

Why Make a Decision Tomorrow When You Can Make It Today?

September 2009 newsletter

We often hear three main complaints about qualitative research:

- It takes too long
- It is too expensive
- It doesn't tell us what to do

Even when the report is delivered within a week of the field work, we hear the first complaint. We hear that the major stakeholders have "moved on" based on what was heard or observed during the focus groups or in-depth interviews. The report, nicely printed and bound, sits on a shelf (or resides deep inside a hard drive) and sometimes it is never read.

We hear that all research costs too much, but mostly they are complaining about value. However, we also see a lot of 'scope-creep' which increases the number of groups or depth interviews, pushing the costs outside of the original budget parameters, a major hurdle during these tough economic times.

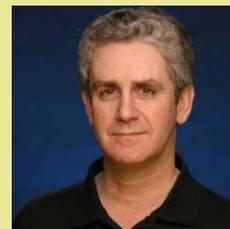
We also hear about the frustration that research does not tell them how to implement its findings. Even though qualitative reports are usually loaded with 'insights,' too often it is difficult to translate them into actionable recommendations. This is often caused by a disconnect between the research team and the ultimate users of the research information.

Whether these three complaints are true or not does not matter. Since we preach that our clients need to

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.



be consumer-focused, we too must be customer-focused and accept these complaints at face value. And deliver a solution.

The solution, we think, is to engage stakeholders at key points in the research process, mostly compressed into a 24-hour time period that respects their time and focuses their concentration. At the end of this time period, the client team will have made the most important decisions set out before them. We call this process Focused Decisions.

Although a week is needed to recruit respondents, the real action starts in the late afternoon when we start the first of two (or three) focus groups. The client team observes these groups while following along with a discussion guide that provides room for them to take notes, indicate key verbatim quotes and prompt them to start thinking about the implications of the research.

After the last group is completed later that evening, there is no immediate debrief. Instead, the stakeholders go home and sleep on it. By consciously not processing the evening's information, they can come back the next morning refreshed and attack the situation with fresh eyes and ears.

That next morning is crucial: the moderator leads the client team through a structured ideation process with a focus on answering the key questions that led to the research in the first place – and on making decisions.

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