Conducting Effective Survey Research on a Shoestring

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Audiences

“Whose opinion really matters?

• “Squeaky wheels” vs. “Average folks”
• Convenience samples vs. Scientific
Audiences

- Neighborhoods
- Community groups
- Legislative & Regulatory agencies
- Shareholders
- Financial community
- Employees
- Activists
- Trade media
- Consumer /News media
- Vendors /Trade allies /Channel partners
- Trade unions – and of course…
- Customers
- Prospects
High Quality Samples

- Carefully define target audience
- Build the best contact list possible
- Establish controls / quotas
  - Demographics (age, sex, geographics)
  - Psychographics (customers, voters)
Sources of Bias

What’s possible within the budget?

- No news is good news? *(Comment cards)*
- *Some* good information is better than *no* information
- “Size” is not all it’s cracked up to be
- Objectivity: understand your biases
- Random sampling
Sources of Question Bias

Questions:
- Socially-correct responses
- Uneven scales
- Unasked questions (Why?)
- Double-barreled questions
- Too many questions!
Approaches

- Harder to Reach Audiences (B2B/G)
  - What’s in it for them?
  - Work the gate-keeper
  - Pleasant persistence (6+ tries)
  - Get appointments
  - Meaningful incentives (drawings & charity)
  - Share results with participants
Approaches

Making the most of the Qualitative Approach – Focus Groups

- Rigorous recruiting (random if possible)
- Moderator objectivity & neutrality
- Promote *group* interaction
- Demand “the good, the bad & the ugly”
- It’s OK to focus on key participants
Analyzing Survey Results

Validate the samples:

- Compare responses against known data
  - Organization databases
  - Census figures / Voter data
  - Compare with baseline studies
  - Industry Info / Secondary sources
Fatal Errors
(Putting Lipstick on a Pig)

- Settle for convenience samples
- Combine questions to save time
- Add research to staff’s existing workload
- Hide confusing or unflattering results
- Fail to share/implement results
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