

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

February 2010 newsletter

New media and new methodologies are not always the best approach to reach certain populations. This month, at the risk of appearing old fashioned, we will explore how one of the oldest methodologies (good old snail mail) can be more appropriate, insightful and cost-effective.

Our founder, Art Prell, consistently preached "don't let the methodology drive the research." We use this piece of wisdom as our basic operating principal: we are agnostic when it comes to methodology. Instead of being predisposed towards any one methodology (e.g., online or offline, qual or quant), we let the situation determine what is appropriate - and that will depend on:

- How easy it is to reach the target markets
- The nature of the product being researched
- Time allotted to conduct the research
- Budgetary constraints

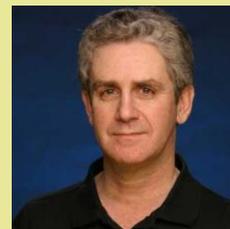
Sometimes, the big new sexy methodology isn't appropriate. Recently I was trying to figure how to send a large (100+ MB) file to a client. Every technological solution appeared to create other problems, until it hit me: snail mail. For as little as 44 cents, I could send a CD to anywhere in the U.S. in about two days.

And guess what, USPS offers a great methodology for market research: mail surveys.

**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.



Because the volume of first class mail continues to decline (-4.5% in 2008), surveys mailed with real first-class postage stamps stand out better – especially compared to what is perceived to be “junk” third-class mail.

We recently conducted a mail survey that generated nearly a 60 percent response rate from physicians and several years ago we mailed 100,000 surveys to benefits managers throughout the country and received an astounding 79 percent response rate.

if you are invoicing your customers regularly, you are likely to have a complete sampling frame with very accurate address fields from which to execute a mail survey. Business-to-business customers, in particular, are extremely difficult to reach over the phone and they are also resistant to completing e-mail surveys at their desk during work hours. A mail methodology gives them the flexibility to complete the survey at their convenience.

Mail surveys used to take three to four weeks to field. But now the first responses arrive within three days and most are received in a week. Thus, field work is completed as fast as online surveys and often faster than telephone surveys.

Some people are overjoyed if they get 500 online surveys returned, without considering the response rate. But if 10,000 e-mail are blasted out (which is often the case), the resulting response rate (of 5%) brings up a serious issue of non-respondent bias.

Like an e-mail survey, the respondents must have an affinity with the sponsoring organization, which means that, unless you are employing a third-party panel, the survey cannot be blind. And it is impossible to ask questions on an unaided basis. But if executed properly, mail surveys can generate great response rates and quality information.

Rick Weitzer  
Principal

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