

The background is a dark blue gradient with various glowing elements. There are several thin, light blue lines crisscrossing the frame. A prominent feature is a glowing, circular, brain-like structure in the center, composed of multiple overlapping, semi-transparent rings. The overall aesthetic is futuristic and scientific.

Qualitative research recruitment guidelines

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1. Privacy

The quality of research depends upon the willing participation of the public. Australian legislation requires that researchers and recruitment agencies respect the privacy of research participants when they are handling confidential personal information. Researchers and recruitment agencies must comply with The Privacy Amendment (Private Sector) Bill 2000, which came into effect on 21 December, 2001.

The National Privacy Principles (NPPs), which were introduced when the new legislation took effect, apply to all market research organisations except those that are members of the Association of Market and Social Research Organisations (AMSRO).

The Market and Social Research Privacy Principles (M&SRPPs), which took effect on 1 September 2003, replace the default National Privacy Principles for all market and social research companies that are members of AMSRO. The M&SRPPs, also known as the Market and Social Research Privacy Code, give the force of law to the privacy clauses within the industry's existing Code of Professional Behaviour, which likewise protects the confidentiality and anonymity of research information.

The M&SRPPs ensure that the ordinary practices of market research organisations, such as refusal conversion, re-contacting participants and not disclosing certain aspects of the research where it is deemed that doing so would compromise the research, become legal. Only members of AMSRO are eligible to subscribe to the code.

Both the NPPs and the M&SRPPs stipulate how businesses should handle and trade confidential personal information.

The primary responsibilities of any organisation handling data are to:

- Collect personal information in a lawful, fair, honest and open manner
- Use information discretely and appropriately
- Keep personalised information confidential at all times
- Keep records accurate and current
- Take reasonable steps to protect any identified information from misuse, loss, unauthorised access, modification, disclosure and unauthorised transfer
- Obtain authorisation to transfer personalised information
- Transfer only personalised information that is relevant to the research being undertaken.

Each business and its relevant staff should familiarise themselves with the legislation and with their own internal privacy policy and procedures. The privacy policy should be posted on websites and be made available to all clients on request.

Participants give personal information to a recruitment agency on the understanding that this information will remain confidential at all times and that no identifying information will be passed to any third party without their express consent. It is our duty to respect the privacy of information at all times.

For more information about the NPPs, visit www.privacy.gov.au

For more information about the M&SRPPs, visit www.amsro.com.au

2. Recruiting from client-supplied lists

The possession and/or use of a customer list supplied by a third party requires that both the research organisation and the recruitment agency comply with the applicable privacy principles.

As mentioned in Section 1 - Privacy, the National Privacy Principles (NPPs) apply to all market research organisations except those that are members of AMSRO; AMSRO members are governed by the Market and Social Research Privacy Principles (M&SRPPs).

There are some differences between these two sets of privacy principles, particularly governing the use of customer lists, and these are outlined below.

Receiving customer lists

The M&SRPPs¹ allow research organisations to receive customer lists from clients provided that reasonable steps have been taken to inform customers of this, or they are told at the time of contact. The requirements of the NPPs² in regard to this practice are less clear and are likely to be interpreted in a way that restricts the use of customer lists.

Using customer lists

The M&SRPPs³ enable research organisations to use customer lists, and even lists of potential customers (e.g. from enquiries), as sampling frames. To do so under the NPPs⁴, research organisations must either obtain customers' explicit consent, or establish that this use is both related to the primary purpose for which the information was collected and reasonably expected by customers, which will always be open to dispute.

Flexible sample management

The M&SRPPs⁵ enable research organisations to pass to clients lists of customers who have been contacted for and/or participated in research, provided that the information is used only for the purpose of sample management. In order for this to be allowable under the NPPs⁶, research organisations must either establish that customers would reasonably expect it to occur (a matter always open to dispute), or obtain customers' explicit consent to do so.

Irrespective of the applicable privacy principles it is recommended that, as soon as it is reasonably possible, the following checks be made before, during and after the use of a list by both the research organisation and the recruitment agency:

- a) Lists have been drawn from a reliable source.
- b) Lists DO NOT contain customers who (since 21 December 2001) have indicated to the list owner they do not wish to be contacted for research purposes.
- c) A contact name and phone number (either for the researcher or ultimate client) for participants who wish to pursue any privacy concerns.
- d) Measures should have been taken to remove customers with silent or non directory (private) telephone numbers. If no measures have been taken to ensure against using private contact numbers, the contact names and phone numbers may require checking against current phone directory entries.
- e) Lists do not contain private or personal information irrelevant to the research being undertaken.

- f) Both the research organisation and recruitment agency should confirm that the lists shall be destroyed/deleted/returned on completion of the project. (Please note that when the owner of the list requests that details be updated on the customer list and returned to them after the research has been conducted, the recruitment agency must obtain the explicit permission of the individual to whom each altered record belongs before forwarding such changes to the owner of the list.)
- g) Under the NPPs, the owner of the list(s) must be revealed during recruitment. (If the research organisation does not agree to identify their client/owner of the list, the recruitment agency, when asked, is still obligated to inform the potential participant, which may exclude them from participating.) Under the M&SRPPs, the research organisation may advise the recruitment agency that the client should not be identified, but only when they have reasonable grounds to do so (e.g. it may expose one of the parties to legal action).
- h) The contact information of the Australian Market and Social Research Society (AMSRS) Surveyline (1300 364830) must be readily available to provide to customers on a list to check a research organisation's bona fides and to make general enquiries.

3. Recruitment agency responsibilities

Recruitment agencies have the following responsibilities in respect to the recruitment of suitable participants for focus groups or in-depth interviews:

- a) To recruit in accordance with Interview Quality Control Australia (IQCA)/ AS4752 standards, the AMSRS Code of Professional Behaviour (COPB)/ ISO20252, and either the National Privacy Principles (NPPs) or, when a member of AMSRO, the Market and Social Research Privacy Principles.
- b) To recruit in accordance with the research organisation's specifications and requirements.
- c) To reconfirm each participant within 24 hours of the research activity.
- d) To supply a list of participants in advance of each research activity to the research organisation, and to any venue(s) hosting the activity. The Qualitative Recruiters' Group (QRG) recommends using the participant validation and attendance form template on page 18.
- e) To negotiate with the research organisation suitable compensation when a research activity cannot proceed when an insufficient number of participants attend.
- f) To negotiate with the research organisation suitable compensation when the research organisation advises in writing that certain participants did not meet the specifications ('off-spec').
- g) In the event of cancellation, it is the recruitment agency's responsibility to immediately contact all affected participants.
- h) To recruit to and maintain original specifications unless changes are

authorised by the research organisation. Changes should be provided in writing by the research organisation and should these changes alter the basis of the original quote, the recruitment agency should provide a revised, written quotation.

- i) To ensure that all screening questionnaires include:-
 - (i) The appropriate industry disqualifications.
 - (ii) The six month disqualification on previous focus group attendance (unless waived by the research organisation).
 - (iii) A consent to record the research activity in any format.
 - (iv) An agreement not to disclose screening questionnaire content or answers to anyone else.
 - (v) An agreement to produce ID (photo or other) prior to participation in the research session in order to prove identity and for venue security.
- j) Recruiter responsibilities DO NOT include:
 - (i) The costs of conducting the research including but not restricted to such costs as moderating, incentives, venue hire, food, travel expenses and so on.
 - (ii) Compensation for participants who fail to attend due to unforeseen circumstances such as transport strikes, major traffic problems, storms and so on.
 - (iii) The care and personal safety of the participants at venues and research activities in which they participate.

- k) If any subsequent contact with a participant is required by the research organisation, then:
 - (i) The recruitment agency is responsible for initiating contact specifying in detail the need for direct contact after receiving written instructions from the research organisation.
 - (ii) The recruitment agency is responsible for obtaining the explicit consent of each participant to pass on contact details to the research organisation.

4. Research organisation's responsibilities

Clients are responsible for the following when commissioning work from a recruitment agency:

- a) To comply with Interview Quality Control Australia (IQCA)/AS4752 standards, the AMSRS Code of Professional Behaviour (COPB)/ISO20252, and either the National Privacy Principles (NPPs) or, when a member of AM-SRO, the Market and Social Research Privacy Principles.
- b) To supply detailed recruitment specifications in writing.
- c) To supply a screening questionnaire that will enable the recruitment agency to identify and recruit suitable participants. Screening questionnaires (or 'screeners') should be clear and concise in order to ensure the recruitment of on-specification participants. Ideally screeners should not exceed 15 questions, including demographics. Recruitment agencies may apply additional charges if requested to prepare the screeners on the research organisation's behalf.
- d) To ensure that the agreed incentive is paid in the agreed form to ALL participants (regardless of whether they participate or not) who:-
 - i) Arrive within 10 minutes of the scheduled start time and whose name appears on the participant validation and attendance form; and,
 - ii) Sign the participant validation and attendance form.
- e) To accept only a participant whose name appears on the participant validation and attendance form. If a participant's name is not on the form but a person arrives claiming they have been invited to attend then every effort must be made to contact the recruitment agency.

If contact is not made with the recruitment agency, then the client should re-screen the participant and determine if he or she is suitable to participate.

- f) To indicate on the participant validation and attendance form:
 - (i) the 'no-shows' (participants who do not arrive)
 - (ii) the arrival time of all latecomers, irrespective of whether they were allowed to participate or not
 - (iii) any participants who were paid-off and the reasons why
 - (iv) to note in writing and advise the recruitment agency if the participant was not suitable to participate ('off-spec') .
- g) To return the participant validation and attendance form to the recruitment agency within 24 hours of completion of the research activity in order to comply with IQCA, AS4752 and ISO20252 standards.
- h) To start and finish the research activity on time and to extend the duration only when the participants agree.
 - i) To ensure adequate refreshments are supplied to participants commensurate with time of the group and its duration.
- j) To advise the recruitment agency in writing prior to the commencement of recruiting if the participants are required to sample alcohol, cigarettes, non-commercial food or drink products and/or commercial food or drink products. In such instances an appropriate disclaimer is required for participants to sign, so that the research organisation has prior written consent for their participation.
- k) To treat all participants fairly and respectfully, to ensure that their

experience is enjoyable, and to ensure the personal safety of all participants at venues and during research activities.

- l) To provide appropriate incentives for each research activity.
- m) To cover all other costs, whether direct or indirect, of conducting the research including, but not restricted to, moderating the group discussion/depth interview, venue hire, food/refreshments and travel expenses.
- n) To pay additional fees to the recruitment agency if it is required to co-ordinate and administer the distribution of participant homework or other additional tasks.
- o) To ensure that the moderators are suitably matched to the participant in a group or interview. For example, female moderators should be used to interview young girls about sensitive issues.
- p) Under the AMSRS Code of Professional Behaviour, research organisations must not undertake non-research activities (such as database building) and research activities simultaneously. Further, Rule 20 of the COPB states that the client has no right to know the name and address of any participant unless the latter's explicit permission has been obtained. When a research organisation enters into a business relationship with a recruitment agency, then the research organisation is effectively the 'client' while the recruitment agency is effectively the 'researcher'. Therefore, in practice, if the research organisation wishes to collect and retain personal information after the research activity has been concluded, it must request the recruitment agency to obtain the ex-

plicit consent of each relevant participant. The QRG recommends that this request is submitted in writing.

- q) If any subsequent contact with a participant is required by the research organisation, then:
- (i) The recruitment agency, and not the research organisation, is responsible for initiating contact specifying in detail the need for direct contact after receiving written instructions from the research organisation.
 - (ii) The recruitment agency, and not the research organisation, is responsible for obtaining the explicit consent of each participant to pass on contact details to the research organisation.

5. Cancellation and re-scheduling fees

- a) If a project is cancelled the research organisation will be required to pay recruitment fees for all participants recruited at the time of cancellation advice.
- b) If a project is rescheduled the research organisation will be required to pay a rescheduling fee plus any recruitment fees associated with finding replacements.

6. Screening questionnaires

Screening questionnaires ('screeners') are generally supplied by the research organisation to the recruitment agency. If they are not supplied the recruitment agency may charge the research organisation to prepare the screener.

Screeners should include mandatory industry questions as below:

- (i) The appropriate industry disqualifications;
- (ii) The six month disqualification on previous focus group attendance (unless waived by the research organisation);
- (iii) A consent to record the research activity in any format;
- (iv) An agreement not to disclose screening questionnaire content or answers to anyone else.

Screeners should not be too lengthy and should focus on the key information that qualifies participants for the research activity. Ideally screeners should not exceed 15 questions.

If the job requires a lengthy screener (in particular screeners from international clients), this needs to be reflected in the recruitment cost. A higher incentive may be required to compensate participants for the lengthy screening process.

7. Additional tasks

Should the researcher require participants to complete a pre- or post-research task relating to a research activity the following course of action is recommended:

- a) The recruitment agency should be provided with a complete version of the task prior to the commencement of recruitment. This would detail the exact requirements of the tasks that the participants need to complete before attending the research activity.
- b) It is the research organisation's responsibility to ensure that any additional task is not invasive and respects the participant's right to privacy. It is also the research organisation's responsibility to ensure that the task is suitable for the participants they want recruited, keeping in mind their level of skills, other work commitments and ability to complete the task.
- c) Sufficient notice/time for the participants to complete any set additional task must be given.
- d) Participants must be reimbursed according to the estimated time it takes to complete the task and for any additional costs incurred (e.g. development of film).
- e) The recruitment agency must be reimbursed for additional costs in postage and/or handling and for the lengthier screening/explanation process during recruitment.
- f) The recruitment agency and research organisation need to negotiate costs for replacement participants that take into account the fact that these replacement participants may be unable to complete a pre-task at short notice.

8. Participant validation & attendance form

The participant validation and attendance form is a standard industry form and should be presented on the recruitment agency's letterhead. The design and layout of the form is at the discretion of the recruitment agency but certain standard items should be included. These items are:

- a) Researcher/research organisation company name, contact name and phone number;
- b) Group identification number, date, time and incentive;
- c) Venue details including contact phone number;
- d) The participant sign-in section, which includes the name of each participant and a corresponding space for a signature;
- e) The participant validation statement as suggested below:

I am the person directly recruited and whose signature appears below and I acknowledge that any monies or gratuities received in return for my participating in this research are accepted as compensation for the time and expenses incurred by me and are wholly of a private and non-business nature. I also give permission for the discussion to be viewed, and recorded in any format. I agree not to disclose to the public any information about the matters discussed or the people attending.

Signature: _____

f) Researcher's sign-off, as suggested below:

I am the researcher and I agree that the attending participants met specifications and the six month rule (if applicable) and that all participants' names and telephone numbers are to remain the property of [insert recruitment agency] at all times and cannot be used for further research or contact without authorisation.

Researcher's Signature: _____

Please return the completed form to [Insert Recruitment Agency] on (0X) XXXX XXXX within 24 hours.

To comply with the National Privacy Principles and the Market and Social Research Privacy Code, this completed form must be separated from any identifying information and other identifiers associated with the participants whose names appear above.

g) A return fax number and statement to the effect that the participant validation and attendance form should be returned within 24 hours of the completion of the research activity.

ENDNOTES

1 M&SRPP 1.8 (a)

2 NPP 1.5

3 M&SRPP 1.8 (b)

4 NPP 2.1

5 M&SRPP 2.5 (e)

6 NPP 2.1

9. Acknowledgments

The NSW Qualitative Recruiters Group has developed these guidelines for researchers and recruitment agencies.

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Stable Research	Tallygate Research Services
Taylor Research Services Pty Ltd	

The NSW Qualitative Recruiters Group would also like to thank the Australian Market and Social Research Society (AMSRS) for its support.

The NSW Qualitative Recruiters Group is an AMSRS special interest group that meets several times a year to discuss issues relating to qualitative recruitment. For further information please contact the AMSRS.