

## In With the New Media Out With the Old Media? (Part I)

January 2010 newsletter

You would have to have been sleeping under a rock, for the entirety of the past year, to avoid hearing about social media. And, if you are a marketer, the pressure to do something (anything!) in this space has been relentless.

How do we understand consumer behavior in a world where the rules of communication are in flux? One way is to develop an online community that is dedicated to market research. These **online research communities** engage consumers in an environment in which they feel comfortable to talk, interact and exchange information with their peers – and not entirely coincidentally – with market researchers.

These online research communities are similar to research panels, except much smaller (about 200 to 400 members) and more actively managed. While panels generate an ROI only when a study is in progress, an online research community can provide a continuous feedback loop of rich insights.

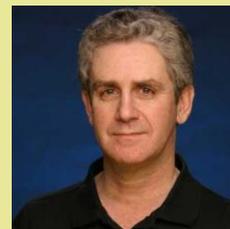
Because responsiveness is critical, members (who we used to call respondents) must be touched, even nurtured, on an almost daily basis. This methodology produces a high level of engagement because it introduces a social context that enables community members to interact in a more natural environment.

While most of the research deliverables are more qualitative in nature, if the community is large

**This is a monthly newsletter from Prell Organization.**

**Prell Organization** is a marketing research firm that uses qualitative and quantitative methods to help our clients and their agencies see their brands more clearly.

**Brand Clarity** is a process by which consumers reveal the essence of a brand to make sure that the products and services being offered are closely aligned to their needs.



enough, it can also function as a small-scale reality check for product development and concept testing, and other quantitative needs. Still, the most valuable insights will be qualitative in nature: on-the-fly and iterative.

In addition, more formally-planned forays into the minds of your consumers are possible, using online bulletin boards, data mining of talk forums and ideation sessions that inject the Voice of the Customer as a real partner in innovation.

The “killer” application is the ability to have real-time input from your customers – even when there is nothing specific to ask them – by just listening to what they are saying about your brand. This gives you an on-going sense of how your brand is perceived and an early warning sign if something changes.

But sometimes online methodologies are not always the best way to reach certain populations. Next month, we will explore how one of the oldest methodologies (good-ole snail-mail) can be more appropriate, insightful and cost-effective.

Rick Weitzer  
Principal

636-728-1557  
rweitzer@prellorg.com  
www.prellorg.com