

Your Views Count (YVC) Industry Briefing Paper

Background

There is a decline in both commercial and consumer response rates to research being undertaken in Australia. According to Bednall and Shaw (2001), “The apparent over-surveying of business people is becoming endemic and we can only forecast more barriers and resistance to allowing interviews to proceed. We have experienced first hand businesses who say it is their policy not to allow interviews.”

In Australia, respondents themselves seem satisfied with their research experience as evidenced by the number and nature of calls to the AMSRS helpline (Van Souwe, 2004, Bednall, 2001) as well as other bodies such as the Office of the Privacy Commissioner. It is also clear that respondents are increasingly unable to differentiate genuine research calls from those made by telemarketers.

However response rates continue to decline and this raises key issues for the market research industry in Australia which both AMSRO and AMSRS feel must be addressed.

Key Issues for AMSRO/AMRS

The key issues, for AMSRO/AMRS, emerging from the above research are:

- Reach is increasing but co-operation is declining and non-contact is increasing, leading to a 3% decline in response rate per annum (Bednall, 2000).
- Target respondents often do not perceive any value/relevance in participation. The emergence of company “policy” on not participating in interviews for the commercial sector is of concern.
- Lack of understanding from commissioning clients on the impacts of their decisions on the instructions to complete projects quickly and at minimum cost rather than valuing the representativeness of the data.
- Lack of understanding from commissioning clients on response rates, contactability etc.
- Less than positive working conditions for interviewers.
- The changing lifestyle and expectations of the consumer.

Initiatives to address issues

AMRS and AMSRO have taken the initiative to develop programs to address these issues, namely:

1. The development of a PR program to communicate the value of people participating in research in order to protect the future of the respondent source for all market research organisations (commercial and academic). It is called, “Your Views Count”.

2. The development of a set of key principles called the “List” which will address best practice in respect of:
 - a. Length of questionnaires
 - b. Introductions to questionnaires
 - c. Sampling efficiency/minimisation
 - d. Time of interviewing.

The aim of the guidelines is to assist good survey practice that will facilitate a positive willingness for a larger range of respondents to participate.

What is this campaign?

The campaign has two fronts, the first, using a PR program to educate and inform, is to external audiences, such as the general public, commissioning clients and the media. This element uses information and positive media stories to correct misinformation and raise awareness about the positive benefits of engaging in research.

The second approach is working through the research industry to provide information and practical tools for its staff to ensure a quality positive experience for participants, resulting in higher response rates.

What are the campaign objectives?

Goals

- To protect our respondent source
- To enhance the value proposition of Market and Social Research amongst key target audiences and stakeholders.

Objectives

1. Raise awareness of the differences between Market and Social Research and Direct Marketing/Telemarketing including strict codes that govern behaviour of researchers and the positive use research is put to.
2. Create a desire by respondents to participate in research.

What are the mechanics of the campaign?

June 2005 sees the national launch of YVC and LIST. At that time AMSRO members will be asked to use the words “Your Views Count” in interview scripts and on other materials that will be seen by the public (eg self-completion questionnaires)

The launch will be supported by national PR and a dedicated “Your Views Count” website will be available full of resources and information.

Information and resource kits for specific target audiences such as commissioning clients and AMSRS/AMSRO stakeholders will also be available.

Following the launch information regarding LIST and how to implement it will be fed to members progressively and all AMSRO members are expected to be using the principles by June 2006.