



## **Caller Identification: Best Practices for Survey and Opinion Researchers**

Although existing regulations on caller identification (caller ID) at the federal level apply only to telemarketers, Congress is considering legislation prohibiting various deceptive caller ID practices and some existing state laws prohibit the intent to falsify or misrepresent caller ID information. This could impact researchers that intentionally block or alter their caller identification information.

To prevent legislative activity directed at the research profession, further legitimacy of the profession and to improve respondent cooperation, MRA recommends that survey and opinion researchers adhere to the same standard. All researchers should use (or require their calling centers and data collectors to use) calling equipment that is **capable of transmitting caller ID information** and ensure that **the telephone number transmitted allows the called respondent to identify the entity making and/or responsible for the call** (as deemed appropriate).

### **The Value in Truth in Caller ID**

Research indicates that, *“the caller-ID transmission works as a sort of ‘compact invitation letter,’ similar to that found for advance letters which underscore the legitimacy of a survey, take away suspicion, and communicate the value of the survey thereby positively influencing response rates.”* (Ludwig, Jack. and McCutcheon, Allan. "Who's Calling?" Paper presented at the annual meeting of AAPOR. Oct. 5, 2006)

### **Name and Number Transmitted**

The transmitted number should be one that the respondent can call back on. Further, it should be one that is answered (by a live person or a recording, with the ability to leave a message) during the research organization's normal business hours and one that would allow a respondent to leave a message, after hours. Depending on the business needs of the research organization, such a number could be an 800 number, or other such number, which results in **no cost to the respondent**. However, under no circumstances should any researcher transmit a pay-per-call number (900 number) as its calling number.

Should the researchers prefer to display the name and number of the entity responsible for the call (i.e., the client), rather than the name and number of the research organization or call center, the above practices should apply in the same manner.

It is up to the research organization, based upon the needs of its business, whether to have the number transmitted via Caller ID answered by: a live representative of the research organization or call center; an interactive voice response (IVR) system; or a voicemail system.

The first option is the best option, but as long as respondents can reach further information and have the option to make a do-not-contact request, any of the three shall suffice.

### **Prohibitions for Researchers**

Under no circumstances should survey and opinion researchers intentionally block the transmission of their calling information to respondents nor should they transmit false information via Caller ID.

### **More Information**

For more information on laws and best practices impacting research, contact MRA, and consider becoming a [member](#) to get free access to the [MRA Compliance Guide](#).