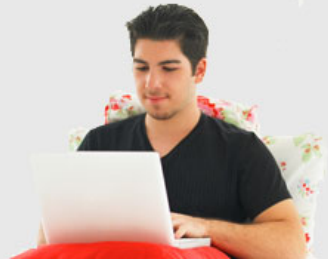


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## Making Quality Real

### *Adding Analytics to the Mix*

*By Ellen Veccia and Wendy Wallner*

Delivering quality to clients is often a matter of understanding what methods and approaches will best serve their needs — and those needs may include budget constraints, issues to address, and level of precision required. Every member of a client relationship team brings different expertise to the table, and often the best solution comes through the combination of two or more disciplines and perspectives to address the client's needs. But how do we recognize which client challenges call for which skills and research design elements, and then work seamlessly to provide just the right mix?

At Knowledge Networks (KN), we frequently involve our methods-savvy Advanced Analytics and Consulting (AAC) group to deliver affordable yet powerful quantitative solutions. Analytics can often add a remarkable degree of actionability to data that would otherwise lie on the page and perhaps never really be put into practice. What is the structure of your market, and what new product or line extension opportunities are possible? How can we decide which combination of products or services would add incremental sales? What are the most effective communication tactics? Which

consumer target groups would be the most productive?

Ellen Veccia is the head of the Advanced Analytics team at Knowledge Networks; as our Senior Vice President of AAC, she brings over 20 years of experience across a variety of industries to this task. And sitting across the hall from her in our California office happens to be Wendy Wallner, a Vice President of Custom Research who has called on Ellen many times to help KN provide the extra value and insight that a given client is looking for. Wendy spent eight years in brand management at P&G and now leads KN's West Coast client service team, covering CPG, food service, finance, and on- and offline retailing.

“What really energizes a client is when they give us a business issue and we can dialogue with them on the fly about research design,” Wendy says. “And often that design includes analytics. I am always thinking about an analytics angle, and there usually is one. It helps differentiate the big idea and as an example isolate key drivers that most clients need to determine where marketing focus and investment should be. We make it a point to leverage our experience by tapping into our

toolbox of proven analytic methods. But we also try very hard to think creatively about each research project and customize the design to directly address the business issue at hand.”

*In just the past few weeks, Ellen and Wendy have worked together to help:*

- Retailers understand what drives loyalty among their target customers
- CPG companies determine which messages are most motivating to their target segments
- Internet and media companies identify their most appealing service packages

This kind of information — including the clarity of the distinctions made — speaks directly to the interests of C-suite customers.

“Maybe the biggest pitfall in introducing analytics to a project,” Ellen adds, “is not *first* putting enough care and feeding into the early parts of the work, making sure that you address the key business issues. It can be anything from not ‘specing’ your sample appropriately — defining the sample too narrowly or broadly — to using a conjoint when you should be using discrete choice. We work hard to make sure we are on the right track in the proposal stage, before any actual work is delivered.”

This preparation is especially important for segmentation work, which has been an expertise area of Ellen and her AAC group for some time. The KN approach begins and ends with workshops that bring together the key stakeholders within the client company to clarify how the segmentation will be used and what it needs to show. “We feel like a segmentation is only successful if it’s crystal clear what actions come out of it,” Wendy says. “Too often a segmentation is left on the table as something that people find interesting but don’t know how to implement. We feel a responsibility to drive actionability by building

it into the process and the design. We think that sets us apart from other research partners, who leave it fully up to the client to implement the actions.”

Bringing a goal-focused approach to planning a segmentation is crucial to delivering actionable results in the end. Recently, a KN client came to us with the intent of creating a general nutrition-related health attitudes segmentation. With additional assessment, however, we were able to refine the goal to address a more specific user need: How do attitudes about package goods’ ingredients align with interest in our current product concepts? Our solution was a very focused model — four segments differentiated on key dimensions of interest in those concepts.

One of the great pluses about analytical work is that it can leverage data already collected for a custom study — even for a segmentation that was devised several years ago. But making sure that all the pieces dovetail is often a key element of maintaining quality in these cases. Sometimes KN is called upon to match a segment algorithm to an internal data file plus information purchased from credit agencies or other source; having a tighter linkage between the different data sources is essential to making the end results clear and actionable.

“It’s another way of looking at the data that you have,” Ellen explains, “and trying to figure out if there are other ways you can use it to address present business issues, or ones that come up later.”

Two of the most important tools in KN’s analytical kit are MaxUR<sup>SM</sup> and MaxUR Plus<sup>SM</sup>; these provide levels of additional differentiation to survey results. In both cases, consumer preferences become more clearly defined and differentiated; while typical ranked data may show a cluster of favorite concepts with little clear separation, MaxUR insights generally provide clear guidance to

one or two. In addition, results are delivered via an online application that allows users to mix and match to create winning sets of products or services.

“The most important element we try to deliver to clients is the ability to take action, to make decisions and to receive affordable solutions,” Ellen explains. “Everything we do should be in the service of that goal; and our most successful work delivers directly on that promise. That is as much a hallmark of quality as the ‘technical’ aspects of what we do; I think that should be true with every Market Research company.”

**Dr. Ellen Veccia**, Senior Vice President, heads the Advanced Analytics Group at Knowledge Networks.



*She has extensive experience in conducting research and consulting assignments for a range of clients, covering both strategic issues and tactical implementation, and is well practiced in a variety of methodologies. Ellen has an M.A. and Ph.D. in Social Psychology from Northeastern University in Boston and a B.A. in Psychology from Florida Atlantic University. She can be reached at [eveccia@knowledgenetworks.com](mailto:eveccia@knowledgenetworks.com).*

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