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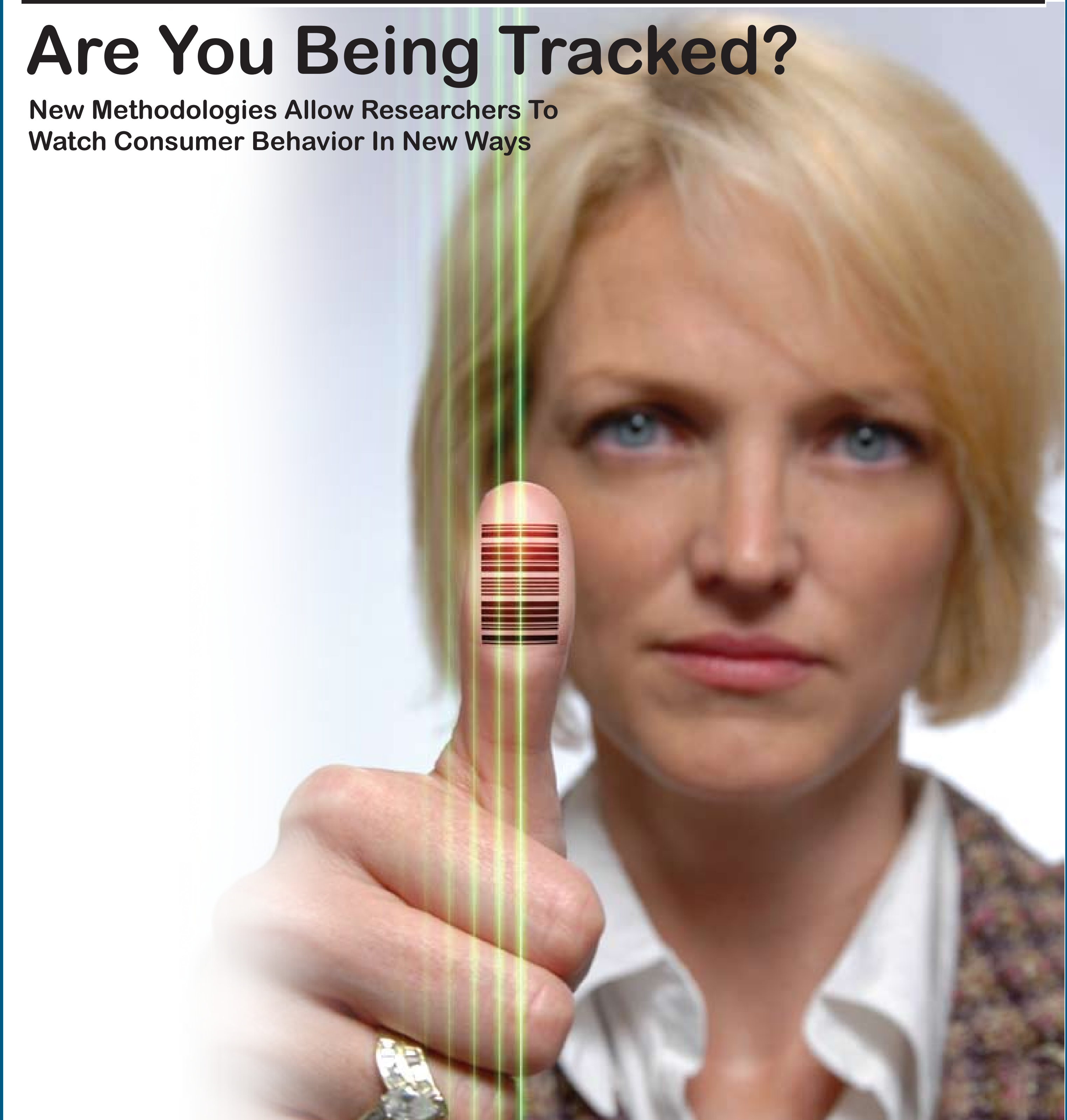
Alert! Magazine

MRA

Are You Being Tracked?

New Methodologies Allow Researchers To Watch Consumer Behavior In New Ways



Alert! MAGAZINE

February 2008

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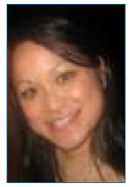
HEADLINES

COLUMNS

MONTHLY



Letter From The Editor

As I stand in line waiting to scan my key tag at my Yoga studio, I can't help but stare at the people in front of me who have a fan of tags on their key chains.

I stare down at the lone Samadhi Yoga Studio tag on my set of keys and am reminded of what my godmother told me, "those tags are a way for the stores to track what you are buying so they know your cravings and vices."

Is it true? Does Big Y know about my weakness for white chocolate and popcorn?

This Orwellian notion got me thinking about the articles in this month's *Alert!* and why they're so relevant to emerging trends in marketing research.

In his article "Are You Being Watched" (page 26), Andrew Jeavons discusses Techno-ethnography and how "people watching" has changed since the days of Margaret Meade. With the help of technology, research methods have evolved and become more invasive.

Have technological advancements allowed us to skip the surveys and interviews and go directly to a database of information? If so, what does this mean for the future of our profession? What does it mean for companies of all sizes?

In her article, "What Methods Will Yield Better Results For Smaller Companies" (page 7), Tao Woolfe discusses how the old fashioned phone survey and one-on-one interviews are still a better survey option for smaller companies.

One thing is for certain: There is a massive volume of data available to market researchers, surveyors and pollsters. It's up to those of us in the profession to continue to make sense of the data.

Connie Yan, Publications Editor
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How Smaller Companies Can Improve Research Results

By Tao Woolfe, NCCI Holdings, Inc.

As marketing research becomes increasingly Web-based, it's something of a luxury to insist upon face time with customers and phone time with interviewees, but for a small company that conducts most of its surveys in-house, these tactics can also make good business sense.

When you know all the players, any one of them could be a client—and a repeat client at that. You almost have to sit down with them to tailor a survey to their needs. In some cases, you might even want to talk them *out* of a detailed survey project.

"Sometimes there may be other ways to find out what they need to know," says Joyce Valley, marketing director for NCCI Holdings in Boca Raton, Florida. Some clients, for example, might be better served by educating them about how a research survey works and when one is needed.

Valley uses electronic surveys but in most cases prefers phone interviews.

"Electronic surveys are not always the best when you need to assure a certain sample size, or a certain number of participants from a fixed or relatively small universe," she says.

Electronic and mail surveys work best when using closed-ended questions that don't require conversational probing or when the sample size is in the thousands.

Valley and her crew of three researchers complete about 70 surveys a year, mostly for internal uses, and often involve interviewing NCCI's outside customers. Depending on the level of information requested, the research can take from two weeks to two months.

> "Online surveys are also more difficult to control, since they are self-administered."

Consumer companies with huge customer bases can quickly sample their large audiences electronically, but conducting online surveys among smaller audiences typically yields a smaller response than calling respondents and asking for their participation. Online surveys are also more difficult to control, since they are self-administered.

"The questions they ask are simpler and do not require back and forth conversation to understand their likes, dislikes and needs," Valley says.

Valley's customer base comprises the 1,000 employees at NCCI and the approximately 900 insurance companies and regulatory agencies that use NCCI's services. NCCI, formally known as The National Council on Compensation Insurance, Inc., has for 85 years provided workers compensation information and employee injury data. The company operates as a non-profit organization.

Over the years many of NCCI's departments have asked Valley to conduct research, including the Customer Service and Human Resources departments and Sodexho (NCCI's outside cafeteria vendor) to see how quality and customer satisfaction could be improved.

"We found the marketing research study to be really useful," said Carl Jesion, area general manager for Sodexho. "It will help us plan next year's operations."

Jesion said he appreciated talking directly to the researchers because it made him feel like he was part of the process. The individualized treatment helped him shape a survey that was very specific to his needs.

"As a result of the survey, we upgraded our

(Continued on page 18)

be prepared to succeed

REGISTRATION FEES

	Cut off Date	Member costs	Non-Member costs
Early Registration	March 20th, 2008	$310	$350
Standard Registration	April 9th, 2008	$350	$390
On-Site Registration	Day of	$400	$440

$25 per person will be charged for those who cancelled prior to March 31st. No refund is available after March 31st.

Come, enjoy and learn from speakers from Astra Zeneca, BrainJuicer, Dell, Drug Development Insights, FocusVision Worldwide, Greenfield Online and IBM.....

Hotel rate is $235 per night (single/Double occupancy). Contact Beth Dworkin, MAXIMUM Research, Inc. at (856) 874-9000 Ext. 103 OR bdworkin@maximumresearch.com for additional rates. March 27th cut off for special rates. Please book today as we have limited rooms available. Rate based on first come basis.

Registration Form – Must be completed and emailed/faxed to:

Beth Carey at IMA
848 West Lancaster Ave
Bryn Mawr, PA 19010
(610) 527-5500/(610) 527-5588
bcarey@imalink.com

Company Name	
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Email Address	
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How you would like your name spelled on your Badge?	
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By April 17th, will you be:	Yes	No
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Professional Researchers Certified?		

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Marketing Research Association

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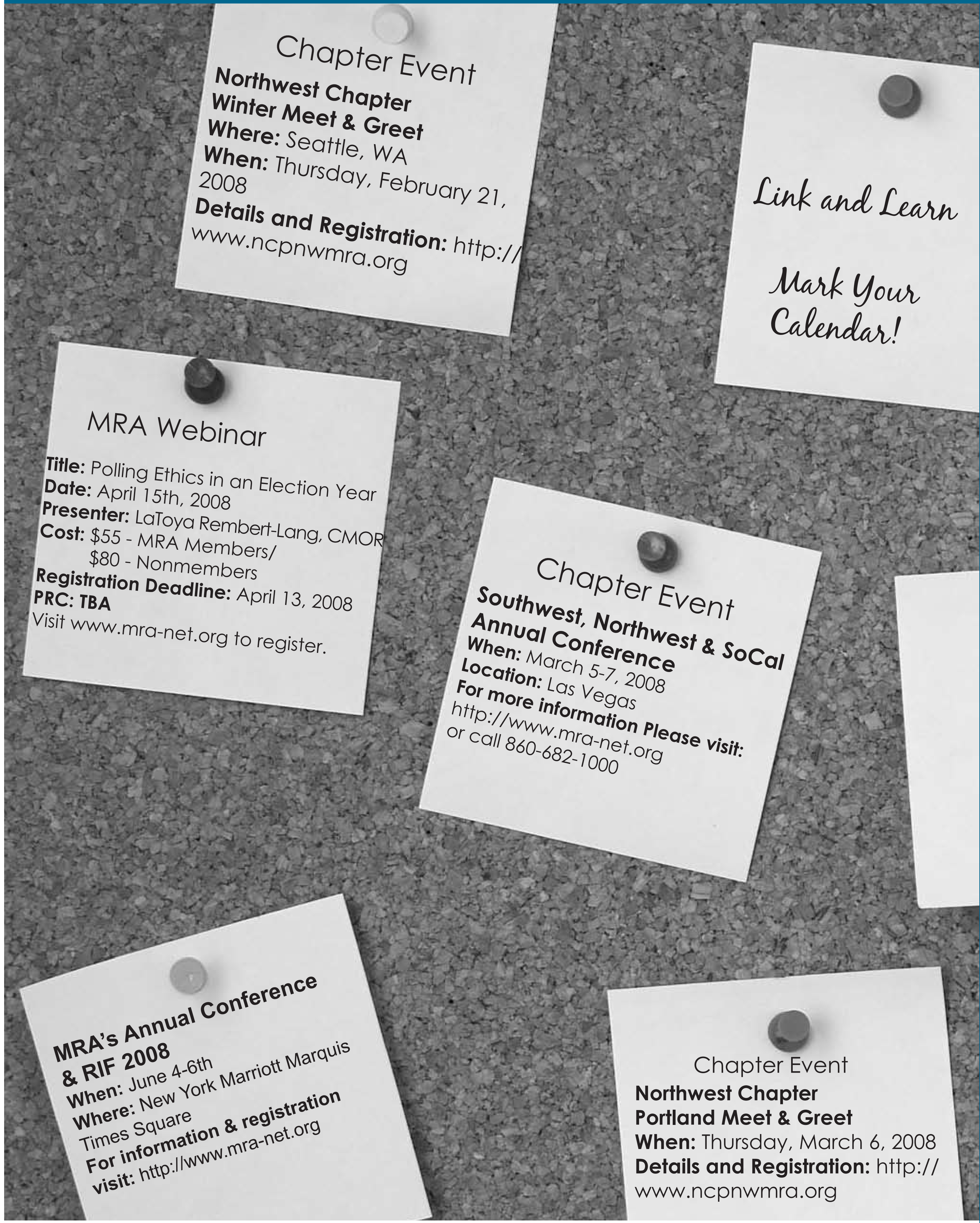

LINK and LEARN

'Variety is truly the spice of life.'

By Colleen Moore-Mezler, MRA President, Moore Research Services, Inc.

The saying goes-*"variety is the spice of life."* The variety I experience in both my life and career seem to keep me energized on a daily basis. I never have the same day twice; one day I could be facilitating a focus group on healthcare and the next watching children try out a new toy. In one room we could be placing a product for a cosmetic study and in the next conducting a taste test.

So where does this variety come from? They come from the choices we make in life. Some are easy such as "What are we going to wear today?" "What are we going to eat for dinner?" Some are a little harder: "Should I marry this person?" or "What do I want to be when I grow up?" Then there are the choices we have in our profession: "What methodology should I use for this particular project?" or "What decisions need to be made as a result of this research?"

> "The choices we make in the workplace both help our careers and our individual lives by showing us that variety is truely the spice of life."

We, as market researchers, are in a profession that allows this kind of positive assortment of daily work decisions. We not only make decisions for ourselves, but we're also able to help our clients make them. Once we clearly define their objectives, we can help them decide the best methodology for their project.

The dramatic differences in the variety of projects are due to the fact our clients have very distinct and specific needs. All projects have their own unique plan. Our clients look to us to guide them as to which methodology they should use. Oftentimes it is not just qualitative or quantitative - it is both.

The mixed-method approach is necessary in most cases. When designing/refining a product or service, the two methods used together can maximize the study and provide a comprehensive understanding of both consumer attitude and behavior.

With so many different methodologies to choose, every work day is different for a market researcher. Our clients provide us with challenges that test our ability to blend different methodologies until we find the right formula.

The choices we make in the workplace both help improve our careers, and our individual lives by showing us that variety truly is the spice of life.

Colleen Moore-Mezler, PRC is the president of Moore Research Services, Inc. She can be reached at colleen@moore-research.com

Chief Executive Column

By Lawrence Brownell, MRA's Chief Executive Officer

This issue's examination of methodologies has me thinking of the ideal research process. I am addressing this article to new people entering the profession. If you have entered the profession without previous experience or formal education in research, your company is going to invest significant time in training you. Often we as a profession forget to show entry professionals the big picture.

Allow me to address the macro perspective.

In the U.S., the largest consumer of research is the government! To the experienced professional this is not a shock. After government, there are very large commercial companies with research departments and the myriad others who have everything from formal research departments to those who farm it out through a purchasing or procurement department. This natural marketplace trickles down to the local business owner who occasionally needs research.

The cornerstone of the industry is what I call the "question," which is what needs to be answered/determined by a research study. From my perspective, this is the base of the profession. When research fails, the problem can usually be traced back to the "question." A classic example would be testing a new version of your product against your competitor's product, but failing to test it against your current product. For a company to have true business intelligence and make a good decision, both questions need to be asked.

Another example is trying to test the consumer loyalty to your service where the question is what attributes make customers loyal. On the surface it is a simple question, but depending on the service and nature/depth that you wish to explore, an uninformed buyer could chose the wrong methodology. In one scenario, it would only be appropriate to test this through qualitative means. Another scenario is where the service is delivered remotely in a standard non-personal form, a quantitative method would work. It goes back to analyzing the question.

For example, a new hire at Wells Fargo is analyzing the need for branch service at supermarkets. He is asked to field a quantitative study to come up with a definitive answer. Before reporting back that he came in under budget by doing the survey online, he needs to ask himself, "will this answer the question?" He will have a general feel for what people want from kiosks. Has he gone beyond this and explored actual desires of users? Should he have conducted a phone follow-up? Do we need to better understand the feel of the environment?

Many may say I am complicating the issue, but if research or business intelligence were easy every company would succeed every time and there would be a research company on every corner.

We have heard a great deal of concern about quality this year, much of it focused on panel management. Panel management needs to be examined, but in my four years with MRA the complaints I have received have largely surrounded the "question." Many times it is attempting to answer the question through the wrong methodology or by not using a mixed methodology as required. When I explore this with member companies to resolve discrepancies this becomes apparent.

For new members of the profession on the client side, I encourage you to use MRA's end-user services to gain assistance and advice from peers. Sometimes you may not feel comfortable asking a supervisor or supplier, which is why MRA provides these services. For research providers we also have peer resources for you to address your questions.

Additionally, the MRA Web site (www.mra-net.org) has areas to familiarize yourself with the whole profession.

If you're new to the profession, before you begin your work on a study, no matter where your position falls in the research process, ask yourself these simple questions:

1. Do I know and have I confirmed what is actually to be determined in this project?
2. Has the question(s) that we wish to address been fully thought out to the overall corporate (clients) business objective?
3. Before I begin my part, is the right methodology(ies) being used to address the project?
4. Would I bank my savings on the ability to make an accurate decision based on the work being done?

To respond to this article, e-mail Larry Brownell at executivecolumn@mra-net.org

The MRA Nominating Committee presents the following election slate:

PRESIDENT-ELECT

KIM LARSON
Information Alliance

(Unopposed for a one-year term)

DIRECTORS AT LARGE

END USERS
(Vote for 1 for 2-Year Term)

DAVID ASHLEY
Department of Homeland Security

REBECCA GRAHAM
MeadWestvaco Corporation

LINDA LYNCH
Blue Cross/Blue Shield of Massachusetts

DIRECTORS AT LARGE

DATA COLLECTORS
(Vote for 1 for 2-Year Term)

GINGER BLAZIER
Directions in Research

MAGDA COOLING
Opinions of Sacramento

ANGELA LORINCHAK
Metro Research Service

DIRECTORS AT LARGE

RESEARCH SUPPLIER
(Vote 3 for 2-Year Term)

ELISA GALLOWAY
Galloway Research Services

ANNE HEDDE
Lightspeed Research

CARLA LINDEMANN
Issues & Answers Network, Inc.

VICTOR WALSH
National Data Realty

GEORGE WILKERSON
Flake Wilkerson Marketing Insight

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To become a member of MRA, please call Membership Specialists Aisha Terry and Sarah Walsh at: 860-682-1000 or visit www.mra-net.org

Who Is In and Who Is Out?

State Elections 2007

By LaToya Rembert-Lang, State Legislative Director, CMOR

Proposals and actions impacting survey and opinion research, made by a single state legislator, Governor, or other state executive branch official can cascade to other states and even gain traction at the federal level. A perfect example is the national Do Not Call Registry, which began with do not call registries in separate states.

Because every state matters, CMOR followed the Fall election cycle closely for any possible impact on the survey and opinion research profession. Party control is always a mixed bag for the research profession.

CMOR
Shielding the Profession

While not all the information about who is in and who is out of office/power may be directly relevant to the profession, CMOR shares it to help members become informed and get involved in all aspects of the political process. Researchers who wish to learn and do more, should consider volunteering with the State Capital Network (www.cmor.org/pdf/Capital_Network.pdf).

Overview

During the Fall of 2007, state elections were held for legislative seats in six chambers. Louisiana and Mississippi held both executive (Governorship) and legislative elections. Kentucky held executive branch elections only. New Jersey and Virginia held only legislative elections. Voters in seven states also considered ballot measures: Texas, Maine, New Jersey, Louisiana, Utah, Oregon and Washington. Texas had the most measures (16), while Utah had only one. One each of the two citizen initiatives and popular referenda on the ballot passed, as did 83% of the measures proposed by state legislatures.

State Legislative Results

Following the elections, the Democrats controlled both chambers in 23 states, while Republicans controlled both chambers in 14 states.

Democrats obtained a narrow majority in the Mississippi and Virginia senates. Democrats also maintained their majority status in both chambers in New Jersey and the Mississippi House of Representatives. In Louisiana, Democrats retained control of the Senate by winning 25 seats, while Republications won 14 seats. In the Louisiana House, Republicans won 50 seats, Democrats won 53, and two seats were won by independent candidates. The Republicans still hold their majority status in the Virginia House of Delegates.

Governorship Results

Mississippi Republican Governor Haley Barbour easily won re-election, but incumbent Republican Governor Ernie Fletcher in Kentucky was beaten by Democrat Steve Beshear. In Louisiana, Republican gubernatorial candidate Bobby Jindal won the race to replace outgoing Democratic Governor Kathleen Babineaux Blanco in the primary in October without a runoff election. Democrats now control 15 state governments, and Republicans hold all the marbles in 10 states. In 24 states, power is divided between the two parties.

Ballot Initiative Results

There were 38 ballot initiatives/referenda up for vote this fall, including two citizen initiatives (a proposed law or constitutional amendment placed on the ballot by voters through a petition drive) and two popular referenda (voter consideration of a bill passed by the legislature, placed on the ballot by voters through a petition drive). For more details, see the appendix below.

Conclusion: The Impact of the Elections

It is likely too early to determine what impact, if any, these elections will have on the political landscape. Each state has its own policy issues and political trends. Party control is always a mixed bag for the research profession.

Tax and regulation issues are generally lighter under Republican control, but most privacy issues are bipartisan -- especially when it comes to issues like do-not-contact registries. More importantly, today's Democratic-controlled legislature could be tomorrow's Republican stronghold. That is why CMOR works hard to build and maintain relationships with members and leaders of ***both*** major parties.

CMOR looks forward to tracking the balances of power between dueling legislative chambers, and between legislative and executive branches, as they consider legislation in the year to come. CMOR will highlight any developments or trends that ultimately emerge, reach out to new legislators and executives, and work with our volunteers in the State Capitol Network to **"Shield the Profession"** in every state.

Appendix: More Information on Ballot Initiative Results

Utah had only one measure, which would have approved a program to provide tax-funded vouchers for students to attend private schools. The initiative failed, receiving only 38% of the vote.

Oregon had two initiatives on the ballot. A property rights initiative scaled back a 2004 law by curbing property owners' ability to develop large subdivisions and commercial projects on land reserved for residential and farm use. This measure passed with 61.5 percent of the vote. The health care measure would have increased the current $1.18 state cigarette tax by 84.5 cents per pack and use the money to pay for children's health care and smoking prevention programs. The initiative failed with 40% of the vote.

New Jersey had four initiatives on the ballot. The first initiative would have amended the state constitution to dedicate 1 percent of sales tax revenue each year for property tax reform. The measure failed with 47% of the vote. The second initiative would have authorized $450 million in state bonds to fund stem cell research at state universities and private institutions. The measure failed, garnering 47% of the vote. The third initiative authorized $200 million in bonds to fund open space and parks preservation, and passed with 54% of the vote. The final initiative amended the state constitution to delete "idiot or insane person" when referring to persons denied the right to vote after a court deemed them mentally incompetent. The measure passed with 60% of the vote.

Louisiana had four initiatives on the ballot. The first initiative, which passed with 59% of the vote, changed the state constitution to protect from budget reductions the state's supplemental pay program for certain law enforcement officers and firefighters. A second initiative changed the state constitution to revise the funding requirements for future benefits to members of state retirement systems, which passed with 58% of the vote. The third initiative, which passed with 56% of the vote, changed the state constitution to expand the state's supplemental pay program to include additional law enforcement officers and firefighters. A fourth initiative to exempt jewelry held on consignment from property taxes failed with 44% of the vote.

Maine had five initiatives on the ballot:

1. To allow an American Indian tribe to run a harness racing track with slot machines and high-stakes beano games in Washington County, which failed with 48% of the vote;
2. To provide $5 million in loans and grants and $50 million in research and development for targeted technology sectors, which passed with 51% of the vote;
3. To issue $43.5 million in bonds for school repairs and renovations at state universities, which passed

(Continued on page 44)

Phone, One-on-One Best Methods For Small Companies

(Continued from page 7)

technology to make the cashier lines faster," Jesion said. "We realized, from the survey, that it was a matter of some urgency."

Because NCCI has no direct competitors, the company must focus inward to continue to improve the quality of its services. Having an in-house, autonomous marketing research department is a huge advantage in that quest.

Valley's surveys help department heads raise the bar. One of her most recent surveys was undertaken at the request of Cheryl Budd, the head of NCCI's Corporate Communications Department.

Budd wanted to know how to make the company's popular three-day Annual Issues Symposium even better.

Please visit MRA's Web site (www.mra-net.org) to discover exactly how Valley's surveying techniques improved NCCI's Annual Issues Symposium.

Valley started NCCI's marketing research department from scratch. She had been hired for another position in the company, but began accepting research projects as a sideline. As word of her expertise—and results—spread, she took on more projects and now, 10 years later, she has created an autonomous, centralized, marketing research department comprising herself, one full-time research project manager, and two part-time professional research interviewers.

Besides the accuracy and thoroughness, phone interviews and face time add up to a nicer way of doing business.

"We always give the respondent the option of participating. We set up appointments and conduct interviews at their convenience, and thus, respect their time," Valley says. "By the time the interview takes place, the participants are generally relaxed and interested, and that's the secret to great survey results."

Tao Woolfe is the Senior Writer at NCCI Holdings, Inc. She can be reached at tao_woolfe@ncci.com

Editor's Note: Refer to the Case Study and graph on MRA's Web site (www.mra-net.org)

Start With Proper Tax Planning For 2008

By Bruce Bialosky, CPA

Do you already feel burdened with worry about filing your 2007 taxes (entities due March 15; personal returns due April 15)? Unfortunately 2007 is already buried and there is little, if anything, you can do about that. **Now is the time to better your situation for 2008.** Waiting any longer may jeopardize any chance you have to capitalize on improvements you can make to your tax plan for this new year.

Part of the challenge with planning for 2008 comes from not knowing exactly what the 2008 tax laws will be. After all, the Congress did pass a bill that will stop a raise in taxes on 20 million taxpayers by exempting them from the dreaded Alternative Minimum Tax (AMT) – but they waited until the very last minute to do so.

Since this is an election year, you can bet Congress will do the same exemption, but most likely prior to November 4. That is because the states that really get whammed by the AMT are principally blue states, and the Democrats would like to maintain their control of Congress by not antagonizing their own base.

Suffice it to say, very little more will get done with the tax law this year because the Republicans want to lower taxes and they are in the minority in Congress while the Democrats want to raise taxes and President Bush will not sign any tax increases.

There are, however, many things you may wish consider to lower your taxes or costs of running your business.

Health Savings Accounts (HSA) –

These accounts are a second generation of a major change in how we pay our health care costs. Every company or worker in America continues to be concerned about ever-increasing health care costs. There are a lot of reasons these costs continue to rise and you can name a few.

HSA are savings accounts you use to pay for your out-of-pocket expenses. Since the amounts in the savings accounts roll over if not spent, HSA participants make more educated decisions about what costs to incur. The idea is that you have a substantial sum in a HSA account when you turn 65 years old and go on Medicare. That is also the time when your medical costs will most likely soar.

Speak to your insurance agent and see if this plan is right for you. There is one company that had more than 100 employees who saved enough on their reduced insurance premiums to be able to fund everyone's HSA account and still save a large sum of money.

Don't feel you are going out on a limb here either. There were more than 3 million of these accounts in 2005 and it is expected there will be more than 10 million by 2010. Congress continues to make these plans more attractive with small adjustments.

Choosing the Right Kind of Entity –

When your business was formed, you decided to make it either a Sole Proprietorship, S Corporation, C Corporation or LLC based on the advice of your attorney and/or tax advisor at the time. That business vehicle may no longer be right for you.

Not only do the laws change, but factors in your business may also have changed. You may have fewer or more employees, your employees may have gotten older, or your business may be a different "model" than your original goal or plan because of the constant evolution of the business world.

Proper Tax Planning For 2008

(Continued from page 19)

Because of all these factors, you may have the wrong business structure to meet your current and future needs. If you have not explored this issue, take the time to do so. It may produce large savings.

Paying for the Kids –

College can be very costly. Most people, need to plan ahead to shoulder the costs. There are many tax-advantaged programs, but by far the best is a 529 plan. You can put up to $12,000 per year -- or $60,000 in the first year under a special clause -- into an account. Your spouse can match those amounts. The earnings on the monies in the account are tax-free, and you can pay for most college costs through this program.

Each state has its own plan, but that does not mean your child has to go to school in that state. Be careful though because the performance and costs of the plans vary widely. Several independent services rate the performance of these plans.

Overall, the 529 plan is one of the best programs the feds have adopted, and there are no income restrictions as there are with other college savings plans.

An Employee vs. An Independent Contractor –

There has always been a fight between employers and governments as to how to classify some individuals – either as an employee or independent contractor. There are two new developments in this area:

The first is that the IRS is now matching records with the states in an attempt to identify more people who should be treated as employees. The second is that the IRS has tightened its rules regarding independent contractors.

For a long while, the IRS has had a list of 20 criteria to evaluate employee vs. independent contractor. They have reorganized those points into three categories: behavioral control, financial control and relationship of parties' control.

This is all in attempt to treat more people as employees. Employers need to be careful on this issue as all responsibility and related costs and taxes falls on their shoulders.

Moving Your Business –

Large companies often move to capitalize on tax advantages offered in another state. In today's environment, many businesses may operate well from almost anywhere. If this applies to you, you may want to look into relocating to a more business-friendly/lower-tax state. The money in the pockets of you and your employees could be significant.

Changing Your Reimbursement Policy –

Expenses incurred by your employees on behalf of the company could be treated as your expenses. If you specifically reimburse your employees for expenses like auto, cell phone, entertainment or others you can deduct them as ordinary and necessary business expenses. You may be able to pay them a reduced compensation to offset the expense payment. It saves you payroll taxes. It saves them payroll and income taxes.

Taking a big picture look at your business as 2008 begins may change your working life and how you operate. Working for you and your employees or working for tax agencies may be decided during these next few weeks. If you spend your time focusing on these issues your efforts may positively enhance your own quality of life.

Bruce L. Bialosky, CPA is a licensed CPA in the state of California. He can be contacted at bruce@bialosky.biz

Feasting At The Tower of Babel

A LANGUAGE GOURMET'S RECIPE TO EFFECTIVE MULTICULTURAL QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

By Antonio Guerra, CETRA, Inc.

With the boom of global markets and niche products, the demand for multicultural qualitative research is rapidly becoming more prevalent. The standard approaches to qualitative data collection simply do not work for ethnic consumers, and marketing research companies are forced to reevaluate and reinterpret their traditional methods. While the research goals may remain the same, the perspectives, criteria and exploratory techniques require a radically different new set of rules.

The idea of cooking up a successful and effective multicultural research project can be downright intimidating; however by aligning themselves with cultural experts and a specialized language services provider, researchers can confidently expect a positive, enlightening and rewarding outcome.

Much in the same way that a trusty cookbook will successfully navigate the novice chef through the preparation of a complex multi-course banquet, the following "recipe" is intended to provide some insight and guidelines for clients and researchers, from the selection of key quality ingredients to the execution of the event and even the final analysis.

Prepare in advance…

• **Select a facility that is inviting, well-equipped, comfortable, and not intimidating** to the target ethnic group. Pre-heat or pre-cool the facility to accommodate their preferences.

• **Recruit one batch of carefully-screened, talkative, and energetic respondents:** chosen with keen sensitivity and attention to their particular ethnicity, use of language, and psycho-socio-economic-cultural traits. Set aside until the day of the event.

• **Puree one ripe, culturally accurate discussion guide:** adding questions that have been peeled from well-tuned research of the cultural and language nuances, preferences, and behaviors of the target group.

• **Sift the contents thoroughly to yield one savory translation** of the same discussion guide, adapted into the target language and culture.

Cooking day, place respondents into your facility and…

• **Stir translation and discussion guide vigorously with one culturally and linguistically savvy moderator:** should be sweet enough to coax the information from the participants, but salty enough to probe further when needed.

• **Pass the mixture through two finely-seasoned, professional interpreters:** well-honed and regionally appropriate, with keen simultaneous capability and specialized in the marketing industry.

• **Fortify with ample audio equipment:** two top quality microphones and at least 15 receivers for observers and clients. Keep a few extra headsets and batteries on hand as back-up.

• **Roll out one hefty dose of quality documentation equipment:** dual-language capability audio/video recording devices.

• **Garnish with a tangy bundle of incentive payments:** cash in an envelope for respondents works best!

• **Serve to Analysts** with sharp eyes, keen hearing and open minds.

Shopping for Ingredients: Avoid the low-hanging fruit

When recruiting **respondents**, it may not suffice to simply target "Hispanics" as a group. Depending on the topic and the research objectives, it may be more appropriate to further refine the selection criteria by age, sex, profession, socio-economic factors and country of origin.

An immigrant Guatemalan stay-at-home grandmother who lives in a segregated neighborhood and only speaks Spanish is likely to respond very differently than a bi-cultural and bilingual, young U.S. born Dominican, who is a corporate IT administrator working in a big city.

The research goals must be considered as these differences may significantly impact the study and skew the results. In this instance, recruiters need to determine whether the data collection is aimed at products that appeal to anyone who identifies with Hispanic language and culture, or whether a more specific niche is desired.

The same stipulation applies to selecting respondents from some Asian cultures where traditionally, conformity is valued and women will defer to the opinions of men. This deference is also palpable in business-to-business Asian focus groups. When there are several management levels in one focus group, out of respect, the junior managers will respectfully yield to the opinions of senior executives. While it may be obvious to most, it should be noted that not all Asians, as with their Hispanic counterparts, get along or share common traditions.

The importance of involving bilingual cultural experts in the recruitment and development of the event cannot be emphasized enough. They are essential in ensuring that the selection of respondents will be made with full consideration of all the complex cultural variables.

Marketing research recruiters must take into account not only ethnic origin and screen for language dominance, but also consider lifestyle, behaviors and

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Are You Being Watched?

Techno-Ethnograpy Observes Consumer Behavior

By Andrew Jeavons, Nebu

Summary

What is Techno-Ethnography? Simply put, it's the use of automatic observational technology to carry out ethnography. For market research this is a promising new way of observing consumers at every moment.

Ethnography is usually defined as the technique of observing human behavior in "society," in the "wild" rather than in any test situations. For traditional ethnography this involved field work. Anthropologists such as Margaret Mead who wrote about Samoan teenagers in the famous *Coming of Age in Samoa* (1928) would spend years "in the field" performing ethnographic studies and observing behavior. Of course in market research the target population is probably more likely to be in Slough than Samoa, but the principles are the same!

Why Watch?

Ethnography has the advantage that the consumers' behavior is seen as it happens, not through the filter of memory. In focus groups there may be a tendency for participants to synthesize information about behavior and intentions. People can't help doing this: the way we understand the world is a synthetic process; we build our own representation of the world.

Observational techniques get past that by actually seeing what happened in a given situation. Of course this may not include the person's thoughts or intentions, what we get is reality without the running commentary. Within academic psychology it's fairly widely understood that people don't tend to want to think very hard at any given time.

For instance it's pretty hard to get respondents on a Web questionnaire to add up to 100% correctly, so it may be true that while in focus groups and interviews respondents give their thoughts, it may be that these insights aren't always accurate. So the alternative would be to actually watch what people do rather than rely on their recall of events.

This is where technology comes in. Until relatively recently it was time-consuming to observe consumers, and it could be intrusive. The act of observation should ideally not impact the person being observed, but if you're being followed around by someone with a video camera that can be difficult to avoid.

These days technology can help tremendously. Last year the computer and digital camera manufacturer Hewlett Packard developed a prototype of a camera that can be worn around a person's neck that would take a digital picture every few seconds and can store an entire day's worth of pictures!

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"In focus groups there may be a tendency for participants to synthesize information about behavior and intentions."

HEADLINES

"Keeping An Eye" On You Has A Whole New Meaning

(Continued from page 27)

Life Logging

Life logging (recording all the events in your life) is already being done. A researcher at Microsoft, Gordon Bell, has developed software for life logging called "MyLifeBits." He wears a special camera to record all his activities; all his interactions with anyone of any form are recorded and archived. Some parents have even started to life log their newborn child.

We have the capabilities to record everything someone does in a relatively unintrusive way. It would be a fascinating study to see how a child or an adult is really exposed to marketing messages or to see the growth of brand loyalty as it happens rather than piecing it together by assumptions or possibly faulty recall.

The potential and benefits for techno-ethnography are huge, and the issue generates its own set of problems.

First, how do we analyze all the data? Traditional ethnography, as practiced by Margaret Mead for instance, relied on the selection of events. A person can't record everything, so some events have to be discarded. The events that are discarded often depend on the observers "interpretation." Technology just gives us everything, and it can be a huge problem to sift through all the data for the required events.

Whatever you do, it takes 24 hours to watch 24 hours of video recording. Of course you can speed up the replay, but then the potential for losing vital information comes in. So it will be important to pick what situations are observed. The life loggers have a tantalizing potential, but that potential comes with a huge analytical challenge: spend a lifetime analyzing a life?

The second challenge is theoretical. What framework do we use for the analysis of behavior? Much of market research consists of trying to find out the details of the consumers' inner "mental life" and their attitudes and intentions.

Ethnography reverses this: we may have few details of the consumers inner world, what we do have is great detail of their "outer world," the situations they are in, what they did, what they said and so on. Of course we can ask them later, but people can't recall the details of their second-by-second thought.

This forces behavior to be interpreted from the viewpoint of the society and situations people are in rather than their internal mental state, which after all is the point of ethnography. Implicit in the ethnographic approach is an acknowledgement that situations are as important as internal "cognition" in determining consumer behavior.

The third challenge is privacy. In traditional qualitative research the aggregation of responses shields the individual. Focus groups offer similar anonymity. Observational techniques could introduce some subtle challenges to MR.

Until now the consumer's actual consumption, the event of purchase or use has been shielded. When we research we either ask what happened in the past or what will happen. MR is now usually present at the act of purchase.

> "We have the capabilities to record everything someone does in a relatively unintrusive way."

We've long had Point of Sale data (POS), but with techno-ethnography we can actually be at the *Point of Purchase* (POP), we can see the moment of choice between product A and product B. Intervention is the temptation.

MR already provides clients with information *on individuals* who may be dissatisfied with a service or product. This is almost a routine part of customer satisfaction questionnaires; if someone is really unhappy their information is sent to the company as a matter of urgency.

The temptation of clients to seek to intervene at an unfavourable purchase decision has to be resisted. POP data has the potential to be both a tremendous source of information and a huge challenge to future MR.

There is no doubt that the potential for ethnography is incredible given the huge leaps in technology we are experiencing. The challenge is to keep it from being Orwellian.

In Orwell's novel *1984* the upper echelons of society had the ability to turn off the telescreens which both inform them and observe them. MR needs to harness the power of observation and the understanding of how society interacts with individuals without losing sight of the fact that we are all entitled to privacy.

Andrew Jeavons is the Managing Director of Nebu. He can be reached at andrewjeavons@nebu.com

Education Update

By MRA's Education Workgroup

As Benjamin Franklin said, "An investment in knowledge always pays the best interest."

MRA's Education Workgroup is proud to offer the best educational investments in the research profession, including conferences, Webinars, and access to thousands of articles, sessions and education portals through the Education Central page on the MRA Web site (www.mra-net.org).

As respondent cooperation rates continue to decline, and the challenges our industry faces continue to catch the public eye, continuing education becomes increasingly important.

As researchers, we have to maintain our competitive edge, and participating in professional development programs is one of the best ways to do so. To that end, and (as always) keeping our members' best interests in mind, MRA's Education Workgroup has a strong year planned:

First, we are thrilled to launch MRA's first CEO Summit which is scheduled for February 12-13 in Fort Myers, FL. This excusive event limited to CEOs, owners, presidents, COOs and managing directors was developed to enhance MRA's already strong conference agenda.

Targeting industry, economic and future trends, the CEO Summit will allow participants to learn key business elements that will help their business flourish in today's challenging market. A combination of high-caliber speakers and "think-tank" discussion sessions make up this unique learning event.

MRA's Annual Conference is in New York at the Marriott Marquis Times Square on June 4, 5 and 6. This is MRA's first conference with an international theme. The workshops on Wednesday will cover the latest technologies and attendees will walk away with practical solutions to their everyday challenges.

Experts from CBS News and Wrigley Co. are just some of the presenters who will keep you on the cutting edge of the profession. Watch the MRA Web site (www.mra-net.org) for updates as content is developed and speakers are selected from among the many proposals received each year.

MRA's third major event is the Fall Conference which will be held in Las Vegas on November 3-5, so mark your calendar.

Also this year, the Webinar Committee has made it their goal to increase the number of Webinars offered…and has extended its schedule to include both Tuesday and Friday sessions. Sessions to look out for include themes that relate directly to keeping your business current.

Interested in sharing your expertise with colleagues? The Webinar Committee is seeking presenters on a wide variety of topics. Plus, if you produce an hour-long Webinar on a topic of interest that earns participants PRC credit, you will also receive PRC credit in that area! So what's your expertise? Problem Solving? Business Strategies? Research Process or Design? We welcome you to join our esteemed team of presenters…just contact Kim Nevers, MRA Education Manager, at kimberly.nevers@mra-net.org with your proposal.

MRA also offers Education on Demand, which you can access at any time of the day or night to offer you maximum flexibility. With more than 30 offerings, Education on Demand is a great resource for continuing education options.

Education Central can help you find education not yet offered via Webinars or at live conferences. In addition, the Education Workgroup is investigating the possibility of offering members "virtual" conferences in the near future. It's our job to educate ourselves, and the public; and what better way than to stay informed?

Visit the MRA Web site and click on "Education" to find out everything that's being offered by the Education Workgroup and start your education plan. As Antoine de Saint-Exupery said, "A goal without a plan is just a wish." Stop wishing and start planning; the education you want to keep your edge is right at your fingertips!

Note: If you're interested in working with MRA's Education Workgroup, please contact Marisa Pope, Workgroup Chair, at mpope@jacksonassociates.com.

A Recipe For Effective Multicultural Qualitative Research

(Continued from page 23)

world outlook of a particular cultural group to arrive at more accurate and relevant information pertaining to the target population.

Setting the Table: Chopsticks, spoons or fingers?

Critical to the success of any grand "feast" is the host venue, which should be dictated by the type of respondent being researched. Would a **facility** located right in the ethnic neighborhood make it more easily accessible and less intimidating?

Whether you are targeting housewives or businessmen, the choice of environment should be culturally appropriate without compromising the functionality and technical needs necessary for the ultimate realization of the research goals.

The challenge for planners is to know how to adapt the space and routine while maintaining a consistency in the desired outcome of data collected, regardless of the targeted country or ethnic group. This will ensure that the data collected can be evaluated and measured against other reports from other market segments.

Cultural nuances, preferences and symbolism ought to be considered when devising the methodology. For instance, in Japanese culture, it can be seen as impolite to introduce yourself, even in a large gathering, and white flowers should be avoided in the decor, as they are associated with funerals.

Other arrangements to be considered pertaining to the focus group facility are adequate audio equipment for transmittal of the interpretation in the target language, culturally suitable food and refreshments, as well as viable **incentive payments** for the participants.

The Menu: How would you say "Make it sizzle!" in Tagalog?

The important contributions of cultural experts extend beyond consulting on the preparation of the facility and the recruitment process. It is like combining just the right blend of spices for a stew.

Cultural consultants, proficient translators and interpreters and expert native moderators can help to create and execute a discussion roadmap that respects the cultural norms while keeping the group on track by gathering the information needed towards achieving the predetermined research goals. They can also protect the event from potentially disastrous cultural taboos (such as serving pork sandwiches to Arabic respondents).

The design of the **discussion guide** should be culturally neutral. For example, humor should be avoided as jokes do not often translate well from one language/culture to another. Metaphors that are common in the U.S. are also not ideal, as literal **translations** are usually inadequate and do not elicit the expected response.

Sports references as analogies are occasionally effective (Dominicans are huge baseball fans) but should also be generally avoided. The expression "hitting it out of the ball park" in Urdu is more likely going to take the discussion in an unwanted and murky direction.

Clients, analysts and moderators should work closely with the translation company to ensure that key words, slogans and brand names are clearly identified in the modified discussion guide, and are appropriately adapted, translated or preserved in-language.

It is the job of the professional language company to ensure that the translated material comes across to the respondents as authentic, appropriate and accurate, without changing the brand positioning in the process.

A well written guide will start with the desired result, and allow the translator and moderator to take a local point of view. A skillful and knowledgeable **moderator** will consider the key emotional motivators unique to each culture and tap into them.

Like master chefs, they will employ an interactive process that is flexible in its stylistic delivery, while preserving the methodology to secure the vital data predetermined at the planning stage.

The Meal: Is that Alphabet Soup?

The basic function of simultaneous interpreting is the real-time listening, analysis, comprehension, conversion, editing and reproduction of the discussion from a foreign language into the language that is understood by the observers listening in another room.

Simultaneous interpreters work in teams of two to compensate for the fatigue that naturally occurs during the discussions, alternating turns in 30 to 45 minute intervals so that not one word is lost. This method is used by even the most accomplished interpreters at the UN.

Many linguists who specialize in focus groups have lived and traveled extensively in the U.S. and abroad, have complete command of two languages, and are familiar with dialects, idioms, and invented words. A high number of conference and focus group interpreters have Master's and PhDs in technical, business, medical and legal industries.

Even so, it is always advisable to familiarize the team with any specific terminology to be used as well as prepare them for any sensitive topics that might arise.

As cultural and language brokers, it is the qualitative interpreter's responsibility to ensure that every word spoken by the focus group is heard and understood by the observers, delivering accurate cultural context and meaning in the target language.

The best interpreters for qualitative research are selected for their outstanding credentials, as well as their spontaneity, sharp attention to detail, their stamina over the duration of the session and their ability to convey not only an accurate rendition of multiple responses but also to convey emotions and reactions critical to those observing.

In addition, these high-quality performers will capture more than meaning. They will convey energy, cultural relevance and the subtle inflection behind respondents' remarks that engage the listener and help minimize the feeling of being an "outsider" for those observing.

Dessert: The Proof is in the Pudding

While it may seem that until now, all of the ingredients are in place to launch and execute a comprehensive multicultural focus group, what has not been mentioned is how to capture the data of those elements that may not be immediately evident from notes or transcripts of the event, for final analysis.

Since this is a performance that will only happen once, **audio and video documentation** in both languages will serve as powerful tools in the debriefing process.

Visual cues are especially important in those cultures where the paralinguistic messages can carry more meaning than the words. For instance, since the Japanese strive for harmony and are group dependent, they rely on facial expression, tone of voice and posture to tell them what someone feels. They often trust non-verbal messages more than the spoken word as words can have several meanings. A frown from a Japanese respondent while someone is speaking is a strong indication of disagreement!

Clearing the Table: That's a Wrap!

Even with the best interpreters, mere transcripts of the focus group discussion would fall seriously short of an accurate depiction of the attitudes and opinions of the respondents. With the help of the expert moderator or cultural consultant, one can effectively and correctly **analyze the data** that has been gathered; being especially attentive to what is not overt, apparent or obvious.

In the multicultural arena, analysts must look beyond the standard research tactics to grasp cultural and sociological circumstances from various regions around the world. Language is essential but it must be considered in the context of the group dynamic and the culture, along with shrugs, gestures and facial expressions.

With international qualitative research, the key to success is to follow a clearly defined, culturally accurate recipe with that "Banquet" in mind, while also allowing for many winding detours and unexpected variations during the course of the feast.

Bon Appétit!

Antonio Guerra is the Head of Interpretation Services at CETRA, Inc. He can be reached at tony@cetra.com.

Online Panel Survey Design (Sampling, Questionnaire Design, Engagement) Expert Panel Discussion: Part III

MRA Fall Conference, Atlanta GA October 25, 2007

Introduction: Lawrence E. Fisher, Roosevelt University, and IMRO Board of Governors, Moderator
Part 1: Quality and Consistency in Online Sampling (Ken Strunk, Burke, Inc.) (See January's *Alert!*)
Part 2: Questionnaires for Online Fielding: Special Considerations (Lawrence E. Fisher, Roosevelt University) (see January's *Alert!*)
Part 3: Engaging Online Respondents (Donna Wydra, Socratic Technologies)

Editor's Note: [Fisher and Strunk's installments appeared in January's *Alert!*]

Engagement's Effect on Response Rates

By Donna Wydra, Socratic Technologies, Inc.

While plummeting response rates have, for a number of years been a critical issue for phone research, we have recently seen similar downward patterns for response on the Web, with average response rates dropping over the past five years from 38% to 22%. While some of this decline in online response rates is, no doubt, due to the novelty of it wearing off, it is imperative to the future of online research to understand why people are no longer responding at the same rates.

As an industry, we must not risk alienating online respondents to the point where online research becomes a task done only by a few, and surely skewed, individuals.

In their work regarding the Leverage-Salience Theory of Survey Cooperation, Groves, Singer & Corning (2000) identified four general elements that affect cooperation. They are (paraphrased):

- The perceived **burden** of the request
- The type and amount of **incentive** offered
- The **topic** of the study
- The authority of (and **affinity** with) the survey sponsor

The last of these elements points to affinity with a survey sponsor, or to look at it another way, how we can build a relationship with respondents. It is important to examine how this sort of affinity positively delivers to respondents a sense of engagement.

In further examining what makes a satisfying survey experience, we see that the value of a research activity for a respondent equates to the personal return (actual and perceived) minus the burden of completing the activity:

Value Perception of Research Activity = Personal Return – Burden

More specifically, satisfaction with the research experience for a respondent is heavily influenced by the following enhancers and reducers of burden and personal return: (see graph on next page)

• **Personal Return Reducers** – Poorly Written – Logic Problems – Personal "Targeting" Data	• **Personal Return Enhancers** – ***Entertaining/Engaging*** – Appropriate Incentives – Feeling of Contribution
• **Burden Intensifiers** – Too much human interaction – Too Long (>17.5 min) – Repetitive – Poor Usability	• **Burden Reducers** – Short (<12 minutes) – Timing Considerate – Anonymous

Thus, one of the areas to focus on to improve survey satisfaction is engaging or entertaining respondents during the research process. This sort of engagement will enhance a respondent's experience, improve satisfaction with the research activity and help ensure future participation. Let's examine this concept in more depth.

Affinity Builds Engagement

In research-on-research findings published in IMRO's *Journal of Online Research* in 2003, Bill MacElroy and Michael Gray examined the key drivers of respondent satisfaction with the research experience. This was done by including several questions regarding satisfaction at the end of more than 33,000 interviews across nearly 100 different studies. From this work, the four top drivers of satisfaction with a research experience were determined to be:

- "Perceived ease of study" (correlation = .727)
- "Affinity with sponsor" (correlation = .721)
- "Perceived adequacy of compensation" (correlation = .641)
- "Topic and level of relevance of the individual" (correlation = .595)

Building on these findings, MacElroy and Gray continued their ROR efforts in 2006 to examine more closely the role that 'affinity with sponsor' plays in respondent satisfaction and cooperation. By developing a Community Affinity Component Scale (CACS) which measures the degree of affinity that a respondent has with the sponsor of the research (or the panel/community owner), one can now quantify the level of affinity. This CACS is based on the following factors:

- The degree to which **customized content** was developed for the community
- The **frequency limits** of requested interaction
- The degree to which feedback was consolidated and shared (and the extent to which shared information created the **sense of a two-way dialogue**)
- The **loyalty** of members as expressed by turn over or abandonment rates
- The degree to which members were willing to **recommend the community** to others
- The level of perception that membership was in some way **special or**

When looking at respondent behavior across various levels of community affinity (as measured by the CACS), we find that the affinity-effect increases response rates by 4.6% for every one point improvement on the CACS scale. Thus, participation rates (response and cooperation) increase with the sense of 'community involvement' and relationship, as seen on the graph on page 36:

(Continued on page 36)

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Cooking Light and Health magazines are looking for a marketing research analyst to assist in their consumer research initiatives. Position Description: Work with Research Director to manage an online reader panel and conduct various consumer primary research projects for Cooking Light and Health magazines. Duties: Work on all aspects of survey projects from inception and development phase through execution, analysis and reporting. Key responsibilities include questionnaire design, survey execution, data analysis and reporting. Candidate will also communicate with panel members via e-newsletters and panel website updates. Requirements: Bachelors degree in Marketing/Business or related field; 4-6 years experience in marketing research; excellent analytical, writing and interpersonal skills; high attention to detail; strong mathematical abilities; general understanding of marketing research principles; capable of working within tight deadlines in a fast paced environment; computer proficiency mandatory including Excel and PowerPoint. This position is based at Southern Progress' headquarters in Birmingham, AL. Interested candidates can email their resumes to **carlton_kemper@timeinc.com.**

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Phone Center Manager
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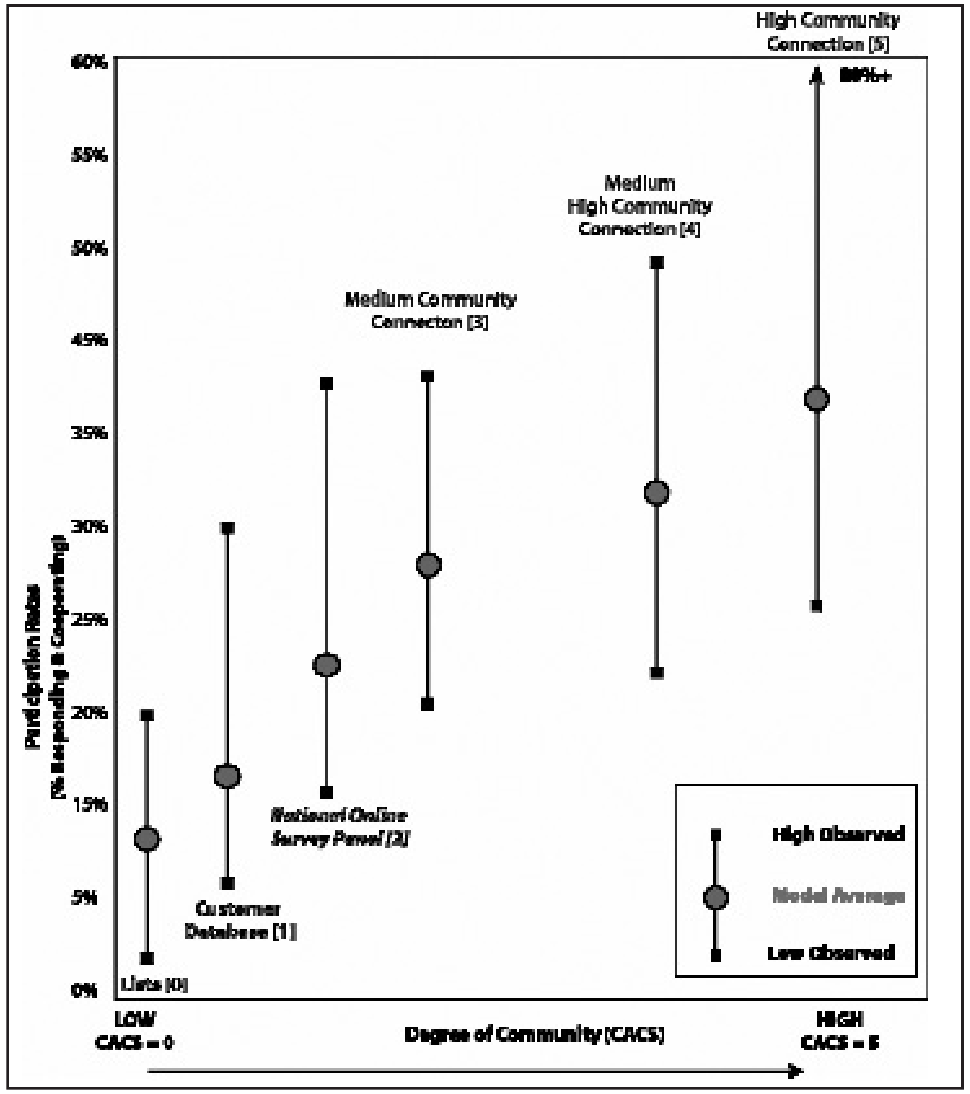
Itracks is a technologically advanced, business services firm headquartered in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan operating internationally. Leading market research firms use our software and services to execute projects for companies such as Yahoo!, Sony, MasterCard, GM, and many others. In the role of the Marketing Manager you will report to the VP Sales and be responsible for supervising the Marketing Coordinator and the Sales Assistant.
Job Responsibilities:
• Design, execute and evaluate the company marketing plan and budget with a focus on measurable results.
• Maintain and report on the budget to management.
• Develop a consistent brand identity.
• Generate market awareness and leads.
• Track and maintain customer retention.
• Identify threats and opportunities.
• Generate reports and recommendations for corporate strategic planning.
Core Areas:
1. Market Awareness: Ensure Itracks' profile in the industry via advertising, tradeshows, sponsorships, etc.
2. Lead Generation and Development: Generate leads via a mix of mediums and undertake initiatives to develop the leads.
3. Brand Development: Develop a consistent brand via consistent representation of Itracks' visual identity and voice in marketing materials and software and in activities or events (sponsorships, memberships, etc).
4. Communications: Media, Market and Client Handle media relations and press releases. Identify opportunities and publish articles by Itracks staff. Undertake communications initiatives with leads, to remain top of mind, and clients, to support client retention.
5. Advertising: Develop print and online advertising and marketing materials to generate market awareness, leads and support the sales process.
6. Tradeshows and Events: Coordinate all tradeshows and conferences as market research and lead generation activities.
7. Competitive Intelligence and Market Research:

(Continued on page 39)

Online Panel Survey Design Panel Discussion

(Continued from page 33)



It is important to note that to build a sense of community among respondents, there must be more between the sponsor and the respondent than simply a willingness to take surveys. The concept of community is most effectively built on a common interest or bond. For example, a sample source with no sense of community, such as a basic e-mail list, has no commonality or bond and thus typically garners participation rates in the range of <1% to a high of 20%.

Conversely, a panel community that has been built on strong common interest (such as working mothers or brand champions for a given brand), typically enjoys an average participation rate of 40% and often sees those rates soar up to more than 80%.

There are other benefits to building affinity. Respondents who are a part of a panel community with high affinity scores are significantly more likely to report higher satisfaction with many facets of the survey process, from 'easy to complete' to 'getting my opinions heard' and more. As shown in the figure below, a high CACS score leads directly to happier respondents.

Community Attitude Scores
(Top Two Box = % Strongly + Somewhat Agreeing with Statement)

	High CACS [4 or 5] (a)		Medium CACS [3] (b)		Low CACS [1 or 2] (c)	
	n= (2,427)		n = (2,374)		n = (2,605)	
Surveys are easy to complete	93	b,c	75		77	
Surveys are of an appropriate length	88	b,c	61		65	
I like getting my opinions heard	86	c	82		79	
I really enjoy being a member of the Community	76	b,c	55		54	
Surveys don't take too much of my time	73	b,c	39		54	b
I feel more connected to the company	67	b,c	43		38	
Community has met my expectations	62	b,c	30	c	23	
Community surveys better than other surveys	61	b,c	37	c	28	
The Community doesn't communicate enough	53	b,c	25	c	17	
The rewards are appropriate	38	b,c	21		23	

Higher levels of community also lead to higher agreement that the rewards for survey completion are appropriate. People stated that the appreciation expressed by the sponsor (by way of the incentive paid) was not a direct compensation for time spent. Rather, it is more appropriate to think of it as "an acknowledgement". This panelist mindset moves us away from a mercenary model and more towards a longitudinal, more varied (not just cash) model.

A high degree of affinity with the sponsor of the research can have significant ameliorating effects on weaknesses in the other three Leverage-Salience components.

It was found that the higher the CACS score, the greater the influence of the affinity-effect at overcoming other barriers such as burdensome surveys (either due to length or difficulty of completion), boring surveys or low paying surveys.

Thus, building affinity can help when you simply must construct a survey that is sub-optimal in terms of its engagement factor for respondents.

> "Thus, building affinity can help when you simply must construct a survey that is sub-optimal in terms of its engagement factor for respondents."

How to Foster Engagement

There are a number of affinity-based elements that can foster engagement with respondents. These include:

- Create a **branded identity** for the community with prestigious or exclusive connotations
- Make invitations to join simple but highly **personalized**
- Provide content, tools, utilities, etc., that are **perceived as valuable** to the members
- Ensure that members are contacted at least **once every 2-6 weeks** (contact frequency is based on type of panel and panelist expectations when they joined)
- **Share information** and give members the opportunity to see their input at work, or foster a sense of contribution
- Create the opportunity for members to **communicate with the sponsor** outside of the survey framework
- **Produce rituals** that add a sense of tradition (i.e. celebratory announcements about decisions based on member input)
- **Protect members** from overly burdensome or off-target survey work
- Create channels for communicating **personalized thanks and appreciation** for participation in all community activities

Interactivity Builds Engagement

Optimizing the interactive environment can also fuel respondent engagement. It is important to remember that we are asking for respondents to spend their (increasingly shrinking) free time with us doing research rather than doing other things.

As researchers we can provide an engaging experience for respondents by using interactive tools rather than long, arduous tasks, shortening the interview, and using interactive environments to engage people (with the added benefit of bringing respondents closer to the actual experience about which we are inquiring).

While our first efforts into the online research arena were centered around duplicating exactly the offline experience, we will benefit by realizing that the interactivity of the Internet gives us the opportunity to do things differently, and often better, than we did them offline. This often results not only in better data points, but also the added benefit of well-engaged respondents. And engaged respondents provide more truthful, more honest and more detailed inputs.

Donna Wydra is the Vice President of Consumer Products Practice of Socratic Technologies, Inc. She can be reached at donna.wydra@sotech.com

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Establish and execute regular CI & MR to identify threats and opportunities at the corporate level and support sales.
8. New Product Development and Product Enhancements: Through MR, communications with clients and internal communications play a critical role in identifying, evaluating and recommending new product and service lines and enhancements to current offerings.
Determine the product positioning (including differentiating features), target market, price, and promotional strategies and execute the associated marketing activities. Work with R&D, sales and communications staff to build and enhance and launch our new version releases and new offerings.
Skills/Abilities:
• Excellent communications skills: written and oral
• Data gathering and analysis: must be able to recommend courses of action based on research
• Organizational: coordinate multiple responsibilities
• Results oriented: must be able to show measurable results
• Strategic thinking and problem solving
• Team building and leadership Goals/Objectives:
• Build a strong marketing department and presence to assist Itracks in reaching the goal of being the leader in online data collection. Education and Experience:
• Bachelor degree in Marketing plus 7 years experience; or equivalent in education and experience.
Compensation:
Itracks offers an attractive salary commensurate with experience, education, and qualifications. We offer an employee benefits package and bonuses based on corporate performance.
Why work for Itracks?
Itracks hires people with an entrepreneurial attitude who are flexible and can adapt to meet client needs as we continue to build our position as leaders in online market research product and service development. We are a growing company, with a global reach, offering exciting opportunities! If you think you have what it takes to exceed client needs with enthusiasm and professionalism then send your resume to **humanresources@itracks.com.**

Marketing Research Project Directors/Analysts
Natural Marketing Institute (NMI) is an international strategic consulting and market research firm specializing in health, wellness, and sustainability. Based on rapid company growth, NMI seeks candidates with 5-10 years experience to manage in-house market research project activities and various client projects. Position includes hands-on involvement across project design, analysis of multiple market research methodologies, preparing written reports, and the development of insightful client strategies. Previous market research and/or experience in health, wellness and sustainability, consumer packaged goods, business-to-business marketing, or related fields is required. If interested, please send your resume to **info@NMIsolutions.com.**

To view more or place job listings please visit:
http://www.mra-net.org/media/onlineclass.cfm

How Is Respondent Cooperation Affected By Methodology?

By Patrick Glaser, Director of Respondent Cooperation, CMOR

As we know, the different choices a researcher makes in designing a study affect the respondent. The focus of this article is on one of the most significant of these choices: the mode of data collection. How does the respondent experience differ if they participate in an in-person interview, within a focus group setting, over the telephone, by mail, on the Internet, or in some other manner? This question is an important factor in producing quality data.

CMOR
Shielding the Profession

Respondent Cooperation 101: All Modes are Not Created Equal

From the respondent's perspective, each mode of data collection has different degrees of privacy, flexibility, and novelty. Although society and technology are very fluid, and tend to change over time, certain modes tend to perform better than others for certain tasks. CMOR has seen evidence of this from our Industry Image Study, through which we asked members of the public about their preferred method of participating in research (see CMOR's Image Study http://www.cmor.org for more details).

Interviewer-Administered Research: Rich Information and the Human Touch

Interviewers can often offer unique flexibility to a research study. An obvious feature of research methods that involve an interviewer or moderator (in-person interviews, telephone interviews, focus groups, etc.) is that they offer the capacity to draw out rich, contextual information.

This advantage can be crucial in situations where the respondent may have a difficulty answering particular questions. The added advantage may help to avoid any frustration that would have occurred if the respondent had otherwise struggled with answering particular questions. A well-trained interviewer can both probe for meaningful answers to research questions and instruct confused respondents.

An additional feature of interviewer-administered research is the ability to provide a human connection- a fact that should not be overlooked, especially in light of varying preferences among different cultures.

A respondent may often be wary of an unfamiliar organization or request for research participation. An interviewer can explain the privacy policy of the organization, provide official credentials, and answer questions the respondent may have. An adept interviewer will quickly analyze and respond to fears or concerns that a respondent may have regarding the research process – and therefore have a significant impact on cooperation.

Self-Administered Research: Privacy and Flexibility

Modes of data collection where the respondent provides information without assistance from an interviewer (mail, Internet, etc.) may provide an important sense of privacy for the respondent.

In situations where respondents are asked for information about topics, themes, or questions that they may consider sensitive or personal, the presence of an interviewer may lead to biased answers. The respondent may feel more comfortable answering honestly without another person observing and recording their answers.

Additional benefits of self-administered modes of data collection include offering respondents greater flexibility about when they participate and allowing respondents ample time to consult with relevant records or reflect on questions.

A research design is often tailored to the type of information to be collected. Situations that require detailed information may require giving the respondent adequate time to reference records or documents. CMOR's Research Profession Image Study supports this hypothesis, illustrating that three dominant reasons people refuse to participate in research are due to a lack of time, fears of confidentiality, and because questions are too personal.[1]

Making the Decision

Selecting a particular mode of data collection involves weighing these and other factors (sample options, capabilities of mode, cost, etc.). However, the manner in which the respondent experiences the interview should always be a prime consideration.

If the mode isn't a good fit with the respondents, data quality may be jeopardized from the onset of the research.

Discover More About Methodologies' Impact on Cooperation!

The 2008 CMOR Workshop, from March 3- 5 in Ballys Las Vegas, offers you many opportunities to further explore how different modes affect respondent cooperation. The Workshop will feature presentations across all modes of data collection, as well as a special presentation given by mixed-mode guru **Don Dillman**. To view the entire program, please go to www.cmor.org.

Patrick Glaser is the Director of Respondent Cooperation, CMOR. He may be reached at pglaser@cmor.org.

CMOR is the only industry association actively performing the duties of watch dog on federal and senate issues. CMOR's offices are based in Washington, D.C.

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Footnotes

1 Glaser, Patrick. 2007. Research Profession Image Study. CMOR, Glastonbury, CT. Available at www.cmor.org

Creamation Company's Message Lives On Via Online Video

Market Research Companies See Valuble Lessons

By Lori Baerg, Prizm

Small to medium size businesses are becoming competitive by utilizing professionally-produced online videos to carve out niche audiences, affect search engine rankings and drive traffic to Web sites. Overall, the Internet has evolved into a very personal forum in which companies use online videos to create a client experience and reach individual consumers by revealing the heart and soul of their company.

Client Experience

Most Web sites are text driven with a few graphics, but this does not constitute a client experience. A client experience draws customers to the company and the brand, so much so that they become advocates for the company.

Trust is an important aspect in building credibility. Trust is how we build successful relationships for our businesses. According to Nielsen's Customized Research Services, the recommendation of someone else remains the most trusted source of information when consumers decide which products and services to buy.

Online Branding

Online branding and marketing strategies should correspond with traditional media. In fact, online strategies increasingly influence the traditional forms of marketing and advertising. As companies fight to survive within the Internet-driven society, new alternatives need to be explored to market and advertise their products and services via their Web site.

Case Study

Heartland Cremation & Burial Society tripled its online sales inquires and improved search engine rankings through online video and social media relations.

According to Andrew Loos, president of Heartland Cremation & Burial Society, his company wanted to separate itself from industry competition while responding to customer needs by providing around-the-clock assistance. Loos felt the best way to accomplish this objective was with an emotional video message.

According to a study by Google and AOL conducted by market insight and information group TNS from 2,394 online users between 18 and 54 years old: • 64 percent of respondents have taken action after seeing an online video, • 44 percent going to the company's Web site, • 33 percent searching for a product or service, • 22 percent visiting an actual off-line store, and • 21 percent discussing the advertised product with friends or family. Revealing that not only does online video bring in new business, but creates buzz as well (Video Ads - Statistics Are In by Arik Bannister).

As a result of online video success, Loos turned to an online video production agency to produce and develop a site for his company and for 15 of the top cremation and alternative death care businesses across the nation. Loos wanted to integrate a passionate message delivered by a Human Host™ and online video on 15 death care businesses' Web sites (www.heartlandcremation.com).

Since the company operates around the clock, a Human Host™ and online video was the next best way for families to experience Heartland Cremation without a physical representative explaining funeral options at 2 a.m. By utilizing new online technology, Heartland Cremation was able to differentiate itself from competition and position itself as an industry leader.

For Heartland Cremation, online video created a new venue for consumers to explore cremation and burial options without leaving the comforts of their home. An interactive Media Site included a Human Host™, a virtual host, and two online videos: "How to Care for A Veteran" and "Why Cremation?"

The Human Host™ greets visitors with a warm smile 24-7-365. Every element of an online media site needs to engender trust, both from the human interaction through the use of video to the information consumers and businesses gather when they are researching a company.

A Media Site™ can capture the attention of online consumers. This technology serves as the next best thing to a handshake and as a company's 'Window to the World'™. Heartland's Human Host™ assures visitors that the company is always ready to field questions and take care of details associated with the death of a loved one. Human Hosts also provide details about company services and serve as an extension of the company's culture.

As a result of the Media Site™, Heartland Cremation received immediate feedback from customers, who revealed that they hired the company after finding the new site.

Viral Marketing

Loos built on this momentum and hired a traditional PR and social media relations agency to leverage the new marketing videos and create online buzz about his business. Professionals with expertise in strategic messaging can help to send a clear, valuable message to targeted consumers.

The public relations firm incorporated several social media relations tactics that effected Heartland's traffic, search engine rankings and online sales leads. By creating and managing a viral PR campaign that included a search engine optimized (SEO) press release, RSS Feeds, online videos and content sharing sites.

By relying on video content the public relations firm –

- Tripled Heartland's online sales inquires through the Web site.
- Increased unique visitors from 50 in January 2007 to 2,146 in March 2007.
- Increased Web site hits from 747 in January 2007 to 30,811 in March 2007.
- "Why Cremation?" video viewed 917 on YouTube from March 2007 - ?
- Overall, Heartland's first quarter business of 2007 matched business generated in all of 2006.

According to Valerie Jennings, president and CEO of Jennings Public Relations & Advertising, this is a perfect example of how small-to-medium size companies can be just as competitive as large corporations and create niche audiences for their businesses.

"It's not about mass marketing, but about targeting consumers and key words," Jennings said. "There is a significant difference between purchasing sponsored links, key words, banner ads and pay per click advertising versus the use of organic Web content to drive search engine optimization, Web traffic and sales leads."

Jennings noted that companies are spending hundreds of thousands of dollars for online advertising. Jennings believes that online video is one of the best ways to attain these types of results.

According to a ComScore.com survey, in May, nearly 132 million Americans viewed more than 8.3 billion video streams online. The average online video viewer consumes more than two videos per day. Surprising to some is that 69 percent of consumers viewing online video are 35 and older (www.infocomgroup.net, August 2007). The average online viewer looks at your homepage for thirty seconds (www.useit.com, August 2007). Prizm's Human Host engages viewers, filling the demand for content that's both relevant and entertaining.

Lori Baerg is the CEO of Prizm. She can be reached at lori@prizmproductions.com

State Election, 2007

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with 51 percent of the vote;
4. To issue $35.5 million in bonds to invest in land conservation, water access and wildlife habitat to be matched by at least $21.8 million in private and public contributions. The measure passed with 63 % of the vote; and
5. To extend term limits for state lawmakers from four to six terms, which failed with 33% of the vote.

Washington had six initiatives on the ballot:
1. To change the state constitution to allow voters to approve school levies with a simple majority vote instead of the current 60% supermajority. The measure was approved with just over 50% of the vote.
2. To change the state constitution to allow colleges and universities to use their permanent funds to invest in stocks and bonds, which passed with 53% of the vote;
3. To require that tax increases receive a two-thirds approval from the Legislature or direct voter approval, which passed with 52% of the vote;
4. To give voters a chance to approve or reject a law the legislature passed in 2007 allowing consumers to collect triple damages if their insurance "unreasonably" denies a claim. The measure passed with 52% of the vote;
5. To require that 1% of general state revenues every year be devoted to a new rainy day fund, which passed with 68% of the vote; and
6. To allow the state to contract out inmate work programs if they do not unfairly compete with private businesses, which passed with 60% of the vote.

Texas had 16 initiatives on the ballot. All 16 initiatives passed, including those on higher education funds, student loans, property taxes, bonds, motor vehicle taxes, eminent domain, home loans, disabled veterans, abolish state inspector office, legislative procedures, transportation bonds, domestic violence, retirement of judges, cancer prevention and research, and water infrastructure.

The Impact of the Elections

Each state has its own set of policy and political trends. The impact these elections have on the political landscape cannot be determined this early. CMOR looks forward to tracking the balances of power between dueling legislative chambers, and between legislative and executive branches, as they consider legislation in the years to come. CMOR will highlight any developments or trends that ultimately emerge, reach out to new legislators and executives, and work with our volunteers in the State Capitol Network to Shield the Profession in every state.

LaToya Rembert-Lang is the State Legislative Director, CMOR. She can be reached at lrembert@cmor.org.

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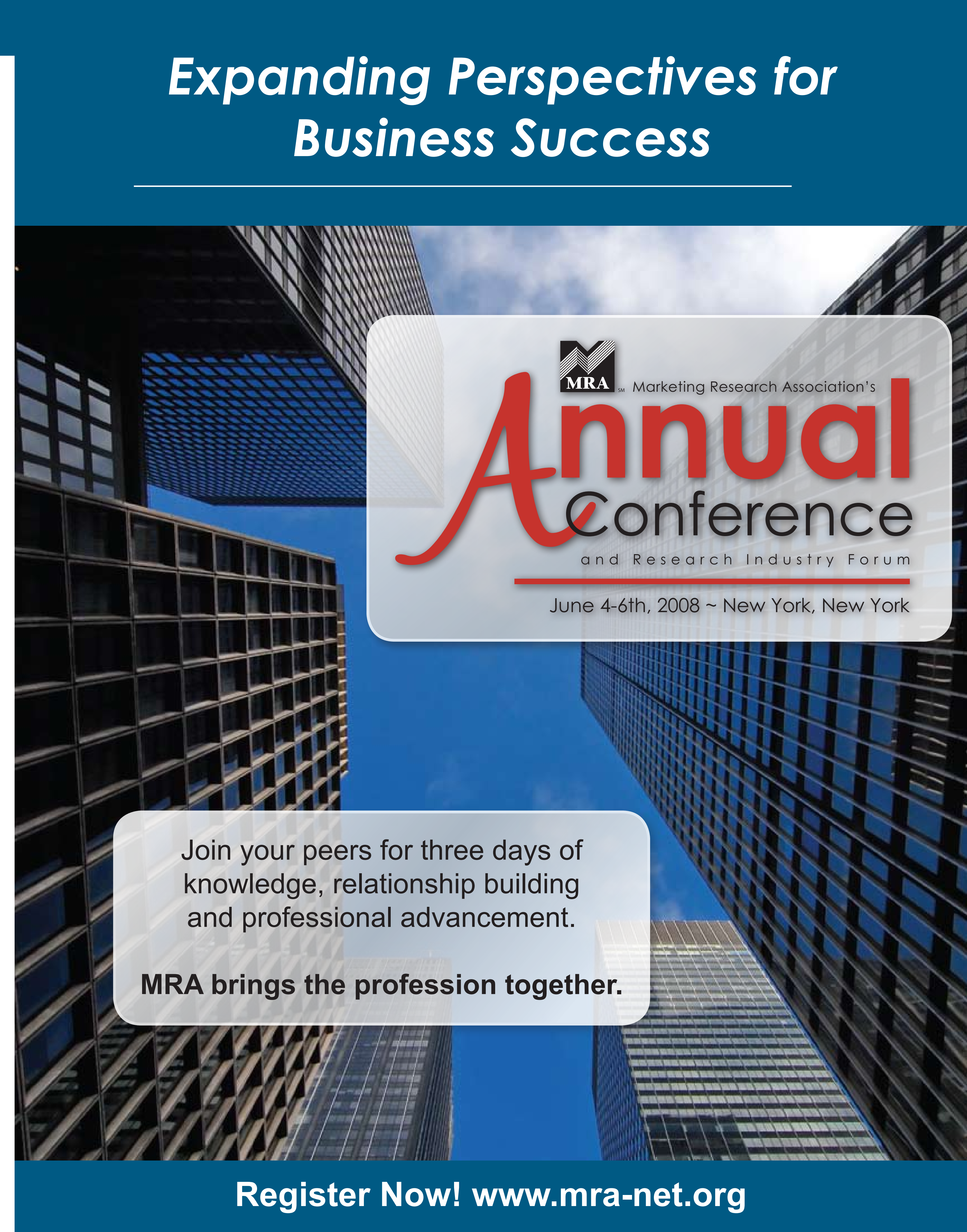


THE BUZZ

Profession News/Announcements

Join your fellow researchers in improving respondent cooperation and protecting the research profession. The **Your Opinion Counts® (YOC)** program is dedicated to ensuring the public voice is heard by supporting the relationship between the public and opinion research. For more information on YOC and an application, visit: **www.youropinioncounts.org**.

CMI has hired **Angela Wells** as Senior Marketing Consultant.

Fieldwork, Inc. has just named **Jeffrey Lorber** VP/COO of their quantwork call center facility in Chicago.

Schlesinger Associates launched a new focus group facility in Houston.

Bare International named **Virgina Newton** the new Chief Operating Officer.

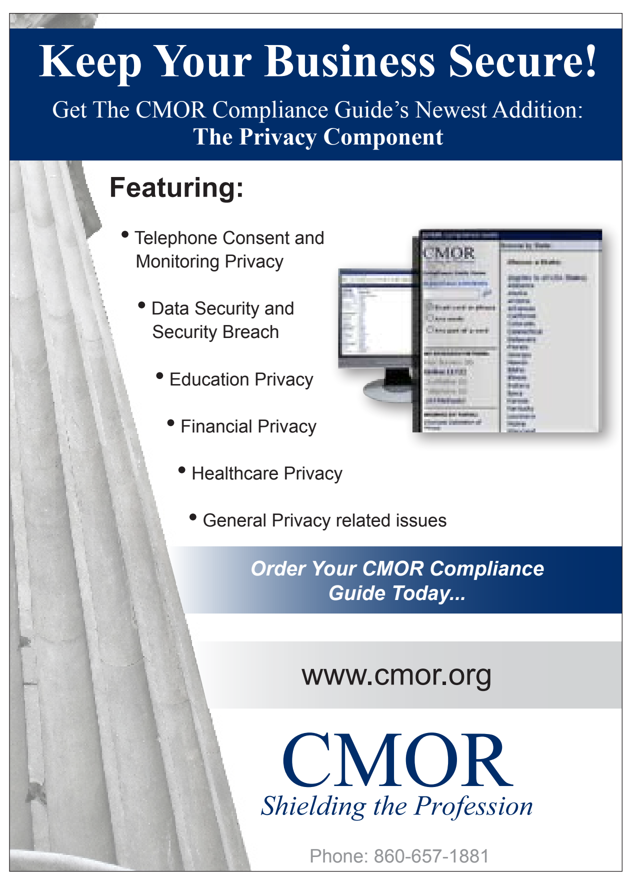
Lightspeed Research hired **John Short** as Director of Panel Operations.

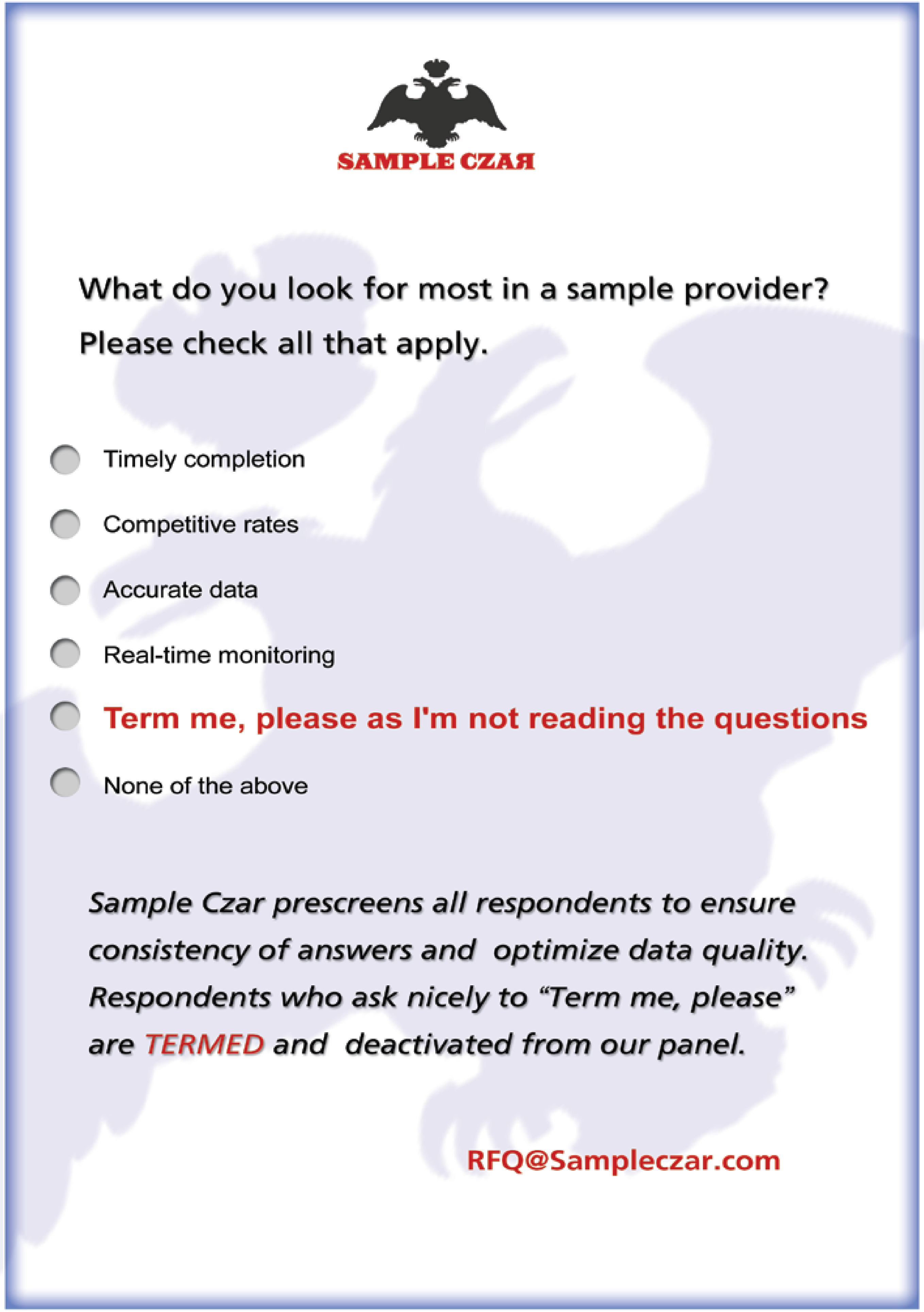
iModerate hired **Robert Liguori** as Director of Strategic Accounts.

Survey Sampling International promoted **Debi Hart** to Vice President, Global Panel Solutions and **Jackie Lorch** to Vice President, Global Knowledge Management. **Kim Giangrande** has been hired as Vice President, Global Human Resources; **Suresh Subbiah** as Vice President, Global Client Services and Delivery and **Harold Kelly** as Vice President, Global Marketing.

G & S Research promoted **Wendy Martin** to Manager, Client Services; **Elizabeth Woerly** to Analyst and **Ashley Gardner** to Analyst. **Megan Axe** was hired as Director, Client Services.

Directions Research promoted **Carley Metsker to** Senior Account Executive; **Darlene Oggy** to Senior Data Analyst; **Andrea Hogan** to Associate Project Manager; **Bob Kushner** to Vice President of Client Servces; **John Kerr** to Senior Account Executive; **Tim Laake** to Account Executive and **Michael Hunter** to Project Manager. **Debbie Oliva** has been hired as Senior Data Analyst.





MRA Marketing Research Association

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Glastonbury, CT 06033
www.mra-net.org (860) 682-1000

Upcoming Conferences

June 4-6, 2008: MRA Annual Conference and RIF
Marriott New York Marquis Times Square

Nov. 3-5, 2008: MRA Fall Conference and RIF
JW Marriott Las Vegas

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