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Making Quality Real

Delivering an Accurate, Highly Service-Oriented Approach to Online Research

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Most online research today is panel-based; and there is no shortage of panels. But the number of panels that can deliver a high-quality approach is small indeed. The challenge is conveying to clients the importance of making decisions based on a known accuracy of data. Secondly, the quality and depth of the collaborative relationship between client and insight provider can affect the value of the results substantively.

As Senior Vice President and Senior Managing Director of Knowledge Networks (KN), Audrey Rosen has been advocating the value of high quality research in support of complex business issues for years. She advises that essentially it all comes down to “How do you size markets or make recommendations on market growth without knowing the quality of the information you’re working with? I can’t imagine doing the types of work that we do without having our quality panel at its core.”

At Nielsen and now KN, Audrey has been a leader in the industry in enabling clients to maximize value received from their research and consulting with them on how best to apply research to their business needs. More and more, she has found clients thinking about quality issues – and in some cases, actively seeking out better custom research to

buy. A turning point, in her mind, came when Wal-Mart – with whom Audrey has worked extensively – began making quality distinctions and requirements for the research presented to them by their research suppliers.

“The initial reason Wal-Mart came to KN was because of KnowledgePanelSM. Our panel did an amazing job of representing the Wal-Mart shoppers — particularly in capturing C and D counties, because we are recruiting and web-enabling the 28% of the population that does not have Internet access. How do you conduct a full spectrum of research if you are not capturing your entire customer base?”

In 2007, Wal-Mart rolled out a new “Segmentation Lens” to the manufacturer marketplace. Wal-Mart selected only four custom research suppliers to have proprietary access to their shopper segmentation algorithm. These research companies (including Knowledge Networks) were chosen for their commitment to quality data and quality analysis. Manufacturers supplying Wal-Mart are requested to validate their product ideas against the retailer’s target shopper segments, providing mutual benefit to both Wal-Mart and to the manufacturer. Similarly, a major pharmaceutical company initially contacted KN because they wanted to

be using data that would most accurately size their prospective patient marketplace. The pharma company felt that no other company could provide them the accurate read of their patient population, while at the same time allowing them to use the power of the Internet to do higher-end choice-based analytical exercises.

“Knowing the quality of your sample source is finally becoming something that is being recognized as a must-have for deciding what supplier to use for a particular study,” Audrey says. “We feel that transparency is the most important element of understanding and acting on research sample accuracy; and we provide that through an ongoing program of research on research and publishing what we learn.”

One key to a high-quality approach to online research is rigorous panel maintenance. Research on research for online panels needs to address such key topics as panel tenure – how long can panelists maintain a high level of engagement with research? And controlling how many surveys panelists are sent in a given week, as well as giving them the resources to answer accurately, are also key elements.

Audrey calls her commitment to her clients and to research a “passion,” and she has applied that to her advocacy of research

excellence. “The quality of the sample goes hand in hand with a top quality consultative service approach. Working with clients to fully understand their business issues enables me and my colleagues to illustrate the value to them of a high-quality approach.”

Audrey Rosen is Senior Vice President & Senior Managing Director, Custom Research at Knowledge Networks.

She brings over 20 years of client management and market research experience to Knowledge Networks, where she is responsible for strategic account planning and development for the organization. She received a B.A. in Psychology from SUNY Stony Brook, and an M.B.A. in Marketing and Management from Adelphi University. She can be reached at arosen@knowledgenetworks.com.

