

President's Corner

Linda Daniel, Harris Interactive
Chapter President

I hope you are all enjoying the New Year. I'm not really sure where last year went, but it certainly went fast! And that brings us to the topic for this article. If you are one of the people who has procrastinated through all of 2006 about applying for PRC accreditation under the "grandfather" clause, please be aware that you're running out of time. Some of the grandfather end-dates are as early as the end of February 2007. Please go to the PRC section of the National MRA website to check the dates for your specialty. Only those people who have applied for certification by the listed dates will be considered for PRC status **WITHOUT HAVING TO TAKE A TEST**. Just in case you've somehow missed all of the PRC information, here is what we're talking about.



The Professional Researcher Certification program (PRC) is designed to recognize the unique qualifications and expertise of marketing and opinion research professionals. It was developed in part as a result of increased legislative regulations and marketplace pressures.

The goal of PRC is to encourage high standards within the profession in order to raise competency, establish an objective measure of an individual's knowledge and proficiency, and to encourage professional development.

PRC is open to all marketing and opinion researchers (you do not have to be an MRA member to apply). It encompasses all segments of the profession – from End User to Interviewer. To achieve Certification, applicants must satisfy all education and experience requirements designated by the

2007 Upcoming Events

March 22, 2007

Multi-Modal Research with Michael Conklin

More info on this event to come...

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Certification Workgroup and must demonstrate an acceptable understanding and knowledge related to their area of Certification. In addition, those who have been granted this MRA credential must demonstrate ongoing professional commitment to the field by accruing education Contact Hours in their specific discipline. Certifications are renewed every two years.

Candidates can be 'Grandfathered' into PRC based on their experience, education and ethics with the application materials providing a full representation of the candidate's expertise. No exam is necessary during this phase, which ends on February 28, 2007. An applicant's marketing research experience will be reviewed to determine if the employment history substantiates the skills acquired to meet the specifications for the job category and level selected. Experience considered is in the form of actual practical application of research techniques and skills obtained in the process of research execution. Applicants applying for the Expert level need 5+ years experience in their current position, Practitioners need 3+ years and Associates need 1+ year(s).

We've been told that the tests you will have to take after the deadlines are HARD. This means that you should apply ASAP—the clock is ticking down! For more information, go to the MRA's National website at www.mra-net.org.

Now!

Linda

Advertising

Would you like to have your company spotlighted in an upcoming newsletter? Do you have questions or comments regarding the Verbatim? Articles you'd like included? Please email or call me. Contact information can be found on page 3.

Corrections

In the fall issue of the Verbatim, we spelled Karlis Nollendorfs' name incorrectly. We regret the error.

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Lightspeed Stats on Mobile Phone Survey Response

MrWeb, www.mrweb.com/drno/

Sixteen to twenty-four year olds are not only much more likely to respond to surveys conducted via mobiles, they also respond more quickly, according to Lightspeed Research's analysis of its pilot cell phone panel.

The research, conducted among a sample of 1,007 panel members, was designed to explore the acceptance and effectiveness of mobile surveys. The under-25 age group achieved a response rate of 39%, while the over 55s lagged far behind at just 17%. Older respondents had a high non-completion rate of 47%, compared with 14% for the 16-24 year olds.

The two main reasons why respondents didn't complete the survey were technical problems (50%) and concerns about the cost of participating (13%). Panel members with monthly contracts were more likely to take part than those using pre-paid mobile phones.

Nearly half (45%) of responses arrived within half an hour of sending out the survey, and within 24 hours, 85% of all respondents had taken part.

Results confirm a number of assumptions: notably that this type of research benefits from the mobile being a 'must have' accessory for most under 25 year olds, while those in the older age bracket are less relaxed about using this method of survey completion.

While David Day, CEO of Lightspeed Research feels that mobile research shows enormous potential, especially for capturing the opinions and attitudes of the younger generations, he also believes that there needs to be more scrutiny of how technology, costs and the novelty factor are impacting on response rates.

Day concluded: 'We know that new technology can be used to overcome some of the issues of traditional research, but only if it is done properly and to high quality standards. To ensure this, we are conducting further in-depth mobile survey research before deciding if using mobile research should become part of our offering in the future.'

Lightspeed's home page is at www.lightspeedresearch.com.

This article was taken from MrWeb, a portal site with news, jobs and directories for market research professionals worldwide, established in 1998 and with more than 12,000 regular users. For daily market research news, visit www.drno.org.

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The 10 Most Important Questions to Ask Your Online Vendor

Janet Savoie, VP Communications, IMRO

For four years I have purchased the same brand and model of running shoes, the New Balance 991.

However, after my second knee surgery I decided I might be due for a change. I went shopping for a shoe that was a perfect fit for my running style and would give me the support I needed. I was amazed by all the choices I had. I didn't know where to begin.

I often get the impression market researchers feel the same way when they are looking for the perfect online data collection vendor. In the last 3 years the number of companies offering a variety of services has tripled. Figuring out how to differentiate between the offerings and the quality of those offerings is no small task when researchers are being called on by so many different companies. Because I was wishing I had my shoe issue of Runner's World with me as I was staring at the racks of running shoes, it dawned on me that it might be helpful to develop a checklist of questions to ask potential online partners. I came up with these questions by listening and asking: listening to my prospects as I spoke with them for the first time, and directly asking people in the industry, who do a lot of online, to tell me what is important to them. The same issues came up over and over again and it was not difficult to narrow it down to the following 10 areas of concern.

Question 1: What services does your company provide?

This is the best place to start because there is great variation among what vendor companies are offering and what research companies need. There are service bureaus offering one-stop shopping: deliver a final survey to them and they will deliver data to you and do everything in between. They supply sample or work with client lists, program, and host. Many also offer tables, coding and weighting. But not every company needs or wants this full-service option and there are many choices for just programming or just sample. Match the offerings to your needs and then ask the more specific questions.

Question 2: How large is your panel?

This seems like a simple question, but panels actually count their panelists differently. The number can represent households or individuals. Panels counting households assume they have access to everyone living in that household for surveys through the individual who actually signs up for the panel. For instance if they have one million households they would assume perhaps 2.5 potential respondents. Panels that count individuals may have more than one person in a household on their panel but they do not track that.

The size of the panel is especially important if you plan to do large tracking studies that require unique respondents for every wave or if you are looking for low incidence groups. If you are doing research overseas, what is the panel's international reach? If they do not have their own panel do they have reliable global partners?

Question 3: What do you know about your panelists?

The more information known about respondents and their household members, the better it is for the health of the panel and for panel buyers. If consumer buying behavior, hobbies, occupation, etc. can be targeted, fewer emails have to be sent out and that cuts down on the number of invitations each panelist receives. It is good for researchers because it helps keep down the cost of low incidence studies. Most panel companies can supply you with a list of their targets. Usually the list is long but they may have only screened a portion of the panel on each target (except for major demographics). What this means is that there may not be sufficient numbers to do the size study you need to do, especially for B2B. B2B is still difficult online but for some specific groups such as Physicians, small business owners, and C-level executives, panel companies have invested in developing sub-panels. Find out what is available or

Education is All Around You

Linda Daniel, Harris Interactive

Some people think that education can take place only in a classroom, at a seminar, or through reading books. Those are the same people who think learning is all about memorizing facts and figures. Don't get me wrong. As a former college teacher, I have complete respect for classrooms, seminars, and books. I've also made my students learn a lot of facts and figures. My real issue is that education is all around us—we learn (or should learn) new things every day just by living and observing. Likewise, we should look for opportunities to teach each day.

For example, I pretty much taught myself how to use Microsoft Excel. It was a struggle. Of course, those of you who have read earlier articles by me know that technology is not my friend. I firmly believe that the evil wizard who developed Excel spent a great part of his time saying, "OK, let's see how complicated I can make this so that Linda Daniel will get frustrated." Despite the wizard's vile plot, I eventually learned enough to be able to use Excel fairly well. I still remember the day, though, when I was tediously coloring various cells to show significance and a co-worker stepped in to teach me how to use conditional formatting. WOW. That may not seem momentous to you, but it was a double win for me: I was able to become a better market researcher and I could spit in the eye of the dastardly developer who hid conditional formatting from me in the first place.

I can guarantee that RIGHT NOW you know something that could make a co-worker's job easier and that he/she has a piece of information that could help you. Keep your eyes and ears open! At Harris Interactive, we have weekly team meetings and a standard agenda item is New Learnings. Sometimes the learning is a new tip or trick for using Excel or PowerPoint. Other times it is a report about a pleasant or unpleasant experience with a particular vendor. The learning might also be about a not-so-familiar research technique like laddering, or an article in the paper discussing a client's likelihood to file for bankruptcy (send the invoice fast!).

A note of caution, however. You do not want to go to someone who is notoriously bad at something and ask for their help. That is known as a Compound Disaster. Here are some examples:

- ◆ Do not ask someone who receives those snide "your mailbox is over the limit" messages every hour on the hour to teach you how to use the Archive function in Outlook. Either this person has never heard of it or simply doesn't clean out their un-archived messages regularly. (Yes, Julie, I know I have no credibility in archiving and promise to never teach it to anyone.)
- ◆ Do not ask a directionally challenged person to give your client directions to the airport during peak traffic time on a Friday afternoon when it is snowing. (I still maintain that my directions were good and that it wasn't my fault the clients left too late, then got stuck on I494 because of an accident, and missed their plane.)

Chapter Board Elections

Election season is once again upon us for our chapter elections. Nominations for Director at Large are being accepted for the MN/UMW Chapter of the MRA's 2007-2008 Board of Directors. Nominations should be sent to President-Elect Bonnie Sargent at bonnie@fieldresearchservices.com no later than February 12. Please contact Bonnie for more information. Below is the list of nominees and the office they are running for:

Linda Daniel, Harris Interactive – Past President
 Bonnie Sargent, Field Research Services – President
 Tammie Frost-Norton, Questar – President- Elect
 Julie Heise, Harris Interactive – Secretary
 Danelle Gorra, Delve – Treasurer

Directors at Large:

Valerie Hanson, CJ Olson
 Denice Duncan, Fieldwork Minneapolis
 Josh Holly, Padilla Speer Beardsly
 Cheryl Powers, Research Edge
 Gayle Belkengren, Cook Research & Consulting

MRA Saves the Day

Tammie Frost-Norton, QUESTAR

I was in it for the long haul. You know – 6 months, a year. Hoping it wouldn't be longer. You think it will never happen to you. You join a company that has been in business for 20 years, you just never guess the owner will decide to sell a mere two years after you came on board. But there it is – 15 minutes after the “papers are signed” and 25% of the staff is officially laid off. You perform triage. Check the savings account, look up unemployment rules, go over your budget, and stare at that shrinking severance check. Oh yes, and you consider your “free time” – Allow some celebration! After that, my instinct was to tell friends. Everyone. Maybe this is to force you to accept reality (!), maybe to reaffirm to yourself you HAVE friends in a world gone topsy-turvy...and email is such a delightful way to get out the news.

I have to tell you, I never considered the true value of my MRA involvement over the years until now. And sending out that “update” email wasn't for the crass need (anyone got a job out there?)...it was really about connecting with people who know you. Maybe even about affirming your own value through the friendships and working relationships after the harsh reality of “rejection.” And friends don't let you down! “You'll be snapped up in a minute,” and “there's nothing good to say about what you just experienced” are all salve to the injured, laid-off soul. But even better, and I admit to my own amazement, was the immediate offers of help. “I'll keep you in mind,” “I may know someone,” followed by information about companies hiring, favorite headhunters, transitions taking place in other companies, informational interviews, and opportunities in our small research universe.

The true value of volunteering in the MRA (or anywhere I suppose) is the relationships you make. People know you. They know you helped out with an idea, or stuck it out when a committee was falling apart, or simply followed through by being there as a volunteer as you had promised. People learn a bit about you. Volunteering might be about giving your company more profile, or a desire to learn more about your own industry, or just acquiring skills you might not get to “try out” in your 9-5 job. But the unintended

side effects are that you meet people, you get to know people, and they get to know you.

Of course, as a manager myself, I know you can hear comments about “letting” your people network right into a new job. I do want to take a moment to reassure other managers out there. While it might happen, I never really saw evidence of “losing” people directly because of MRA networking... especially at the chapter level. We are a small community, and I think people know they could do long-term harm with short term “stealing” of talent. It is up to the individual to open the doors of asking about opportunities.

The truth is people who know something about you – your character, your work ethic, etc. really want to help. They want to help you find a place to display your talent, find a home where you can continue to make a difference. And to all those professionals who had that reaction with me (you know who you are), I do thank you from the bottom of my heart. MRA is HANDS DOWN the finest place to meet great people in our industry. I encourage you to consider volunteering if you haven't done it before. Because you never know when the great “restructure” could happen to you!! And my personal bottom line? Only 10 weeks from my old desk to my new one...thanks to MRA SAVING THE DAY!

Winter Quiz

True or False

1. It can get cold enough that it doesn't snow.
2. There really is 1 inch of water in every 10 inches of snow.
3. Snow gets fluffier as temperatures drop.
4. You should eat snow.
5. Snow is colder in deeper spots.
6. There are more icicles on south sides of buildings.

Research International Merges Japan Businesses

WorldOpinion News, www.worldopinion.com

Kantar announced that all of its Japanese businesses - Research International, Millward Brown, ICM/Added Value and Lightspeed Research - are being merged into a single business, Japan Kantar Research (JKR). The new business will be one of Japan's largest market research and insights companies and will offer clients a complete and unique portfolio of solutions. It will be focused more than ever on the needs of local clients - Japanese and multinational, Kantar said.

The merged business is intended to increase the effectiveness of the company's work for clients and the attractiveness of employee career path. The decision was taken with the specific and unique Japanese market in mind, and Kantar said has no plans to replicate this approach beyond Japan.

For other market research news, visit www.worldopinion.com. Over 13,000 unique visitors every month turn to WorldOpinion for information about the research industry.



The 10 Most Important Questions to Ask (continued)

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if they offer a phone-to-web option. Many panels companies regularly re-screen panelists for specific information, so a good follow up question (if you have a group you routinely survey) is to ask if there is a way to get a question or two on soft exits or on screening questionnaires.

Question 4: What steps do you take to make sure I have a representative group taking my survey?

Most panel companies can claim that their panels stack up well against the census, except for the elderly, the very low income and the minority segments. But the base representation of the panel is not the key issue. What is important is the number and variability of the sources for the panelists and the process used for pulling a representative sample. One issue to be aware of is that when sample is pulled, the pull is usually based on 3 variables: age, gender, geography, and it is not pulled by race unless it is specifically requested by the client. There is nothing wrong with this, but from my experience, clients aren't always made aware of it, and they get frustrated when they get their data back they often have only 2-4% African Americans and Hispanics. In the client's mind a rep sample is representative on all demographics, not just 3. Find out how many and which variables they are using. Also make sure to verify that when they are pulling sample that they take into account the response rates of the different segments of their panel.

Question 5: How do I know if Jane Doe really filled out my survey?

This is a hard question for panel companies to answer as there is no equivalent to phone validation in the online world. Some panels have a system in place where they re-screen for demos that should not have changed, like gender and year of birth, and compare that data to what is in the respondent's record. If there is a discrepancy they can delete the survey. This process needs to be combined with password protection so that Jane Doe cannot take the survey multiple times as different people and then send it to John Smith so he can take it. Passwords insure the survey assigned to Jane can only be taken once.

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The 10 Most Important Questions to Ask (continued)

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Question 6: Do you limit the number of surveys respondents can receive?

Everyone is worried about professional respondents, and most panels claim to have a strict policy of survey management. Some companies limit the invitations sent to a respondent over a certain period of time; others rest panelists when they have taken a certain number of surveys. Find out what the policy is and then join the panel using a personal e-mail address. That is the best way to determine their commitment to their policy. In their defense, panel companies are finding it more and more difficult to control survey volume to their panelists because the demand for online research has dramatically increased over the last few years. The demand has grown faster than the panels have grown. Ask what their plan is to balance supply and demand for sample with their panel management policy.

Question 7: What information will you need to give me pricing?

Although incidence, length in minutes, and number of completes is what is minimally necessary, companies will usually require complexity level, programming length as well as respondent length, and specific quotas. The more information you are asked for the more likely the price will be accurate. If you are asked all the right questions up front, there is less chance of price issues down the road. Of course if your specs change before or during fielding, the price will also likely change. In general, incidence is the responsibility of the client, not the vendor. Most companies are willing to give pricing for several incidence levels if the client is unsure.

Question 8: Will your programming platform meet my needs for complexity and timing?

The ability to program specific types of questions (discrete choice), to handle complex quotas, to offer cool tools (card sorting) is an important area to explore. Ask if they have a survey demo. You can get a good feel for their capabilities and a good look at how they present the questions to the respondent. This is also a good time to inquire about the experience level of the programmers on staff and where they are located. Are they in-house or overseas? Will you have access to them? Will they be on the kick-off call? And, since timing is often an issue, what is the typical turnaround time and can you accelerate a schedule if necessary?

Question 9: Who will be managing my project?

Once a project hits the field, the day to day contact is with the project manager. If you are looking for a company to partner with you probably want to develop a relationship with one or two project managers who will be a constant on all your jobs. First find out the experience level on the team in research and in managing research projects. If you do very complex work ask if you can be matched with a project manager that can handle that level of complexity. This is a key relationship: you want someone who understands your requirements and can anticipate your needs. If you work well with a particular project manager, can they be assigned to all your projects? Will there be a back-up person assigned?

Question 10: How do you price your services?

Does it always come down to price? Clients say no, but they want to understand how things will be priced and if it is a firm price. Are the charges per hour, per complete, per amount of sample used? Can costs be broken out so they can compare between vendors? Are there hidden costs? One universal complaint is being nickel and dimed to death. Clients expect price changes if the length and incidence change dramatically, but they don't like surprises that knock their budgets out of the water.

Asking the questions that reflect what is important to you is crucial when you are interviewing a potential online vendor. Does the company have the resources to do the job the way you need it done? Just like shopping for the right running shoe, you need to make your choice based on the right fit for your needs. But in either situation, the

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The 10 Most Important Questions to Ask (continued)

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proof is ultimately in the pudding. Whether you are out on the road for the first time or partnering on that first project, what matters most is if promises are kept and it feels good. Hopefully asking these questions will help you narrow the field down to those who are potentially the best fit.

This article was taken from the e-newsletter the Edge and written by Janet Savoie, the new VP of Communications on the IMRO Board. The Edge is IMRO's quarterly e-newsletter "designed to keep you abreast of interactive technology and how it relates to online research." To sign up for the free e-newsletter, just go to www.imro.org.

Quiz Answers

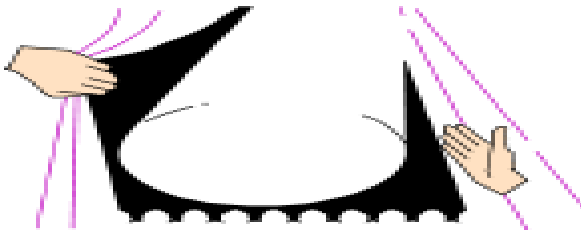
1. False. It isn't really because it's too cold to snow, but because it's too dry. (The coldest weather is almost always associated with very high pressure and very dry air.) The truth is that it can never be too cold for snow, barring a drop in temperature all the way to absolute zero (-460°F or -273°C), in which case snow or lack thereof should be the least of your concerns. But even at balmy temperatures than absolute zero, below, say, -20°F (-29°C), it can be too cold for a lot of snow to fall. <http://www.straightdope.com/mailbag/msnow2cold.html>
2. True. Here's an experiment you can do. I don't know if it's as simple and easy as it claims, but have fun. http://www.crh.noaa.gov/mgt/?n=swe_muffler_pipe.php
3. False. Not seeing enough of the white stuff outside? Try this: <http://www.kerismith.com/WishJarTales/instant-snow.jpg>
4. False. Did you know that you should never eat snow? Well if you didn't know that, it's a good thing that you came here. The reason you shouldn't eat snow is because snowflakes form on small pieces of dust. When they fall from the clouds they pick up pollution in the air. The pollution sticks to the snowflake, then the flake falls to the ground. If you eat the snow you might also be eating pollution and dirt. In 37 A.D. the emperor of Rome (Nero) had his servants get snow down from the tops of mountains and bring it back to his palace. After they brought it to him, he had them mix it with honey or fruit juices for him to eat. The cleanest snow is in Antarctica. Because Antarctica is far away from cities and their pollution, the snowflakes aren't as dirty. The snow there might even be clean enough to eat. Check this site for another experiment: <http://library.thinkquest.org/3876/eat.html>
5. False. Hee hee hee: <http://www.andertoons.com/search.php?keywords=snow>
6. True. <http://www.thulebageren.dk/gallery/iceberg%20with%20icicles.JPG>

Quiz Source: <http://library.thinkquest.org/3876/yn2.html>

Scoring:

- 6 points: Get your nose out of the encyclopedia and get back to work!
- 4-5 points: You've lived in Minnesota your whole life, haven't you?
- 1-3 points: You're counting the days until your beach vacation.





Spotlight

Check out the next issue of *The Verbatim* when we “SPOTLIGHT” a Board or Committee Member’s company.

SPOTLIGHT on *Harris Interactive*



About Harris Interactive

When you choose Harris Interactive as your research partner, you tap into an unparalleled blend of science and art, of expertise and experience. This assures that we can deliver on our promise to you: to provide innovative research, insights and strategic advice to help you make more confident decisions that strengthen the bonds between your enterprise and its key stakeholders, leading to measurable and enduring improvements in performance.

Harris Interactive is widely known for *The Harris Poll*, one of the longest running, independent opinion polls and for pioneering online market research methods. The company has built what it believes to be the world’s largest panel of survey respondents, the Harris Poll Online. Harris Interactive serves clients worldwide through its United States, Europe and Asia offices, its wholly-owned subsidiary Novatris in France and through a global network of independent market research firms. The service bureau, HISB, provides its market research industry clients with mixed-mode data collection, panel development services as well as syndicated and tracking research consultation.

The Science of Innovative Research

Harris Interactive uses the most advanced global research technologies in the industry. Our innovative research models and methods have been developed with scientific rigor by leading, published research methodologists. While we are well known for having pioneered the application of Internet-based research methods, we continue to offer traditional and multi-mode qualitative and quantitative research around the globe to meet the needs of our clients.

Today, we are the 13th largest, and the fastest-growing, market research firm in the world. Our multimillion-member proprietary online panel of cooperative, double opted-in respondents—believed to be the largest and most robust in the industry—gives you access to numerous specialty audiences worldwide.

The Art of Strategic Consulting

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More information about Harris Interactive may be obtained at www.harrisinteractive.com.



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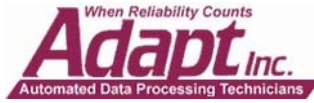


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www.adaptdata.com



The Verbatim

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The Verbatim

Newsletter of the Minnesota/Upper Midwest Chapter of the MRA