26.6% of U.S. households will have only cell phones (no “land lines”). The same study showed a staggering 51.3% when looking at the 25- to 29-year-old bracket.

In the wake of this trend, it’s clear that technology and social media are affecting major change on how the consumers interact with media and brands. As these shifts are occurring, so too are their expectations of how they will be able to engage with a brand.

While researchers are comfortable thinking about mobile as a method to round out their sample or address coverage bias by doing the same surveys on a different screen, we have found it less common for researchers to take the next step and actually reconstruct the way they are doing their research to meet the expectations of how mobile information requests, survey based or otherwise, can add facts and insights from the person who is a consumer, a shopper, a brand builder, a physician, a patient and a citizen. Such an adaptation and reconstruction of where we obtain research means not just adapting to mobile phones, but targeting them so that not only are consumer expectations met, but so too are brand insight and action objectives.

Consequently, Knowledge Networks embarked on a strategic initiative in the Fall of 2010 to explore mobile opportunities in research. The initiative centered on the belief that panel members could be a conduit for much more than just answers to survey questions. The objective was to establish how mobile devices could be used not only for traditional information gathering but also ‘on-the-go’ and ‘in the moment’ research.

Knowledge Networks took a methodical approach to this task, as outlined in the following framework:

1. Secure executive sponsorship
2. Identify client key business drivers with respect to mobile
3. Review deployment options
4. Determine key criteria

...we have found it less common for researchers to actually reconstruct the way they are doing their research to meet the expectations of how mobile information requests can add facts and insights...
5. Consider build vs. buy
6. Perform market scanning for a technology partner
7. Embark on staff education initiatives
8. Find a pilot

The key in finding an appropriate pilot was to search for a company in a category which inherently had elements where the point of experience, consumption or environment mattered. The pilot client was a major producer of ingredients and packaged foods in the United States.

A sample of 10,422 members of Knowledge Networks’ online panel was screened for Smartphone qualification as well as providing mobile contact information. The screener had a completion rate of 47.6% and of those who completed the screener, 33.8% fully qualified and opted-in for mobile App research.

For the research approach, we transformed what was historically a projective exercise (“what do you think you will do this holiday season?”) to become an in-moment exercise (“take us along with you the next time you...”).

The research collected what the respondent was currently baking, who the baked item was intended for, the recipe, how baking the item made the respondent feel and how the ingredients were chosen. We also requested pictures of the baking process and the final product.

While we had expected to be in field for 7-10 days, we had actually filled quota within 2 days, with 64% filled within the first 5 hours of launch. Keeping in mind that this was a task- or activity-based exercise, the results were astounding to us.

What was also astounding was the level of intimacy and the holistic views we achieved from our respondents through the combination of qualitative and quantitative elements.

We attribute the success of the project to having made the research a conversation with the respondent that was...
personal, completely portable and available, contextual, and relevant. These are four aspects which when deployed appropriately via Mobile Apps can achieve a holistic view of the consumer experience.

Most importantly, in the client’s eyes we:

1. Found a novel and unexpected way to grow their business
2. Uncovered a way to emotionally connect with their audience
3. Gathered valuable and unique content from their key customers
4. Provided evidence of their target market using their product in real time
5. Revealed the significance of how emotion and gifting rises to the top in importance for their category in such contexts

In other modes, respondents could previously only guess at what their intentions, motivations and activities were or would be in the future. Where we had previously talked about in-the-moment and on-the-go possibilities, these results changed our mindset – As a consequence, we now view the mobile channel as our instrument for “recall-busting” research.

For the full CASRO conference paper on making the move to App-based mobile research, visit [http://bit.ly/p0uPPF](http://bit.ly/p0uPPF)

**Update:** Further to this project which was first presented at the CASRO Online Research Conference in March, 2011, Knowledge Networks has done much to explore the potential for mobile apps in other categories and with new audiences. There seemed to be promise for B2B audiences, and more specifically, we have forayed into connecting with highly specialized physicians via mobile apps. The initial response in this oncologist group has also been very promising. The within survey response rate of 38% of qualified oncologists completing the mobile survey is higher than in past research with this physician cohort. It should be noted that the research participation request was longitudinal in nature and oncologists were instructed to complete the survey after meeting with each of their next 1 to 4 patients who would be moving onto a second line of treatment. On average we received reporting on 3.6 patient visits per oncologist and 80% agreed to give us a voice recorded open ended response which added to the insight obtained from the research.

As has become a theme with this mode, we also gained some surprising insights such as:

We could determine the impact of patient emotions and attitudes on the oncologist’s second line regimen decisions as well as gauge the amount of influence patients’ clinical characteristics have on oncologist’s second line regimen choice. The client as a result gained a much clearer view of the treatment pathways and what to do about it than they would have obtained from more traditional research alone.

Furthermore, when at the end of a recent Physician survey we asked for feedback about this mode of research, respondents replied with such comments as “This is a pleasant experience and it’s nice to be able to complete this on my iPhone wherever I am and at my own convenience” and “Exciting and interesting and relatively easy to do”.

These results, coupled with our experience to date confirm that mobile research can indeed help us tell clients something they did not know before that leads them to new actions large and small.
ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Patricia Graham
Patricia is Chief Strategy Officer at Knowledge Networks and since 2001 she has held several senior executive roles with responsibility for managing both the line and corporate functions of the business. In her current role as Chief Strategy Officer, she is responsible for identifying the strategic direction of the firm along with capabilities, alliances and partnerships that drive future growth. Patricia has extensive senior executive experience in general management, strategic marketing and product development, operations, and expanding profitable client relationships in information and technology based businesses. As Executive Vice President, Consulting Services at Nielsen, Patricia led a 1000+-person organization that turned around declining financial performance and had hands-on involvement with Fortune 500 consumer packaged goods clients, most notably, Kraft. Prior to that, she was Senior Vice President at IRI establishing the introductory, and stage two, sales and marketing success of BehaviorScan & Media Services. Prior to joining Knowledge Networks, Patricia applied her expertise on the client-side as Executive Vice President/Operating Chairperson, of INTERLINQ Software, and President & COO of start-up R2R, Inc. She holds a Master’s in political science from Rutgers University.

Sean Conry
Sean, Vice President at Techneos, has been partnering with research and marketing professionals to implement technology-driven research solutions for close to 10 years. He has worked with top-10 global international research companies to improve their fieldwork infrastructure, has built custom online panels for Fortune 500 companies, and has implemented diary research and mobile feedback solutions for various commercial, non-profit and academic organizations. Sean has been a featured presenter for the MRA, MRIA, CASRO, the Canadian Evaluation Society and he is a past president of the board of the BC Chapter of the MRIA.
Se Habla...

...opinions, attitudes and behaviors of the new American mainstream – U.S. Hispanics

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Let’s Bring Robust Text Analysis to Primary Research

By Theo Downes-Le Guin, Chief Research Officer, Market Strategies International

Theo presented at the CASRO Technology Conference, June 2-3, at the Millennium Broadway, New York City.

As market research undergoes various transformations, one of the most striking is how we handle large quantities of text. This challenge is presented by “big data” sources (such as call center records) and social media listening, both of which produce lots of essentially qualitative, textual information, and can be analyzed alone or in tandem with primary research. Software platforms for text analysis have exploded in number and sophistication over the past decade. We are at the start of a period in which the best qualities of human and software-based text analysis can come together for a high quality, cost effective result—if we handle it right.

At the same time, traditional primary qualitative research barely seems to notice these opportunities. Most primary qualitative research today is analyzed with less discipline and rigor than it was 20 years ago. Very few of the platforms and lessons of automated textual analysis used routinely in survey verbatim coding, listening research and in the half-billion-dollar business intelligence market have seeped into primary qualitative analysis. But focus groups and other primary qualitative modes are, from an analysis perspective, heavily reliant on text and should be good candidates for these new methods. On the whole, text from “asking” and “listening” research differs more in quantity than it does in quality.

At Market Strategies International, we’ve done some small-scale experimentation on how we could push these disciplines together. In one recent experiment, we conducted analysis of 20 qualitative (depth interview) transcripts using two independent approaches. In one case, the qualitative interviewers—both senior researchers—used the traditional approach of reviewing their notes, tapes and transcripts to produce a report. In the other case, an analyst completely unfamiliar with the project and subject matter analyzed the transcripts using a qualitative text analysis software platform (MaxQDA).

Both analyses yielded extremely similar insights for the client. If you think of this experiment as a version of an inter-coder reliability test, we demonstrated that both analytic processes yielded highly reproducible findings (high reliability) and did about an equally good job of representing all the findings (high content validity).

The process and workflow, however, is markedly different. In the software-driven approach, set-up is much of the total time for analysis; it takes a lot of work before you can start to generate findings, though once set-up is complete the findings come fast and furious. This is problematic in a world in which toplines and real-time dashboards are increasingly important. At the same time, scalability of software approach to large qualitative dataset is much

Qualitative researchers seeking to apply the tools and principles of unstructured text analysis need to rethink the way they analyze. They have to identify when robust, quantitative views of content are appropriate and when impressionistic analysis will suffice.
greater—we could have analyzed 200 interviews in not much more time than it took to analyze 20.

At the same time, software can be tone-deaf to nuanced use of language; relying solely on the software approach without input from the interviewers would have missed nuances of tone and body language, producing (for example) incorrect findings when irony is coded literally or when emotional valence is ignored. This is exactly the same challenge listening platforms face when coding sentiment and intensity on a purely automated basis.

In another experiment using social media listening, we examined consumer discussions around rate hikes from a regional energy utility. Social media excluding Facebook produced about 900 pieces of content during the analysis period. This content was heavily influenced by mainstream news and corporate content in blogs, forums and aggregator sites, and thus sentiment was mainly neutral. Facebook, on the other hand, generated about 2,200 pieces of content—a fact that the monitoring software essentially missed, because the Facebook “fan” page misspelled the company name (we found our way to the appropriate pages just by luck, and manually). On Facebook, the client’s rate hikes led to creation of a few groups that produced a large quantity of wall and discussion posts/replies. Facebook content was often influenced in reaction to mainstream news and corporate content, but very little mainstream content was simply recycled. On the contrary, Facebook posts were personal and emotional and their sentiment almost wholly negative. Content was heavily influenced by a limited number of more active participants. Had we ignored the postings of these participants, our understanding of how the client’s rate hikes were viewed would have been entirely different.

These two experiments underscore two factors that are obvious but significant in the current market research landscape. First, we have a generation of excellent qualitative researchers who are simply not trained to take advantage of software platforms that can greatly enhance their work product. Qualitative researchers seeking to apply the tools and principles of unstructured text analysis need to rethink the way they analyze. They have to identify when robust, quantitative views of content are appropriate and when impressionistic analysis will suffice. In cases where something more than impressionism is called for, researchers must learn to use text analysis software and rethink the report workflow. Second, no text analysis platform can completely substitute for an attentive, experienced researcher in generating actionable research insights.

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

**Theo Downes-Le Guin**

Theo has spent more than 20 years in market and policy research, specializing in brand equity and new product development. Before merging with Market Strategies International, Theo co-founded Doxus, a research consultancy providing marketing and product strategy to leading technology corporations. Previously Theo managed market analysis and corporate brand research programs at Intel and various health policy survey programs at RAND. Theo holds a Master’s in applied social research from the University of Michigan and has published and presented on a variety of research topics including internet panel data quality, online qualitative research and sensitive question-asking.
2012 Legislation Outlook: Federal Privacy Legislation, State Physician Payment Statutes Are Top Focal Points

By Duane Berlin, Lev & Berlin, P.C.
Russell Anderson, Lev & Berlin, P.C.

Federal privacy legislation and physician payment statutes continue to be the areas we are most closely watching as 2012 approaches. In addition, the U.S. House of Representatives is considering legislation that would revise the Telephone Consumer Protection Act (“TCPA”) to permit expanded use of autodialers to call cell phones. It is unclear, however, whether that bill in its current form will help the research industry. Lastly, a pending class action lawsuit against ComScore reiterates the importance of using proper notice and consent procedures in the handling of personally identifiable information.

FEDERAL PRIVACY LEGISLATION

Currently, there are at least 14 proposed privacy bills circulating in Congress. The bills can roughly be sorted into three categories:

1. **Baseline federal privacy legislation.** These bills would impose EU-style restrictions on the collection and use of personal data, including the requirement to give consumers notice and receive their consent. The Kerry-McCain proposal is the best known of these bills.

2. **Data breach notification and data security legislation.** These bills would impose standardized federal breach notification as well as security requirements. These rules would, by and large, preempt the ever-growing web of state legislation, such as the Massachusetts’ data protection law, and therefore should actually make it significantly easier for businesses to understand their compliance obligations.

3. **Do-not-track legislation.** These bills would regulate online tracking of consumers’ use of the Internet and require the FTC to create an online opt-out mechanism. These “do not track” bills would each allow the FTC to except “commonly accepted commercial practices,” such as analyzing data for quality assurance, product improvement and fraud prevention.

While most of these bills would impose additional obligations on the research industry, we believe that none of them would impose material impediments or interference with the normal course of research business, and in several cases could actually prove beneficial.

While most of these bills would impose additional obligations on the research industry, we believe that none of them would impose material impediments or interference with the normal course of research business, and in several cases could actually prove beneficial. With the current gridlock in Congress it does not appear likely that any proposal will gain sufficient support to earn passage this year, but given the enthusiasm for proposals on both sides of the aisle, we will continue to monitor for developments.
PHYSICIAN PAYMENTS

Several states have made substantial revisions to their physician payment statutes and regulations in the past year. Most notably, Vermont expanded its existing physician payment bill to become the first and only state to make the payment of compensation to health care providers for survey participation explicitly illegal. More positively, Maine repealed its entire statute earlier this year. Also, the District of Columbia, as a result of actions by CASRO, has published proposed regulations to significantly loosen its restrictions and is on track to finalize and implement those regulations in the next month or two. If D.C. approves its proposed regulations, the only state to have a statute that broadly affects the research industry will be Vermont.

So long as the identity of the physician respondent is blinded to the manufacturer, payments made to physicians as compensation for participation in market research are not reportable under the federal Physician Payment Sunshine Act, D.C.’s AccessRx Act or Minnesota’s similar statute. Massachusetts, which has considered repealing its own physician payment reporting statute several times, also exempts market research payments when the research is conducted in a double blind fashion.

FEDERAL CELL PHONE AUTODIALER BILL: HR 3035

On September 22nd, Congressmen Terry and Towns introduced H.R. 3035 – the Mobile Informational Call Act of 2011 (“HR 3035”). If passed, the bill would amend the Telephone Consumer Protection Act (“TCPA”) to permit autodialing of cell phones for all “commercial purposes,” other than solicitations. Currently, the TCPA bars the use of automatic random and sequential dialing equipment to call any telephone number assigned to a cellular telephone service for any purpose other than calls made by the wireless carrier in connection with the provision of cellular telephone service.

HR 3035 has the potential to make it much easier to conduct telephone research; however, the key will be whether market research and public opinion polling constitute a “commercial purpose.” Under current FCC and FTC regulations, polling is considered a non-commercial purpose, and this treatment has led to beneficial exceptions under several other rules, including CAN-SPAM and Do-Not-Call. Consequently, whether HR 3035 will open up the use of autodialers to cell phones for research is far from clear.

This bill has quickly proven to be very controversial and, based on our impressions of a recent committee hearing, HR 3035 likely does not have the votes to pass. If HR 3035 does pass, CASRO intends to ask the FCC to craft regulations that permit autodialer use for research.

COMSCORE CLASS ACTION

ComScore was sued in a class action lawsuit filed in Illinois federal court in August 2011 alleging a number of violations of state and federal law. Each allegation in the suit, Harris v. ComScore, Inc., ultimately centers on whether ComScore downloaded its robust data collection software on research participants’ computers without first adequately disclosing and receiving consent to the full scope of the collection. Based on recent precedent and our own review of the complaint, it appears that ComScore may be able to deflect the federal claims, but that the state law claim may prove more difficult. Many CASRO members use tracking applications that have similarities to those at issue in the Harris litigation. Accordingly, this case serves as another reminder that appropriate disclosures and consent are required, both under federal and state law as well as the CASRO Code, before deploying such technologies.

The plaintiffs in Harris have alleged that ComScore failed to adequately disclose the full scope of the company’s collection of data from research participants’ computers and therefore that the collection was not “authorized.” According to the complaint, ComScore’s software is capable of collecting almost all data regarding a participant’s use of the Internet, including usernames and passwords, search engine queries, websites and advertisements viewed, credit card numbers and goods purchased.
In addition, the plaintiffs assert that ComScore’s software collects information from network computers and is difficult to safely uninstall. The plaintiffs contend that ComScore dupes participants into downloading the software through bundling with other free software, such as a screen saver program, without providing users with a full understanding of the scope of collection. As a result, the plaintiffs claim that ComScore violated three federal statutes, the Stored Communications Act, the Electronic Communications Privacy Act and the Computer Fraud and Abuse Act, as well as Illinois’ Consumer Fraud and Deceptive Trade Practices Act.

Research companies that want to deploy similar tracking software must ensure that they minimize the chance of similar lawsuits by complying with applicable federal and state law. It is clear that under current Federal Trade Commission “common law,” consent of the user must be obtained when tracking software is installed on a research participant’s computing device (including smartphones) in order to avoid committing a violation of the federal Deceptive Trade Practices Act. In its Consent Order with Sears, which installed software after providing notice that the FTC found inadequate, the FTC required Sears to clearly and prominently display, on a screen separate from its privacy policy and Terms of Use, a page that disclosed all types of data collected, how the data may be used, and whether the data may be used by a third party. The FTC reiterated its approval of this model in its recent Consent Order with Google.

Further, the CASRO Code of Standards and Ethics defines rules that govern the use of “active agents” such as ComScore’s tracking software. The Code requires not only informed consent from the user, but also imposes many requirements that are designed to protect the reputation of the research industry. For example, the active agent may not turn off anti-spyware software, hijack the user’s computer, make the computer perform erratically, or be difficult to uninstall. In addition, on a routine and ongoing basis, users who participate in the research should receive clear periodic notification that the research company is tracking their online activities, in order to ensure that their participation is voluntary.

Through the CASRO General Counsel and Government & Public Affairs Committee, member companies receive legal advice on complex compliance and contractual issues; important updates on legislation impacting the industry, and extensive industry lobbying efforts.

Attorneys employed by and representing CASRO member companies meet periodically at the CASRO General Counsel Forum. Here they have the unique opportunity to discuss myriad legal issues they currently face and strategize for what may emerge. Please contact CASRO for details on participating.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Duane Berlin
Duane is a leading authority on legal issues affecting the survey research industry, having represented research companies for his entire 25-year career. Duane has served as legal counsel to CASRO for the past 11 years, is the principal author of CASRO’s Privacy Protection Program, which includes CASRO’s Model Forms of Survey Research Agreements. He is also the editor of CASRO Comments “Legal Update.” Duane also currently provides private legal counsel to many leading research firms with respect to commercial, corporate and privacy matters and speaks frequently on legal and regulatory issues affecting the survey research industry.

Russell Anderson
Russ is an attorney with the firm of Lev & Berlin, P.C., and together with General Counsel Duane L. Berlin, is part of CASRO’s legal team. Russ is an expert in the laws and regulations governing the market research industry, including privacy, data security and technology law. Together with Duane, Russ routinely drafts and negotiates contracts and agreements for many leading market survey research firms. Russ also has an extensive practice in corporate and securities laws. Russ is a graduate of the College of William and Mary Law School and Wesleyan University.
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Head to Head: Are Online Panels Finished?

Bob Chua, Founder and CEO, Pulse Group Plc.
vs. Gregg Lavin, Co-Founder & President, uSamp

This feature appears courtesy of Research-Live.com.

YES – BOB CHUA

Online panels have had a significant impact on the market research industry over the past decade. That said, social media is changing the game. Sites like Facebook and Linkedin have seen massive adoption and their stickiness – the amount of time consumers spend on them – will continue to grow.

These sites, therefore, are prime hunting ground for marketers and market researchers looking to gather consumer opinion. You fish where the fish are.

The sheer size of Facebook and Linkedin’s user bases provide massive reach and make sample recruitment both feasible and cost-efficient. You can target users based on their profile data and their behavioural data. You can reach respondents on multiple devices, like mobile phones and tablets, through a single platform. Clearly, social networks are the holy grail the industry has been waiting for.

Think about how online panels are built today – how the majority of recruitment is performed via traditional banner advertising, newsletter marketing and database acquisition. Multi-panel sourcing for surveys is also increasingly commonplace.

With Facebook we are recruiting sample from a single source, which allows us to have much more control over who we invite to our surveys. Better still, we are engaging with people in an environment where they like spending time and have a high emotional attachment.

We use apps on both Facebook and Linkedin to find the right people, however the respondent still has to opt in and go through the necessary screening to participate and complete a survey. The profile data we use to target survey invites could be extremely rich or extremely vague depending on the type of user we’re seeking to reach. A light Facebook user, say, simply provides basic profile information, while power users provide detailed profile information with various forms of demographic and psychographic details. But profiling could also take account of the user’s experiences, conversations, and paths to purchase - a very valuable source of information for marketers. Tools at our disposal allow for sentiment analysis and fan page profiling.

“The size of Facebook and Linkedin’s user bases provide massive reach. These sites are prime hunting ground for marketers and market researchers looking to gather consumer opinion.”
Some might question the representativeness of the social media audience as a source of survey sample, but representativeness is becoming a moot point. The recent Esomar Congress heard arguments from some major buyers of research in favor of panels that are fit for purpose rather than truly representative.

And what is more fit for purpose as a source of sample than Facebook or Linkedin? Their combined membership base is approaching a billion consumers. People spend significant chunks of the waking day on them. Their smartphone apps are massively popular, providing a means to reach people with survey invites when they are away from their PCs. All this adds up to one inescapable conclusion: the days are numbered for online panels.

NO – GREGG LAVIN

Social networks are a very compelling media, and definitely have their place in qualitative and quantitative research. However, when it comes to understanding detailed information and demographics of users, today’s sample providers are in a league of their own.

Where Facebook is limited to a few key demographics collected at registration, panel providers in many cases obtain hundreds of data points on a user. If an agency were looking to survey 500 iPad owners that use the iPad in a certain way who also have a specific occupation and income, I would argue that sampling from Facebook could not deliver. To screen through thousands of people would be highly inefficient, not to mention a really lousy user experience. But because of the rich, progressive profiling capabilities of panel providers, the hard-to-reach audience remains very accessible. And this capability is critical as marketers increasingly seek insights from niche audiences.

Online panels are a broadly sourced collection of engaged survey-takers, who are motivated and willing to participate in market research studies. Panellists are vetted, profiled and screened for attitudes and behaviours. Contrast this to Facebook data points, which are limited to very basic information either collected at sign-up or through real-time screening. Given this disparity, the breadth of practical research applications delivered on social networks narrows quickly to high-incidence, general population sampling. While solid for some things, social media sampling is simply incapable of more targeted insights.

Another thing to note is that online panel companies are not restricted by the size of their panels. They can utilise highly profiled panels when targeting is needed, while also having real-time river sampling to reach the broadest audience. River sampling allows recruitment across the web for in-the-moment surveys.

Upon agreement to participate, users are screened and electronically validated using a host of technologies and tools. Routing technologies then direct these respondents to appropriate surveys.

River sampling has been around for over a decade. It provides an advantage in engaging fresh survey takers who may not be willing to join a panel but are interested in sharing their views nonetheless. Frequently real-time river sampling draws respondents from social networks via advertising or apps, which helps broaden the sampling frame, creating highly representative online samples. At times, panel and river are used together to deliver high-quality sample that leverages the strengths of both. So this is the best of both worlds.

Panels provide a great deal of value, and are a requirement for some research. Social networks are an excellent place in which to engage potential respondents, but they are not a substitute or a panacea for problems facing panels. Smart sample providers simply need to pull the right tool from the toolbox.

Who delivered the knock-out blow? Click here to comment on this article.
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Bob has led his digital research agency from start-up to IPO (on London’s PLUS market) in 33 months. He is a winner of the ‘Ernst & Young Emerging Entrepreneur of the Year Award 2009’. Previously Bob was Executive Director at Nielsen and Regional IT Research Manager at TNS Asia-Pacific.

Gregg Lavin
Under Gregg’s direction as a traffic driver and biz developer, uSamp has on-boarded 6.8 million panelists to the platform in under 3 years. Previously he led online sample pioneer, goZing, which was acquired by Greenfield Online in 2005. He was a finalist for 2011’s Ernst & Young’s Entrepreneur of the Year award.
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