

Let me just say that I am delighted to be with you this morning particularly because we are all thrilled that Detroit is building its own new Port of Detroit - and that for the first time in our history, we will be able to welcome our visitors with a first rate welcome area.

Community Perception Polling - before lunch seems like such a dry topic before lunch on such a beautiful day on the river. But as we sit here in this union town in this sports town I think of a story connected with the other part of the title - Know your Audience.

It is a story that was related to Doug Fraser, who was once head of the UAW and they were at a very tense stage of negotiations and went around the table to introduce themselves and where they were from....

The first guy said he Dave Thomas from Minneapolis. The next guy said he was Joe Smith from Green Bay. And one of the other guys said "Hey I thought only prostitutes and football players were from Green Bay. And the guy jumped up and said, "I beg your pardon, my wife is from Green Bay!!" And the other guy said "What position does she play?"

Know your audience. The real benefit of Community Perception Polling. We have been doing this sort of work for businesses, for the Michigan Department of Transportation for neighborhood groups, for the Super Bowl and the Riverfront Conservancy

for the past 25 years...and it is always exciting to discover what you don't know...what you think you know and get wrong...and how it is the MOST IMPORTANT PIECE OF INVESTMENT YOU WILL EVER MAKE IN GETTING THE MESSAGE RIGHT.

In the 12 minutes I have left, I would like to talk to you about a topic I really love, how we do it, how you can do it or look at it differently and how it has changed.

Let me set the stage. When we first started this facet of our agency's services it was a time when only print and phone surveys were used. It was the pre-digital age...the age when people were genuinely delighted to be asked for their opinions. Before the phone rang ad-nauseum during the dinner hour!

Fast forward. Now we have a time impoverished audience. They still would like to have their opinions known - but it is through Face Book and on their terms. However, we have found that if you meet some of those terms - they still want to tell you what they think. And then some.

So what are the advantages?

1. No matter what your starting point, audiences will surprise you with what they find most important.

They will have a hard time telling you what they really care about - but this polling does reveal exactly that (and what doesn't matter)

And it unearths landmines/hot spots you didn't know were out there - before they erupt without proper planning to deal with them.

I think the STARTING POINT IS WHERE MOST COMMUNITY POLLS GO WRONG. We usually begin at the back end. WHAT DO WE NEED TO KNOW AND HOW WILL THAT INFORMATION BE APPLIED?

It may be for a:

- Branding Program
- Key messaging
- Media Relations

- Areas of agreement - consensus building
- The most frequently used pathways
- Bridging the digital divide - between some urban audiences who are not digitally reliant and get their information elsewhere.
- Leadership briefings

In any case, it ALWAYS UNCOVERS WHAT YOU LEAST EXPECT THAT SIGNIFICANTLY ALTERS KEY MESSAGING.

Let me break ranks with the outline now and go to one of the examples we used. Detroit was celebrating its 300th birthday. An all star team led by the Mayor and Edsel Ford II. It was a year long celebration - marked by the summer festival celebration, which brought in 27 tall ships, Stevie Wonder for a free concert, and a who's who line up of Detroit born talent.

We were hired as the celebration was launching. The organizers had released the former agency of record So we were planning and implementing at the same time. NO TIME FOR COMMUNITY POLLING. Nor did we know who the audience was...or if this celebration mattered. And, I should add, Edsel Ford's articulation of "what would success look like?" was 1 million people during the summer 4-day celebration!"

But we guessed that the audience would be urban and suburban, regional, and probably people who hadn't been in Detroit in 30 years. So we built a quick intercept poll around that urban/suburban/regional audience who did come to Detroit for the International Auto Show. And we asked them:

DO YOU CARE THAT IT'S DETROIT'S 300TH BIRTHDAY (MOST ANSWERED THEY DIDN'T KNOW OR DIDN'T CARE)
 WHAT WOULD MAKE YOU CARE ABOUT THE CELEBRATION?
 (Tall ships and Stevie Wonder were a definite draw)
 And what would be the best way to communicate with you about the celebration?

This was 2001. And from our 6 question survey, we built the strategy and key messages and the ramp up to the celebration and guess what? 5 million people came to the celebration... and a good portion of those hadn't been to Detroit for 30 years.

Edsel Ford's mail bag was filled with letters by snail mail thanking him for the gift of bringing them back to see such a vibrant city.

All of which is to punctuate 2 items on your handout.

1. Locating your audience

You have to look in unlikely places to determine where that community that is important to poll, lives.

More on that with the Riverfront.

And 2. The length of the survey needs to be controlled. These 6 page surveys that come online are not something that most people will take the time to fill out with their real feelings. The length has to be short. And lead them to locate how they feel. Pictures are great. As Aristotle said, “the soul never thinks without an image.”

We have found that the kind of COMMUNITY POLLING THAT YIELDS THE BEST RESULTS IS A COMBINATION OF SURVEY INSTRUMENTS:

Intercept polls. You go to where they are. We have done them in hotel bars (when we are trying to get visitors)...at auto shows.. at festivals. And most of the time if there is A LINE...PEOPLE ARE HAPPY TO TALK TO YOU.

WEBSITES. Usually the people who visit a website are already interested in that service or product....But you have to drive them to take the survey...Use either survey monkey or by asking questions online.

ROUNDTABLES. This is my favorite form because it yields an incredible treasure chest of qualitative information. We have used these with taxi cab drivers, with office managers, with residents, with urbanities and suburbanites. And we go through the relationships they have with those they value to get them to participate. We are very careful to respect their time - 90 minutes maximum. So the group size is small. We feed them. During lunch, after work. And we send them the results.

PRINT SURVEY. We still use these particularly in urban areas. Or with busy people. We use them and distribute through community meetings, through libraries, through associations, or annual meetings. and if they are brief, they will fill them out.

Now let me apply all of this to my favorite client. The Detroit Riverfront Conservancy. We were fortunately enough to be hired when the vision was just being formulated. That was

6 years ago. Before the CEO who will speak tomorrow was hired...before a shovel had been put in the ground.

Here was the challenge: how do you brand something that doesn't exist?

Here was the layered approach:

Find out which audiences were most important to identifying not only what they thought of the riverfront but when they might use it?

It was residents, workers, urbanites, suburbanites, visitors, community groups, leaders, funders, all of those.

So we sliced the audiences into 3 groups:

1. Tourism referrers (taxi cab drivers, leadership, cvb)
2. Users (residents, suburbanites, downtown workers, urbanites)
3. Visitors

And we located really interesting groups....like a new group then called Detroit Synergy...comprised of "urbanites" people from Detroit, from the suburbs, and those who had moved here who were all high on detroit. Surprise? They told us that the most important part of the river was that it was astride two countries and that the history - which they knew in detail - needed to be shared.

Neighborhood groups astride the Riverfront. Surprise? Why is it that when you log on to the Northwest website there are only 2 restaurants listed in downtown Detroit ?

Cab Drivers

Again a roundtable...Surprise...that they had no information to refer to and unless they bought it or had visited it personally, they didn't know what to recommend.

Suburbanites.

A group arranged by an association. Their perceptions were really important. One asked if we could change the name of the river!

visitors.

in the bar of this hotel...while they were waiting for someone or just having a drink....and most of them were surprised there was even a river on the other side of the hotel! so much for assumptions.

So, we queried our “community”

Online - at the Riverfront Conservancy website

In print - distributing surveys at a meeting of an advertising association and the annual meeting of the downtown partnership.

ROUNDTABLES - 11 OF THEM

And then took all of that information to the final series of workshops we convened with the community residents and the creative community (other agency folks)...to help us guide the creation of the brand.

We used other benchmarks of identities from riverwalks around the country...used the results of our community polling around the room...and brought out some rough sketches of Detroit’s identity for them to vote on.

in the process we discovered what we should share with leadership...what our key messages should look like... that International should be in the name.... and last year hit the 2 million mark of visitors..just 5 years after the vision was created.

This is a fabulous tool for all of us to use. And we are excited to share what we have learned with you. I should also say that this tool works with 1:1 formats... such as with leadership. We conducted that for Detroit 300, for the Super Bowl, and it helps to articulate **WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE!** An invaluable touchstone in the world we all hope to continue doing business in.

One final thought: I know you are all thinking how do you afford this in today’s budgets. Believe me I know your pain! Survey monkey is probably the least expensive online polling to do....but even if your budgets don’t have room for that - take the temperature in the community you wish to query. We often do this by calling or emailing relationships we have and asking them key questions. It is amazing if you have a relationship - what those folks will tell you about perceptions and behavior that

will get the messaging off to the right foot.

Thank you for inviting me.