

## President's Corner

*Bob McGarry, Information Specialist Group  
Chapter President*

It is now the year 2005 and it's hard to believe we are nearly half way through the decade. In the year 2000, we started the year with the non-issue of Y2K and a stock market boom that was led by the dot com stocks. The year ended with the disaster that was the Presidential Election and the dot com collapse. What will be the big stories and trends for 2005? It's part of our business to try and figure that out.

After reading up on new products for this year, you can expect to see recycled clothing as well as clothing that will contain your communication tools, monitor your vitals, or change colors. By year's end we can expect to be able to email during flights, watch programming (the show "24" for example) developed specifically to be viewed on your cell phone. Sony Playstation 3 will come out by the end of the year. Broadband will have a mass rollout and some large cities will be set up as a wireless environment. The price for large screen TVs will drop dramatically. You'll be able to email your shopping list to your shopping cart that will scan your groceries to keep track of preferences and cost. Low carb will be out and glycemic index will be in.

There will continue to be changes in how business is conducted as well. Business is once again synonymous with war. Hardball companies will survive by creating discomfort for their competitors and learning to deal with it themselves. There will continue to be more outsourcing globally. Over two-thirds of US companies are increasing the percentage of their IT budgets going off-shore. This is a direct result of 70% of the firms who currently off-shore saying they are satisfied. Managing the clock will become more difficult as global work groups are set up and 3am conference calls may become commonplace. The age-old strategy of using three-fourths of a marketing budget on advertising and one-fourth

## 2005 Upcoming Events

**February 8, 2005**

*"Super Bowl Smackdown - A Battle for the Champion Commercial"*

**KFAN The Restaurant, Roseville, MN**

**March 15, 2005**

Marketing Research and the Minneapolis Convention Center

**April 21, 2005**

A Panel Perspective on the Value of Open-End Comments

**May 19, 2005**

Annual Meeting /Twins and Marketing Research by Twins President, Dave St. Peter. At the Metrodome, followed by the Toronto Blue Jays vs. the Minnesota Twins game starting at 12:10 p.m.

### *What's Inside...*

President's Corner	1-2
Chapter Event Review	2-3
Board Members	2
Certification	4-6
Board Elections	6
It's the Little Things	6-7
QRCA News	7
Puzzle	7
Chapter Chat	8
Super Bowl Smackdown	9
Puzzle Answers	10
Advertising	11-12

## President's Corner (continued)

Continued from page 1

on other tactics will now reverse. Direct marketing, especially through the Internet, will see increased play as Do Not Call hampers telemarketing and mass media makes it tough to attack certain segments. Branding will continue to be a big topic for businesses, as will blogs.

As expected, the research industry will be changing as well. Clients are demanding, and research firms are beginning to provide ways to electronically track consumer behavior rather than just asking people to report on their behavior. There are now devices that people wear that tell what station they are watching or what aisle of a grocery store they are in. Of course, privacy will become a big debate as we continue to push forward in deducing intention from someone's behavior. In an effort to reach the young crowd, text-messaging surveys will become prevalent. Online research will continue to get a larger piece of the quantitative pie and B2B companies will seek out panels of hard to reach respondents such as IT and C-level executives. Conjoint analysis will continue to be a sought after technique and companies will also focus on customer-centric metrics.

I'm excited for the New Year and all that it will bring to us. We, as market researchers, will continue to be relevant as long as we stay open to change for change brings opportunity. It should be a fun ride.

## Swedish Meatballs & Affordable Home Furnishings: A review of the November 4<sup>th</sup> MRA Chapter Event

*By Joel Schneider, Delve LLC*

The anticipation preceding the November 4<sup>th</sup> MRA Chapter Event rivaled the hysteria of any recent IKEA grand opening. Rumors of die-hard attendees camping out days in advance to ensure good seats and the freshest Swedish Meatballs were unsubstantiated, if not completely understandable. In defense of these purported "campers," it would be naïve to surmise that a store that welcomed in over 1 million visitors between their July 14<sup>th</sup> opening and the MRA event on November 4<sup>th</sup> could breed anything other than wild excitement in the hearts and minds of people.

Continued on page 3

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## MRA Chapter Event (continued)

Continued from page 2

The presentation focused primarily on IKEA's strategy for using marketing research to determine which locations would be most suitable for opening new stores. The most important factor being: is there an inexpensive, cost efficient way to get inventory from their distribution center to the potential new store location? One reason IKEA can sell home furnishings that are affordable to the many is because they save money in shipping costs. For example, they never ship "air." Merchandise is packed flat and unassembled, reducing much cost of shipping. They proclaim with pride that their customer base is made up of the smart, not the rich.

Quantitative models consisting of: demographics, strength of local economy, new home growth, hobbies, and media costs are used to determine potential sales for a new market. IKEA knows that 70% of their customers are female, 80% have a college education, 50% have families with children, and the median age is 36. Researchers use these statistics to determine whether it would be a better option to open a store in Bloomington, MN or Bismarck, ND.

Once a new location has been chosen, IKEA works closely with their marketing research agency to gauge community awareness, market needs, competition, and store modification possibilities. The methodologies most often used to learn about their customers are in-homes, focus groups, and store intercepts. An important challenge for IKEA is to make sure that there is a healthy blend of Swedishness and hipness in their stores. Or as it was explained another way, "don't let IKEA's Swedishness overcome its hipness.

IKEA does not vary the furniture they sell in each of their particular markets, but they use research to determine how best to display the merchandise that they sell. For instance, IKEA Twin Cities has a "lake home" display that might seem wildly out of place in most any other location throughout the country. IKEA uses research to gain insights as to the best way to display the merchandise they sell for individual markets throughout the world.

At the conclusion of the hour long presentation our thirst for information had been satiated. Breakfast followed immediately and then the store tour began. Thank you IKEA for the hospitality!

### MRA MN/Upper Midwest Chapter Committee Chairs

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# The Case for Certification

*Joan Burns, Teradyne, Inc., Chair of Certification Committee*

Nearly two years ago, the MRA Board initiated an effort to develop ideas for raising the level of professionalism within marketing research. The vehicle for accomplishing this was deemed to be Certification. An individual is certified if he/she demonstrates competency by meeting a set of standards comprised of experience and training, including adherence to requirements for keeping up to date in his/her discipline.

A Certification Task Force was formed. The Task Force gathered job descriptions at all levels across the industry. Together with MRA Staff, they analyzed and stratified these in terms of levels of responsibility, level of specialized knowledge, and scope of experience required. These were codified to scale the extent of experience and training required at each level both to maintain certification currency and/or advance to another level. The general Certification segments follow the three major segments of our industry: Data Collection, Research Suppliers/Providers and End Users. Subgroups exist within; for example, within Data Collection some of the subgroups are Mall, Telephone, Online, and Ethnographic Research. Then, within each of these subgroups are job titles. For example, for the Data Collection subdivision of Mall, job titles include Facility Owner, Facility Manager, Supervisor, etc.

From entry level to the “C” suites, there is a clear definition of the scope of job responsibilities, the percentage of time spent on each of these areas and the skills necessary to do the job. All of this translates into the education and experience needed to be Certified in your present area of practice, to remain Certified in your present area of practice or to advance your Certification to the next step up from your current area of practice.

By obtaining Certification, marketing research professionals demonstrate that they are committed to the highest standards of research practice and their own professional growth. Certification will provide recognition to those who are new or newer to the industry and allow seasoned, experienced researchers the opportunity to formally certify their research and business acumen. Certified researchers will provide more value by being a

credentialed resource to clients, colleagues, and their company.

## Applying for Certification

Applying for Certification will be a relatively simple process:

**Step 1:** You will peruse the list of Certification Segments to determine the area in which you will apply for Certification.

**Step 2:** You will fill out the application and forward it to MRA Headquarters

**Step 3:** The MRA Certification Staff will review the application

**Step 4:** If appropriate, the Certification Staff will confer Certification. They will also advise the applicant on the requirements to maintain that certification and, if the applicant chooses, to advance to the next level of certification.

A first principle in defining the MRA Certification Program was the determination that, unlike some other programs that are entirely based on levels of education, the MRA Certification program will weigh both education and experience when determining both Certification level and advancement criteria. Therefore, since this is not an entirely objective process, any applications that are not “cut and dried” will be referred to the Certification Review Committee for further consideration. This Committee will be comprised of Volunteers within our profession who are eminently qualified to render subjective judgments on an applicant’s meeting Certification requirements.

Many people within the profession will qualify for Certification right from the start of the release of the program; their educational background and marketing research work experience will allow them to be grand fathered in. The MRA Certification program will be

## Applying for Certification (continued)

Continued from page 4

taking this into account and will allow for a period of time within which current marketing research practitioners may apply to be “grand fathered” into Certification. By applying to be grand fathered, practitioners’ work experience and education will be considered and, presuming they meet the criteria set, will be Certified in their area of practice. A grand fathering application has been developed addressing the specific needs of current practitioners. No tests will be required during this grand fathering phase, but those who do not apply for grand fathering during that grace period thereafter will be subject to the standard Certification requirements.

This prestigious program is the result of the work of a Committee comprised of members of all segments of the industry (End Users, Research Design & Analysis, Data Collection and Related Services) and who hold membership in the major industry associations (MRA, AMA, CMOR, IMRO) as well as trained MRA Staff headed by Executive Director Larry Hadcock. Larry has spearheaded and supervised several other successful association certification programs. With the depth and breadth of this group, our members and other research professionals will have all the appropriate resources they need to move through the program successfully.

### Certification: Maintenance & Advancement (M&A)

Once you achieve initial Certification, either through grandfathering or by the required testing after the grandfathering period expires, you will have two choices within the program: *maintaining* your Certification at the level at which you were when you attained it or *advancing* your Certification to the next level.

You will *maintain* your Certification by accruing a specific amount of contact hours over a two-year period. You accumulate these hours by taking relevant, approved courses for which you will be given contact hours and for which you submit proof of attendance.

You *advance* your Certification by accruing a specific amount of CEUs (Continuing Education Units). CEUs are granted as the result of relevant, approved courses that test the learner’s understanding level. One CEU is equal to ten (10) contact hours of participation in an organized continuing education experience under responsible sponsorship, capable direction, and qualified instruction. Those who wish to advance will fill out an application. Once that advancement application is in place, you will begin to document your course work through MRA Headquarters. Headquarters will track your application to ensure compliance within the three-year timeframe allowed for advancing your Certification.

Contact Hours? CEUs? Don’t be cowed. You can be earning contact hours when you attend an approved MRA National or Chapter educational event, or those sponsored by other related associations and organizations that offer programming in research skills, business management, or the applicable support skills. “Events” include Conference sessions, phone or in-person seminars and online webinars. Contact hours involve your attendance at such programs and proof thereof.

CEUs are continuing education units that apply when one is taking an approved course (at a school, college, or through any organization offering an approved course). A distinguishing requisite for CEUs is that they involve a test or test-equivalent (paper, project, oral exam or presentation, etc.). CEUs in areas specific to an applicant will be required to advance to a next level of Certification.

Discussion during the recent MRA Fall Education Conference in San Diego revealed that some people are confusing Certification with Accreditation. *Certification* applies to an *individual*; that person carries it (or these) with him/her from job to job and employer to employer (as one who has attained an educational degree). The individual will be able to use it as another proof of competence and achievement. *Accreditation* is conferred upon *companies* that incorporate and maintain certain standards of business operation.

## Certification: M&A (continued)

Continued from page 5

Look for more detailed information available soon on our Certification section of the MRA website. Once our “Certification” section is up and running you’ll be able to access the Grandfathering applications, the full matrix of Certification segments and the requirements for each one, and other details and FAQ’s.



**2005-2006**

### **MN/Upper-Midwest Chapter of The Marketing Research Association Board of Director Elections**

The Minnesota/Upper Midwest Chapter of the Marketing Research Association Board of Directors Election is just around the corner.

To fill positions on the Board, we look for individuals possessing good communication and task management skills, the ability to delegate and lead others, the ability to think strategically and plan for the future.

**Members are welcome to submit additional nominations** to any member of the Nominating Committee (listed below) by Tuesday, February 15. Our Bylaws require a “...petition signed by at least fifteen percent of the members who are in good standing at the time of the nominations,” which equates to signatures from approximately 20 members.

#### **2004-2005 MN/UMW Nominating Committee:**

- Doug Skipper (MSG), President
- Bob McGarry (ISG), President
- Lisa Morse (Questar), Immediate Past President
- Dave Koch (Adapt), Past President
- Bev Koser (Harris), Past President

## “It’s the Little Things”

By Linda Daniel

Our chapter is focusing on encouraging students to attend our events, and that’s gotten me thinking about the things these newbies **really** need to learn. You can take classes in almost all phases of marketing research and, true, they all will be a big help in a future career. I’ve noticed, however, that universities leave the really important things out of the curriculum. What’s the most important class you can take? Learning how to make technology your friend. If you don’t master this skill, a pit filled with gloom and despair will open at your feet and you will be doomed to eternal frustration. Want some examples of the ways in which unfriendly technology can hurt you?

- The copy machine/printer: You will attempt to send 1 copy of 1 page to the printer. Twenty minutes later (when you finish your conference call and have a chance to pick up that 1 page), you find a stack of 600 copies of that single sheet of paper. No one can find any command on your computer that even hints at the number “600.” If you are very quiet while standing by the printer, you’ll hear a faint chuckle—your enemy has scored a point.
- Phones: Some phones come with great conferencing features. Your phone will not. Of course, everyone else in the company can still manage to make a conference call. Sooner or later, you will conference in a very nice stranger in China and manage to hang up on your client. Score: Technology 2, Victim 0.
- The postage meter: You follow the instructions exactly, going through each step with fingers crossed. You line up your 150 envelopes and they breeze right through the meter. Yes! Victory! But.....the postage amount showing on the screen is not the amount printed on the envelopes, all of which are unsealed. Score? Technology 3, Victim 0.
- Computer: The losing possibilities are endless! Score? Technology ~1,000, Victim 0.

Continued on page 7

## “It’s the Little Things” (continued) **Puzzle: A Quiz**

Continued from page 6

I somehow missed that technology class and am now in a position where all machines hate me. You think I’m joking. Just ask my co-workers. It’s so bad that I’m not permitted to even add paper to the copier or turn on the postage meter. I’ve actually suffered from all of the above—except calling China by mistake (it was San Diego).



### QRCA NEWS

#### Strategies for Achieving Top-Notch Recruits

Monday, May 9<sup>th</sup>; 11:30 am

Join the Minnesota QRCA (Qualitative Research Consultants’ Association) as we engage in an interactive dialogue with some of the area’s leading focus group facility managers on how to increase the quality of recruits for focus groups and one-on-one interviews. Discussion points will include:

- What are the most challenging types of recruits?
- What are the roles of the researchers and clients in ensuring a successful recruiting effort?
- What are the key elements of an effective screener?

The details of the program including location will be provided closer to the date of the event. This meeting will be open to all MRA members.

The puzzle for this issue is a quiz from the website of Stephen Wilbers. I’d like to strongly recommend [Keys to Great Writing](#) by Stephen Wilbers. You can find a link to it (and other great stuff) on his website: [www.wilbers.com](http://www.wilbers.com).

He says, “I created the following exercises to complement the 14 techniques of concise writing that I present in my book, *Keys to Great Writing*. Page numbers refer to the relevant sections in Chapter 1, “Economy.” The following techniques will help you eliminate wordiness in your writing. Each technique is accompanied by three sentences for you to revise.”

Due to space constraints, I’ve only included a sample of his quiz. Take a stab at these and then see the New and Improved versions under Answers to Puzzle. Enjoy!

1. **Delete redundant modifiers (p. 15)**
  - a. In this modern world of today, we must necessarily project ahead in planning for the future.
  - b. He referred back to the notes he had taken during the meeting.
  - c. We offer complimentary gift wrapping at no charge to our customers the future.
2. **Replace wordy expressions with single words (p. 18)**
  - a. In the event that you arrive late, use the side door.
  - b. Prior to coming to First Trust, Kimberly worked at Waconia Savings and Loan.
  - c. Due to the fact that the report is more than 10 pages long, the council cannot help but feel overwhelmed by it.
3. **Delete “hollow” hedges and meaningless intensifiers (p. 21)**
  - a. We are rather concerned about your tardiness.
  - b. This effectively limits our ability to respond quickly.
  - c. Your description is altogether fitting.

The New and Improved versions under Answers to Puzzle on page 10.

## Chapter Chat: An Interview with Joan Burns, Certification Workgroup Chair, MRA

*Submitted Randi Luoto, Luoto Associates*

The theme of this issue of the Verbatim (education) could not be more appropriate given the roll out in the next few weeks of the long-awaited MRA Certification program. What follows is an extremely brief overview of a complex and detailed program. Anyone who seeks to fully understand this program, or to apply for certification, is encouraged to go online to the MRA website and download the several articles stored on the site.

### **Why did MRA Undertake Development of a Certification Program, and why now?**

Nearly two years ago, MRA initiated action to raise public awareness of and appreciation for the level of professionalism demonstrated by marketing researchers. Action was deemed necessary to confront several challenges facing the profession: the desire to be seen as self-regulating given ethical lapses in other disciplines; new technologies that enable “do it yourself” research by the untrained; increasingly blurred lines between research and telemarketing; and the problems of adverse legislation being introduced.

An MRA task force, asked to create an action plan, recommended that the organization spearhead an effort to promote the value and contribution of marketing research to the general public, while raising the level of competence among practitioners. A program of certification and accreditation was suggested to address both. For the general public, this will ensure a pool of well-trained, professionals who adhere to consistent industry standards. For individuals, it will bestow instant credibility by confirming basic competencies. Certification of individual researchers will roll out first quarter 2005.

### **What is a “certified” professional researcher and what are levels of certification?**

Individual certification will require researchers to demonstrate competency by meeting a set of standards based on training and experience. Maintaining or advancing certifications will require ongoing training and education. Certification requirements reflect agreement among representatives from MRA, MRII, IMRO Division of MRA and AMA, and all segments of the marketing

research community from mall interviewer through end user.

Work continues to fine tune requirements for levels of individual certification to ensure consideration for both years of experience and specific nature of work performed. Three levels of certification have been established with each requiring a minimum for years of experience: “A” (highest) will require five or more years of relevant experience; “B” will require three or four; and “C,” a minimum of one. In addition to years of experience, consideration is given to the scope of job responsibilities, the amount of time spent on the various types of responsibilities and the skills required to successfully accomplish them.

### **What are the main features of MRA’s Certified Professional Researcher program?**

- Unlike other certification programs, MRA Certification weighs both education and experience when determining certification level and advancement requirements, rather than simply looking at years of study. In this, the process is less “cut and dry” than others. Applications will be reviewed by MRA staff (two staff members are trained and ready). If needed, they will be referred to volunteer members of MRA’s Certification Review Committee for further consideration.
- Once certification has been conveyed, the applicant will be advised of requirements for *maintaining* the certification. Continuing education classes, conferences, webinars, etc. are apt to be options. And, if the applicant chooses, they will be advised as to what it will take to *advance* to the next highest level.
- Advancing to a higher certification will not be easy. Those seeking to advance will register their intent with MRA. MRA staff will track their progress and will expect proof of mastery of the required material in

## MRA-MN Midwest Chapter February 2005 Event “Super Bowl Smackdown”

The Super Bowl is the only event in television where the commercials are as anticipated as the show itself. Regardless of how our team performs, the commercials rarely disappoint. Sure there will be some duds. Maybe a few that we just don't get! But rest assured, by the end of the game, each of us will have viewed at least one commercial that had us howling like it was New Year's all over again.

George Creel, Director of Account Planning and Research for Periscope, will facilitate a panel discussion regarding the success, or lack thereof, for each of the Super Bowl commercials.

The panel will be made up of: Aaron Keller, Managing Principal of Capsule and St. Thomas adjunct professor of marketing with expertise in branding, Kat Dalager, Marketing Business Process Consultant at Target Corporation, and Jim Sandstrom, Principal of Localmarketmedia.com with extensive agency and client side experience in media research and planning.

After viewing each commercial a discussion will follow, and yes, attendees are encouraged to voice their opinions as well. At the end of the evening a vote will take place and a WINNING commercial will be crowned!

**Please join us on Tuesday, February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2005 at KFAN The Restaurant in Roseville, MN for an entertaining and lively discussion.**

**Registration begins at 5:30PM and the panel discussion will start at 6:30PM.**

**All you need to do now is watch the Super Bowl, or at least the commercials.. Contact Clark Kristensen at [info@mnmra.org](mailto:info@mnmra.org) and let us know you are coming!**

**Kat Dalager** is a Marketing Business Process Consultant at Target Corporation. She previously started the Art Producing Department at Carmichael Lynch where she produced photography for Harley-Davidson, Rollerblade, Polaris and many more. She also worked for The Martin Agency in Richmond, Virginia where she reinvented the Art Production Department while traveling the world with clients such as Saab, Timberland and Wrangler.

**Aaron Keller**, Co-founding principal of Capsule, provides consultation in the areas of brand management, identity, and marketing-working with clients like Fisher-Price, Honeywell, Cargill and Target. He has been quoted in leading local and national publications including The New York Times, Business Week, Investor's Business Daily, etc. He is currently teaching integrated marketing communications at the University of St. Thomas as an adjunct professor.

**James E. Sandstrom**, principal of Localmarketmedia.com, has extensive agency and client side experience in media research and planning. He currently works with online advertisers who have specific geographic needs. His focus is on media planning/buying on web sites with local market content. He also plans, buys and manages (i.e. “traditional”) off-line client media initiatives.



## Chapter Chat (continued)

Continued from page 8

the form of test scores, grades, papers or equivalent. According to Joan Burns, chair of the MRA Certification Workgroup, “Each individual will be responsible for forwarding grades or other proof of proficiency to MRA who will maintain private files for each person.”

- Current marketing researchers are apt to qualify for certification immediately; their educational background and experience will allow them to be “grandfathered” in. A unique “grandfathering” application is being created for this purpose; however, applicants must apply for it within the first two years of the launch of the MRA certification program. After the “grandfathering” period, applicants must pass a test administered by MRA in order to win certification.

### What remains to be done on Certification before it rolls out?

To assist with the certification effort, MRA commissioned several subgroups. One subgroup is developing a bank of test questions appropriate for each certification level. Another is pledged to periodically review the standards and requirements for certification with an eye towards identifying appropriate training and education resources. Burns says, “MRA will be inviting associations and other education providers to submit details about course offerings and seminars they believe suitable for our requirements. These will be reviewed and approved as appropriate. MRA members and other marketing research practitioners will be asked to encourage qualified sources to apply for consideration.”

Down the road, MRA intends to launch a parallel effort to build an accreditation program with focus on companies, rather than individuals. Key goal will be to raise business and consumer appreciation for the role of marketing research and research professionals. Burns credits MRA Executive Director, Larry Hadcock, with being a driving force behind the effort. “Larry has spearheaded certification and accreditation programs for other organizations. His knowledge and guidance have been critical factors in shepherding this process.”

### Where can I learn more?

Several articles on the subject of MRA Certification and Accreditation are available at [www.mra-net.org](http://www.mra-net.org) and provide much more detailed information. In addition, *Alert!* will provide updates in upcoming issues.



## Answers to Puzzle

New and Improved:

1. Delete redundant modifiers (p. 15)
  - a. In today’s world, we must plan for the future.
  - b. He referred to the notes he had taken during the meeting.  
*Or*  
He referred to his meeting notes.
  - c. We offer complimentary gift wrapping to our customers.
2. Replace wordy expressions with single words (p. 18)
  - a. If you arrive late, use the side door.
  - b. Before coming to First Trust, Kimberly worked at Waconia Savings and Loan.
  - c. Because the report is more than 10 pages long, the council feels overwhelmed by it.  
*Or*  
The council feels overwhelmed by the 10-page report.

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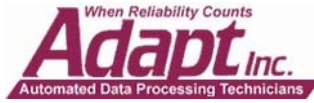
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