

**MRA/QRCA Joint Committee
Recommended Best Practices
for Qualitative Database
Development and Usage**



A publication of the
Marketing Research Association and the
Qualitative Research Consultants Association, Inc.

MRA/QRCA Joint Committee Recommended Best Practices for Qualitative Database Development and Usage*

Introduction

In 1993, informal discussions began between members of the Marketing Research Association (MRA) and the Qualitative Research Consultants Association (QRCA) to determine if the two organizations could benefit from working together on issues of mutual concern. These discussions resulted in the formation of the MRA/QRCA Joint Committee in 1996. This committee's purpose is to formalize dialogue between the two associations and to create materials and processes that will benefit members of both associations. Each association appoints three members.**

The first area of mutual concern to be addressed was recruiting databases—specifically how respondents are recruited into a database and how facilities manage the participation component. The result is this document. It was prepared by the MRA/QRCA Joint Committee to provide recommended best practices to aid MRA members in understanding how best to develop and manage qualitative databases and to familiarize QRCA members with these practices. This document has been reviewed and approved by the Boards of Directors of MRA and QRCA.

How To Recruit Respondents Into A Facility Database

Note: These guidelines are for ways to increase facilities' databases in general. When seeking ways to recruit for a specific study, the method and copy for any advertising or notices should be determined by the client and field in partnership.

Methods currently used by facilities

Local newspaper ads

Radio ads

Direct mail [For example: Flyers are sent by a facility using pre-purchased lists, criss-cross directories, or phone books. Companies that bundle advertisements (Val-Pak or Joan Wright) distribute facilities' information to a pre-determined zip code or metro area usually at a discounted price]

Interviewing or screening in malls

Bulletin boards at local retail establishments

E-mail

Contacting organizations (schools, churches, etc.)

Random dialing using area phone books, purchased lists or criss-cross directories

Distributing flyers at large area events (e.g., fairs, sporting events, etc.)

* These Recommended Best Practices were developed by the Marketing Research Association (MRA)/Qualitative Research Consultants Association (QRCA) Joint Committee in February 1998.

** MRA members are Val Maxwell, Mimi Nichols and Nancy Kolkebeck. QRCA members are J. R. Harris, Anndel Martin, and Alice Rodgers.

Suggestions for copy addressed to potential respondents

Briefly explain marketing research. **(See Appendix for definition.)**

Describe benefits of participating to potential respondents.

Reassure potential respondents that their anonymity will be protected and their time and privacy will be respected

Tell potential respondents they will be compensated for their time.

AVOID using the word(s), “pay” or “paid,” so that potential respondents don’t think of this as a paid job or as a way to earn money on a regular basis.

(See Appendix for suggestions for flyers that can be used to recruit potential respondents.)

Guidelines for having respondents complete qualitative database questionnaires

It is inappropriate to ask respondents to complete qualitative database questionnaires upon arrival at the facility or on site prior to respondent’s participation in interviews for which their attendance has been requested. Respondents participation in impending interviews may be affected by questions asked on database questionnaires and/or affected by the sheer volume of questions they are subjected to prior to participation, e.g. re-screening forms, client questionnaires, etc.

A simple written statement may be posted or made available to respondents that tells them that if they are interested they may request information about how to participate in future studies. If respondents are interested in future participation, facility personnel may call respondents after studies to gather information or they may give database questionnaires to respondents to take home, complete and return.

Handling Client-Provided Lists

Return sample to client or follow client’s directions for disposal of sample at conclusion of study. If there are no instructions, request them.

ONLY include a respondent from a client sample into a database when the respondent **INITIATES THE CONTACT AND ASKS TO BE INCLUDED.**

Making First Contact With A Potential Respondent

The first contact with a potential respondent is extremely important. This is the facility’s opportunity to explain the benefits and process of marketing research. This is also a chance to determine whether the potential participant is a “professional” respondent.

A “professional” respondent is defined as a person who participates in the research process more frequently than desired — either intentionally or unintentionally. Those who do so intentionally may use unethical methods or participate by deception. For example:

Professional respondents do not answer screener questions truthfully, so they may appear to be qualified to participate.

Professional respondents attend focus groups more than industry guidelines dictate by signing up with multiple facilities and/or by fabricating various identities. The industry guideline for past participation in qualitative research interviews, including focus groups, is no more than one study in a six month period. After the standard six months, client's past participation requests should be honored. For example, some clients prefer no past participation within the past year. The industry guideline for maximum lifetime adult participation is four to six focus groups overall. Past participation guidelines for other studies, such as taste tests, may differ. Note that for low-incidence studies, past participation requirements may be waived.

Recommendations for speaking with a potential respondent for the first time

Take a moment to *promote* marketing research. Explain what marketing research is and why respondents' opinions count. Answer any questions potential respondents have concerning the process. Make it clear that no one will try to sell anything and that their time will be respected. **(See Appendix for definition of marketing research and suggestions for responses to frequently asked questions about marketing research. The Appendix also includes a sample letter that can be sent to potential respondents and a consumer qualitative database screener.)**

Use a "code" name on flyers or direct mail to help identify where and how the respondent received the information, e.g. "For more information, call Catherine." To clarify, ask the potential respondent "How did you hear about us?" Most facilities find it beneficial to track the origin of respondents. To do that, listen carefully for *how* the respondent answers. Many calls are simply from people who have been told by a neighbor or friend that they had participated in a marketing research study and thoroughly enjoyed the experience. These are valid and welcome additions to a qualitative database.

Take the potential respondent's name, phone number and any demographic information usually collected. **NEVER IMMEDIATELY RECRUIT!** Check name, address, and telephone number against database for duplication. Also, check against "Professional" or "Do Not Recruit" database. If appropriate add the person to the database.

When gathering information for the qualitative database, include spouse's or significant other's name, occupation, and place of employment. This facilitates cross checking household occupations for possible conflicts of interest that may preclude participation in some studies.

To determine whether a respondent participates at other facilities, say, "We are looking for a variety of people, some who have participated before and some who have not. When was the last time you participated and about how often?...etc.," to determine their past or current participation practices. Their answer will help determine whether to add the respondent to the database or whether to add them to the "Do not use list." When unsure, it is always wise not to use the person in question.

Keep information on respondents who are not to be used in future studies in a “Do Not Recruit Database.” As respondents are determined not suitable, mark the reasons, e.g. respondent has requested removal from database or has asked not to be called in the future; troublesome/non-cooperative respondent based on an alert from client, etc. Be sure to request moderators to provide alerts about any troublesome respondents.

Thank the new respondent for his/her time. If the respondent requests more information, send the new respondent the Marketing Research Association’s (MRA) brochure, “Your Opinion Counts,” and the Council of Marketing and Opinion Research’s (CMOR) “Respondent Bill of Rights.” **(See Appendix for CMOR’s Respondent Bill of Rights.)**

Managing A Qualitative Database

Entering new respondent data is only the first step in developing and maintaining an accurate, efficient qualitative database. Proper management of a qualitative database includes tracking respondents through the life of their participation and beyond.

After using respondents from a qualitative database, individual participation information should be kept current; e.g., including dates of participation, types of studies, product category, moderator’s name and clients’ names.

Recheck past participation before recruiting respondents in future studies. Note that for qualitative research studies, it is not advisable to recruit respondents to participate in studies for industries similar to ones in which they have already participated.

When participation in certain types of studies has exceeded industry guidelines, respondents should be coded as such and not used again for those types of studies.

Many recruitment services and facilities record all respondent contact, including recruitment screening calls. There are no industry guidelines regarding the frequency of screening calls to respondents; however, respect for respondent’s time and privacy should be the guiding principle. When screening, our primary goals as an industry are to do no harm and to encourage respondent cooperation. Therefore, do not engage in excessive or unwanted calls that disturb or offend respondents and result in respondents who are unwilling to cooperate in future research studies.

Appendix

Definition of Marketing Research

The function that links the consumer, customer and public to the marketer through information. This information is used to: identify and define marketing opportunities and problems; generate, refine and evaluate marketing actions; monitor marketing performance; and improve understanding of marketing as a process.

Marketing research specifies the information required to address these issues; designs the methods for collecting information; manages and implements the data collection process; analyzes the results and communicates the findings and their implications.

—American Marketing Association

Frequently Asked Questions about Marketing Research

Responses to questions about company:

XYZ Company is a marketing/opinion research company with offices in _____ . Our business is to conduct surveys with the general consumer population as well as with professionals. We are a locally owned/regional/national research company and we have been in business for XX years, providing people in this area with an opportunity to give their honest opinions about the products and services they buy and use.

Responses to: “What are you selling?”

Please let me assure you that XYZ is a legitimate marketing/opinion research company. Unlike telemarketing or sales companies, XYZ never attempts to sell you any product or service during our calls or anytime after you have participated in a survey.

Continue if needed

Any information you provide to our company will be held in confidence.

Response to “What do you do with my answers?”

Ultimately, your opinions are included anonymously with those of the other survey participants in a report to the company that sponsored the research. That might be a retail store, a manufacturer, an association, or a company that provides services. Your responses help those companies do a better job.

Response to “Who is sponsoring this study?”

I work for XYZ company, an independent marketing research company. The clients who sponsor our studies are not revealed to me, so I can remain unbiased in my interviewing.

Response to “What is a database?”

A database is a list of people. XYZ’s database is a listing of XX,000 households in this area who have agreed to let us call their homes from time to time to gather their opinions about products and services.

Response to “Why do you ask personal questions?”

We only ask personal questions, so we can be sure of getting a true cross-section of people. Our database helps ensure that we only call you for studies which may be appropriate for you or that you may find interesting. For example, if we are doing a survey about children’s products, we would only call households in our database that have children. Similarly, if the topic of our survey is a particular make of automobile, we would only contact those households that have told us they own that make of car.

Response to “What happens when XYZ calls?”

In a typical opinion research study, one of our interviewers would call to speak to a member of your household to ask him/her some questions about the products or services he/she uses. Our interviewers always identify themselves by name and tell you they are calling from XYZ. If you are busy when we call, please tell us, we’d be happy to call you at a more convenient time. We will then ask you the background questions about the product or service we are surveying. You may be offered the chance to participate in a taste test, group discussion, and/or interview regarding opinions on such things as advertising, packaging, and new product ideas. Often those selected are offered cash/check for taking the time to participate. If you are not interested in participating in the survey, simply let the interviewer know.

Response to “How did you get my name? — For cold calls ONLY.

We continually seek to expand our database, so that more people in this area can have an opportunity to participate in research studies. So we make what we call, “cold calls,” by having our computer generate phone numbers. This means we don’t know who we are calling until we dial and they answer.

Response to “How can I be sure you are really a research organization? — or “How can I be sure you will treat me fairly?”

If you ever feel that your confidentiality has been compromised, please contact XYZ immediately. Our business practices are in compliance with the ethical code of the Marketing Research Association (MRA). If you would like additional information about marketing research, you may call MRA at 860-257-4008 or visit their web site at www.mra-net.org. You can also get information about focus groups by visiting the Qualitative Research Consultants Association’s (QRCA) web site at www.qrca.org.

Respondent Bill of Rights

Marketing and opinion research plays an important role in our democratic society, allowing people to express their views on issues ranging from political and social issues to products and services.

Your participation in a legitimate marketing or opinion research study is very important to us and we value the information you provide. Therefore, our relationship will be one of respect and consideration, based on the following practices:

- Your privacy will be respected and the confidentiality of your responses will be maintained.
- Your name, address, telephone number, personal information and other individual response never will be disclosed to anyone outside the research industry without your permission.
- We will always give you the name of the person contacting you, the research company's name, tell you the nature of the study, and in no way misrepresent ourselves or what we are doing.
- We never will try to sell you anything or ask you for money.
- We will not contact you at unreasonable times, but if our time of contact is inconvenient for you we will gladly re-contact you at a more convenient time.
- Your decision regarding participating in a study, answering specific questions, or discontinuing your participation will be respected without question.
- You will be informed in advance if an interview is to be recorded and of the intended use of the recording.
- We will do our best to make your participation in a study a pleasant experience.
- We will maintain the highest standards of professional conduct in the collection and reporting of the information you provide.

YOUR Opinion Counts![®]

XYZ Company is a local marketing research company specializing in data collection, Our clients are interested in your opinions about their products and services. XYZ is a member of the Marketing Research Association and practices legitimate and ethical research.

CALL

◆ **We Will:**

- ◆ Give you a financial incentive for your time and opinions
- ◆ Respect your time and privacy
- ◆ Contact you from 9:00 am - 9:30 pm

◆ **We Will NOT:**

- ◆ Try to sell you anything
- ◆ Ask you for money
- ◆ Sell your name/telephone number to any other company

Please send me more information or call Catherine at XYZ 000-0000

You will receive at least \$40 CASH for participating in marketing research studies lasting approximately two hours.

Please complete this card and mail to Catherine at:

XYZ Company
100 Main Street
Opinion City, IL

or fax Catherine at XYZ-000-0001

Name _____

Address _____

City/State _____

Evening Phone _____

APPENDIX - Sample Postcard that can be sent to potential respondents
(possibly zip code selected).

YOUR OPINION COUNTS![®]

Our clients are interested in your opinion about their products and services. We are members of the Marketing Research Association and practice legitimate research. That means:

We Will:

- *Give you a financial incentive for your time and opinions.*
- *Respect your time and privacy*
- *Contact you from 9:00 am - 9:30 pm*

We Will NOT:

- *Try to sell you anything*
- *Ask you for money*
- *Sell your name and telephone number to any other company*

XYZ Company
100 Main St.
Opinion City, IL

To:

— THANK YOU —

Name _____

Address _____

City _____

Daytime Phone No. _____

Evening Phone No. _____

You will receive at least \$ _____
for participating in market research
studies lasting approximately two
hours. Please complete this card
and mail to:

XYZ Company
100 Main St.
Opinion City, IL

or Call Catherine at XYZ-000-0000
or Fax Catherine at XYZ-000-0001

APPENDIX - Sample paragraphs that can be included in a letter to a potential respondent.

Thank you for requesting additional information about XYZ Company. As we mentioned to you on the phone, XYZ is a marketing/opinion research company with offices in _____. Our business is to conduct marketing and opinion research surveys with the general consumer population. XYZ has been in business for XX years.

XYZ is a legitimate marketing/opinion research company. Unlike telemarketing or sales companies, XYZ never attempts to sell you any product or service during our calls or anytime after you have participated in a survey. Additionally, any information you provide to our company is held in confidence. Your opinions are included with those of other study participants to formulate a report to the company that commissioned the research study.

Our call was to invite you to join our list of XX,000 households in this area that are willing to participate in our surveys. The people included in our database have agreed to let us call their homes from time to time to gather their opinions about various products and services. Some of the respondents called are then selected for further research at one of our offices. You may be offered the chance to participate in a taste test, group discussion and/or interview regarding opinions on such things as advertising, packaging and new product ideas. Those selected usually receive a financial incentive.

If you ever feel that your confidentiality has been compromised, please contact XYZ immediately. You may also report the incident to the Qualitative Research Consultants Association (QRCA), an organization which, in conjunction with the Marketing Research Association (MRA), monitors these incidents on your behalf. QRCA can be reached toll free at 888-674-7722, or you may utilize their web site at www.qrca.org.

In a typical study, one of our interviewers, who always identify themselves as calling from XYZ, would call to speak to you and ask some questions about the products or services you use. Based on your answers, you may be invited to participate further in the study. At this point, our interviewer would provide you with details about the date, time, length and location of the study. If you are invited to our office for a survey, you will receive a financial incentive as a way of thanking you for your time.

These business practices are in compliance with the ethical code of the Marketing Research Association (MRA). If you would like additional information about marketing research or would like to verify that XYZ is indeed a member of the MRA, you may call them at 1-860-257-4008 or consult the MRA web site at www.mra-net.org.

Thank you for taking the time to learn a little bit more about marketing/opinion research and XYZ. Enclosed for your review, is a pamphlet published by the Marketing Research Association (MRA) entitled "Your Opinion Counts" and a copy of the Council for Marketing and Opinion Research (CMOR - 516-928-6206) Respondent Bill of Rights." If you would like to discuss any aspect of marketing/opinion research or would like to be included in our database, please contact our office at _____.

APPENDIX - Sample consumer qualitative database screener

XYZ Company
100 Main Street
Opinion City, IL

Int. Initials _____
Checked by _____
Edited by _____

CONSUMER DATABASE SCREENER

FOR NEW RESPONDENTS:

Hello, this is _____ from XYZ Company. We are not selling anything. We are an opinion research company located in Opinion City. Your friend _____ recently participated in one of our research events. He/she gave us your name and phone number as someone who might be interested in participating in surveys.

XYZ company is a market research company that invites consumers to participate in surveys sponsored by local and national manufacturers. As a participant in a survey, you may be asked to share your opinions on products or services, taste test new or existing products, or respond to an advertising campaign. Typically for your participation you are offered a financial incentive for your time.

I would like to get some background information about you and your household for our files so that we only call you for studies that would be of interest to you.

FOR UPDATING EXISTING RESPONDENTS:

Hello, this is _____ from XYZ Company, the opinion survey company in Opinion City. Today we are updating our files of people who participate in our surveys. I would like to confirm and correct if necessary any information we presently have in your file.

FOR DATA ENTRY—PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY

FIRST NAME: _____

LAST NAME: _____

STREET ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

PHONE (Record with area code): _____

WHAT YEAR WHERE YOU BORN: 19 _____

WHAT IS YOUR ETHNIC BACKGROUND: White Black Hispanic Asian
 Other

RECORD SEX. Female Male

HOW MANY YEARS OF EDUCATION HAVE YOU COMPLETED:

8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19+

ARE YOU EMPLOYED... Full time Part time Unemployed Retired

WHAT IS/WAS YOUR OCCUPATION: _____
(What they do, not their title. Use code list)

FOR WHAT INDUSTRY DO/DID YOU WORK FOR _____
(Use code list)

APPENDIX - Sample consumer qualitative database screener

READ IF EMPLOYED:

We also do many surveys with business professionals in the area. Would you like to be included in our business database so that we can call you for surveys that may concern your profession or industry?

COMPANY NAME: _____

TITLE: _____

COMPANY ADDRESS: CITY: _____ ZIP: _____

WORK PHONE: _____ WORK FAX: _____

OF EMPLOYEES: _____ YR. STARTED W/COMPANY: 19 _____

YR. STARTED IN CURRENT POSITION: 19 _____

ARE YOU... Married Single/Separated Divorced Widowed

DO YOU SMOKE? (If yes) WHAT BRAND DO YOU SMOKE: _____

IS THAT... Full flavor Lights Ultra lights

IS THAT... Menthol Non-menthol

WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU PARTICIPATED IN A SURVEY?

WHAT WAS THE TOPIC?

DATE: _____ TOPIC CODE: _____

READ IF MARRIED:

At this point, I can also include your spouse in our database to do surveys as well. Could I ask you a few questions about him/her?

SPOUSE FIRST NAME: _____ SPOUSE LAST NAME: _____

HOW MANY YEARS OF EDUCATION HAS YOUR SPOUSE COMPLETED?

8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19+

IS YOUR SPOUSE EMPLOYED... Full time Part time Unemployed Retired

WHAT IS/WAS HIS/HER OCCUPATION: _____
(What they do, not their title. Use code list)

FOR WHAT INDUSTRY DO/DID HE/SHE WORK _____
(Use code list)

(DO THIS COMPANY INFORMATION SECTION ONLY IF SPOUSE IS EMPLOYED)

COMPANY NAME: _____

TITLE: _____

COMPANY ADDRESS: CITY: _____ ZIP _____

WORK PHONE: _____ WORK FAX: _____

OF EMPLOYEES: _____ YR. STARTED W/COMPANY: 19 _____

YR. STARTED IN CURRENT POSITION: 19 _____

WHAT IS YOUR SPOUSE'S ETHNIC BACKGROUND:

White Black Hispanic Asian Other

RECORD SEX OF SPOUSE: Female Male

DOES HE/SHE SMOKE? (If yes) WHAT BRAND DOES HE/SHE SMOKE: _____

IS THAT... Full flavor Lights Ultra lights

IS THAT... Menthol Non-menthol

WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME HE/SHE PARTICIPATED IN A SURVEY?

WHAT WAS THE TOPIC?

DATE: _____ TOPIC CODE: _____

WHAT IS YOUR TOTAL ANNUAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME BEFORE TAXES? _____

DO YOU HAV ANY CHILDREN UNDER THE AGE OF 18 LIVING AT HOME? (If yes)

WHAT ARE THE SEX AND BIRTH YEAR OF EACH CHILD?

MALES: 1_____ 2_____ 3_____ 4_____ FEMALES: 1_____ 2_____ 3_____ 4_____

DO YOU HAVE A DOG OR A CAT? Dog Cat

DO YOU USE A COMPUTER AT... Home Work Both Don't use

WHAT ARE THE MANUFACTURERS NAMES OF EACH VEHICLE OWNED BY YOUR HOUSEHOLD.

Manufacturer 1: _____

Manufacturer 2: _____

Manufacturer 3: _____

READ:

Are there any other adults, including adult children, living in your household who might like to be included in our database to participate in surveys? **(Each adult can be included separately. If yes, do a screener with that person.)**

Finally, do you have any friends or relatives outside your household who might be interested in participating in our research studies? **(Record name and phone number on Database Referral Sheet and then call that person/those people.)**



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