QRCA
IDEAS & TOOLS FOR QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

VIEWS

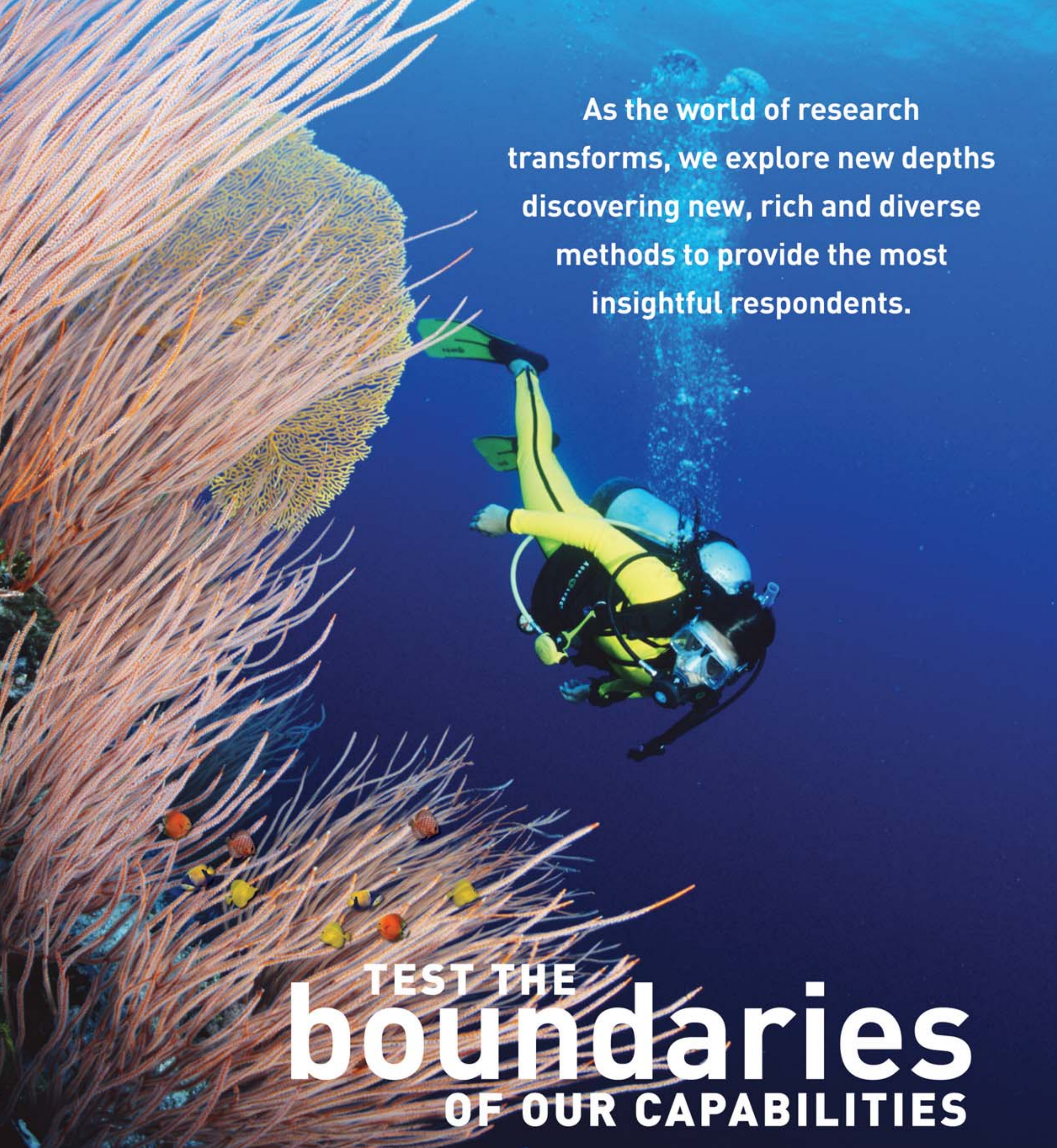
WINTER 2009
VOLUME 8 • NUMBER 2

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH:
The Political Secret Sauce

THE VALUE OF "STORY LISTENING"
in Understanding Consumers

MODERATING WITH SPIRIT
Connecting on a Deeper Level

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE CROSS-INDUSTRY RESEARCH REPORT:
"Consumer and Market Trends During Recession"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QRCA **VIEWS**

WINTER 2009

THE OFFICIAL PUBLICATION OF THE QUALITATIVE RESEARCH CONSULTANTS ASSOCIATION

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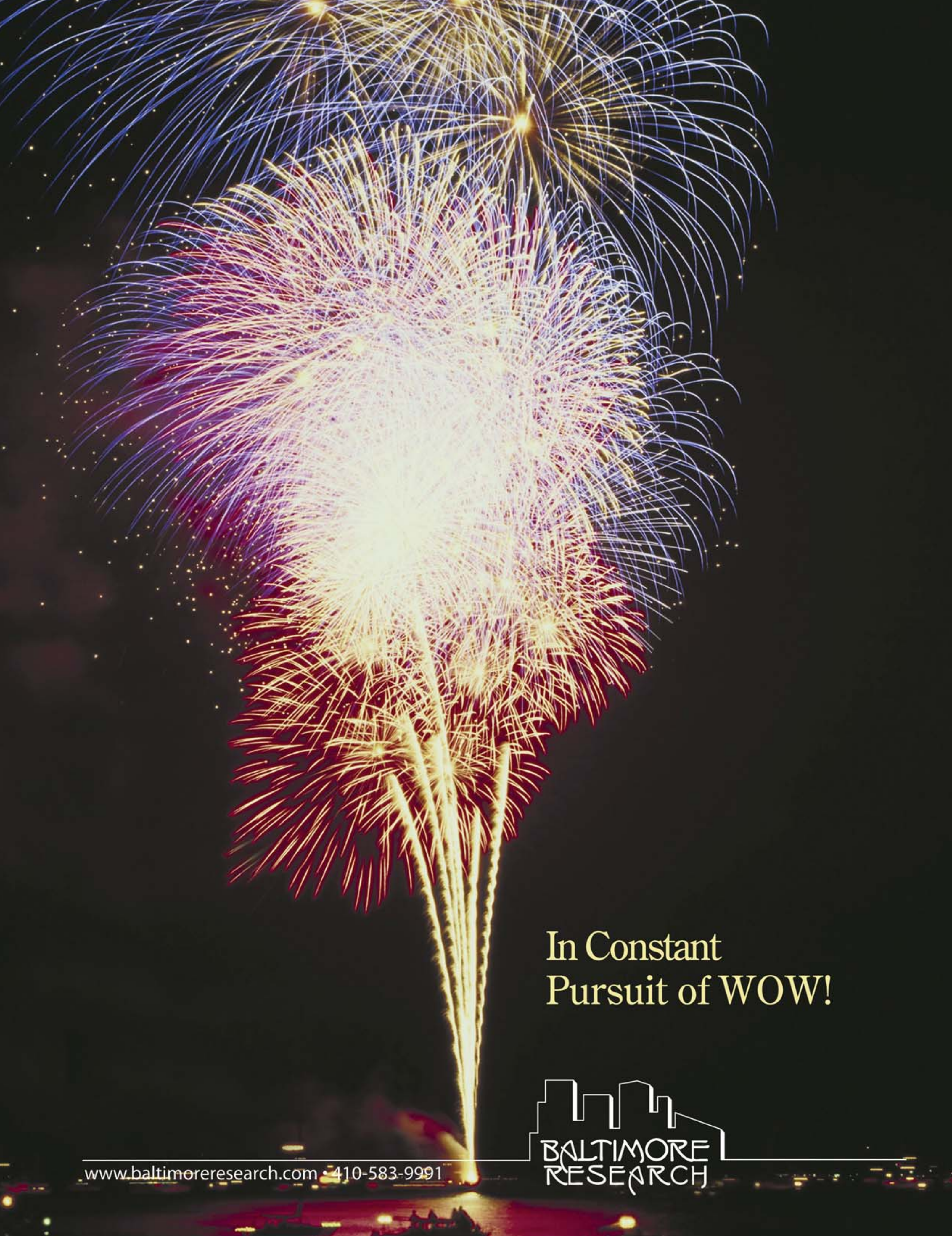
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More hands flipping the pages of *VIEWS* will ultimately raise awareness of the value of the services we all provide and will effectively position QRCA as the worldwide authority on the practice of qualitative research. You can make this happen! Share this award-winning publication with your colleagues and clients, and even use it as a door opener to new clients by **Giving the Gift of *VIEWS.***

TEAMWORK Makes It Happen

It is with great delight and admiration that I assume the role of editor-in-chief of *QRCA VIEWS.* Those who have served in this position before me are icons within this organization, known for generously sharing their expertise, visions and, most of all, their time. I would like to thank all of those former editors-in-chief because, without them, this publication would not be the excellent resource it is to our members and readers: founding editor Alice Rodgers, Sharon Wolf (2002–2005), Lana Limpert (2005–2007) and David Van Nuys (2007–2009).

There are literally hundreds of others to also thank — those who contribute their writing, experiences and voices to each issue; the all-volunteer editorial-staff members who work tirelessly; our publisher, Leading Edge Communications; and the QRCA's board of directors (thank you for putting your trust in me). This is the team that brings you the high level of content you read each issue. I am proud to say that I have been part of the *VIEWS* team for the last five years, and as editor-in-chief, I intend to continue providing the most relevant, unique and inspirational content you have come to expect from *QRCA VIEWS*, which has become the leading publication for those who practice and share the art of qualitative research.

Constantly striving to make this magazine the most comprehensive and useful resource for its readers is my principal goal while holding this post. *VIEWS* has sharpened the focus within each of the feature sections, so there is truly something of value for everyone.

Qualitative ToolBox will continue to provide content related to current and emerging methods of design, execution and the reporting of qualitative research. This issue brings three outstanding contributions in that section: Ricardo López guides you in how to build a strong bond with participants by tapping into the universal energy you possess and connecting with them on a spiritual and intuitive level; Carolyn Rose speaks about one of QRCs favorite topics, consumer storytelling, and emphasizes that story-listening is not all that easy; and the laddering technique is again in the spotlight, but how do you know you are at the end of the emotional ladder when interviewing? Sharon Livingston will clue you in.

Trends will bring you the rising trends in marketing, branding, advertising and consumer research. This issue brings a collection of recession-esque consumer behavior reported by TrendsSpotting.com.

Keeping up on technology can be exhausting and sometimes confusing, so *Tech Talk* will inform you of new and useful technology solutions as they relate to business support and research assistance. The use of social platforms in qualitative research is still new to many of us, and this issue's *Tech Talk* coverage of how you can use Twitter to gain powerful insights for your projects is quite educational.

We have re-thought the travel section of the magazine, newly named *Travel Wise*, aiming to provide advice with useful tips on how you can better manage your travel, making it easier, more productive and more enjoyable. So all of you smartphone owners will not want to miss the list of travel applications available for your iPhone and Blackberry that David Van Nuys has compiled for us.

Business Matters will continue to give you ideas on operations efficiency, business strategies, legal advice and more. In this issue, John Arnold from Constant Contact gives you a primer in email marketing and outlines how this strategy can maximize your current relationships as well as build more business.

We are broadening the scope of our *Book Reviews* to include fringe book topics in hopes of inspiring you to read content beyond the purview of general business or research, while still improving your career (and well-being).

Schools of Thought will continue to give you the provocative topics, diverse perspectives and fresh viewpoints from people who compose our industry. Our international articles will take a more *Global Research* perspective, and the lighter sections of the magazine will remain the same.

In this issue of *VIEWS*, we also have a special feature story, "Qualitative Research: The Political Secret Sauce," reported by Rick Weitzer, co-chair of QRCA's Political SIG.

I take great pride in helping to produce each and every issue of *VIEWS* and pride in how it favorably reflects our profession. I always want to share it, and I give away two- to three-dozen magazines each year. So, my personal goal while editor-in-chief will be to grow our subscriber base. *QRCA VIEWS* is entirely unique and is the best place for our brethren to showcase their expertise and talents. More hands flipping the pages of *VIEWS* will ultimately raise awareness of the value of the services we all provide and will effectively position QRCA as the worldwide authority on the practice of qualitative research.

It is you that can make this happen! Share this award-winning publication with your colleagues and clients. Even use it as a door opener to new clients by **Giving the Gift of *VIEWS*.** QRCA's main office has subscription gift cards for you to use this holiday season, and they are **FREE**. You can request your gift cards from memberservices@qrca.org.

I would love to hear feedback on any area of the magazine, and we appreciate any suggestions on how the *VIEWS* team can make it better for you. Email me at monica@zresearchservices.com.

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QRCA 2009–2010 Officers and Board of Directors

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COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY
Continues to Evolve

I will let you in on a little secret: I am not really sure that I understand this thing called "social media." As a marketing research consultant, and one who loves technology to boot, I really feel that I should be up on these kinds of things. Instead, though, I find that one minute I'm feeling cool, updating my Twitter feed and posting shots of our family trip to Washington DC on Facebook, and the next minute I'm shaking my fist at the computer screen, wondering how to get my status updates to stop synchronizing across multiple sites. (Simple workaround I just learned: change your password.)

Anyway, I started to wonder, what is social media all about, and how can it really help us as qualitative researchers? Is this the new zeitgeist, or are we all just killing time waiting for the economy to pick up?

Like any good researcher, I needed to learn more. In that spirit, I typed "definition: social media" into Google to see what it came up with. Although there were at least a dozen definitions just on my first page of results, most of them seemed to center on a few key ideas. Out of curiosity, I took the top dozen or so results and plugged them into Wordle (www.wordle.net) to see what key themes and ideas emerged.

What I loved about this visual representation is that it really brought to life the ways in which the essence of social media relate to the heart of qualitative research. Like qualitative research, the core of social media is literally in people, interaction and the sharing of perspectives, stories, information and knowledge. And, like qualitative research, social media relies on a variety of technology channels to facilitate communication, including audio, video and good old-fashioned text.

Given the synergies between social media and qualitative research, it seems that the evolution of technology and the ways that we communicate with each other only open new doors for qualitative researchers, as we continue to seek greater understanding of consumers and the way they think and act. The real key for us, as qualitative

Given the synergies between social media and qualitative research, it seems that the evolution of technology and the ways that we communicate with each other only open new doors for qualitative researchers, as we continue to seek greater understanding of consumers and the way they think and act.

researchers, will be to understand this new communication environment and how it impacts the work that we do.

To that end, I invite you to check out some of QRCA's newest outlets for online interaction and content co-creation. The first of these is QRCA Breakthroughs. Of course, we have always known that QRCA members conduct some of the most interesting, insightful and innovative qualitative research in the marketplace today. Now, we have a forum to share those stories and learn from the work of others.

QRCA Breakthroughs (www.qrcabreakthroughs.com) launched this summer as a means of showcasing the "breakthroughs" that our members achieve for their clients. At the Breakthroughs site, you can listen to their stories, write comments and even share those stories with others. Perhaps this is the perfect opportunity to share a story with someone you know, to spark his or her interest in a new approach to qualitative research. You can also submit your own "breakthrough" for possible inclusion in future updates to the site.

QRCA has also recently launched the QRCA Qualitative Research Discussion Group on LinkedIn. (Find it at www.linkedin.com; search Groups for "QRCA.") Although many of our members have enjoyed interacting on our members-only forum for years, this LinkedIn group allows us to have a dialogue with the larger qualitative research community to exchange ideas with other practitioners and users of qualitative research. We already have participants from six continents and a series of vibrant discussions on topics ranging from conducting research with specific consumer groups to "my most unusual project" to, yes, social media and its applications for our business.

It is an exciting time for me to serve as QRCA president. This letter marks the first of my term, and over the course of this coming year, I hope to continue to learn ways in which I can harness new means of communicating to be a better researcher and a better leader. So, I invite you to connect with me virtually. I can be found on Twitter as username AbbyLeafe, and I will identify all of my QRCA-related posts with a "#qrca" hashtag; so, if you are only interested in QRCA-related tweets, you can identify them easily. I definitely can't promise that I will always be insightful and interesting, but I can promise that I will try my hardest to keep you abreast and informed of what is going on with the Association and how it relates to the world of qualitative research.


VOTE

QUALITATIVE RESEARCH:

The Political Secret Sauce

BY RICK WEITZER
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Although political polling becomes the official scorekeeper during election time, why do we hear so little about the role of qualitative research in shaping the messages of candidates and ballot issues? All that we hear is that a candidate's message has been "focused grouped," or we see up to 24 "respondents," sitting in a television studio, providing insights in what cable TV calls a "focus group."

Much more qualitative research is being conducted for political campaigns and on public policy issues, but because there are no "horse-race" numbers to report, qualitative is generally off the radar for most media outlets. The underlying issue may be that "most reporters really don't understand qualitative, and so they usually won't cover it," according to Celinda Lake, a top Democratic strategist and president of Lake Research.

The Value of Qualitative Research

While political qualitative research remains mostly undetected to the outside world, it is often a powerful force within many political campaigns. In fact, it is the secret sauce of success that savvy political consultants use to develop the basic building blocks of a political campaign.

Anna Greenberg, a Democratic consultant and principal at Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research, describes qualitative research as "hugely valuable to know what people know, even if what they know is nothing, because you get a sense of the level of education your campaign will have to undertake if you want to try to effect change."

Eric Bauman, chairman of the Los Angeles County Democratic Party, uses qualitative research often and sums it up this way: "We use qualitative research to test live reactions —

human reaction to messages, images and schematics for campaigns. Polling may tell you in numbers how people react, but you can't watch the reactions. And it's that live human reaction that gives you a sense of whether or not you are going in the right direction with a piece."

While message and ad testing may be the bread and butter of campaign research, much of the front-end work is dedicated to understanding the "Yes, but …" (as in, "Yes, I support health care, but here are my reservations") and identifying the "emerging trends before they emerge." In this type of work, Lake seeks "an understanding of how people think, the connections that they make and a sense of how people relate public policy to their own personal lives."

However, persuading a campaign, at the congressional level or below, to conduct qualitative research can be a hard sell. "It usually gets cut in the budget," Lake told us. Agreeing, Greenberg says, "It will always be a higher priority to do quantitative research, because if you're running for office, you need to know what the horse race is. When I pitch people running for Congress, I never even suggest focus groups. That's sort of a luxury."

However, Greenberg adds, "If people have the budget, there is never any resistance to qualitative. In some ways, qualitative is easier to understand than quantitative. You give the client a book of data tables, and it seems like a different language, whereas focus groups are actually fairly easy to understand. They can sit behind the glass and watch people talk."

> "You have to get to know the players. This type of work does not go out for bid. It's really relationship-based."

Breaking into Political Research

Not surprisingly, the political-consulting business is political in nature, which means it is a who-knows-whom network. Chris Herbert, an Arizona-based Republican consultant and member of QRCA, understands this. "This type of work doesn't go out for bid. It's really relationship-based, so you have to get to know the players," he says. "If campaign consultants know who you are, they'll call you." Hebert suggests that neophytes start by volunteering for some campaigns, especially the smaller ones, to gain experience.

Even for an extensively experienced QRC, the differences between consumer work and political consulting make the latter an exceptionally hard field to break into because newcomers often miss the nuance and context of politics, according to Bill McInturff, partner and co-founder of Public Opinion Strategies, consultant for the GOP and QRCA member. "There have been some disastrous results when people who don't have campaign and political experience try to do research in a campaign setting," he comments. "In one case in California, a research and advertising team with no previous campaign experience concluded that people don't like negative advertising. They then ran an entirely positive campaign and got crushed."

McInturff suggests, "The best way to get started would be as a subcontractor because you may be able to get in based on your particular demographic. Our firm uses African-American and Latino moderators, where the ethnicity of the moderator is helpful."

Choose One Political Party

For the most part, a political consultant must choose to work for only one political party and not waver. Many of the consultants we interviewed told us that the experience of being on the same political team over many years builds up a high level of trust between the research consultant and the people who run campaigns. "I worked with people on multiple campaigns, and the trust was built up by having been in other difficult situations and being part of a winning team. Candidates will put up with a lot, as long as they really believe that you care about them and that you care about their winning," says a sincere McInturff. "The [work] I do reflects people I feel strongly about."

While sticking with one party is the conventional political wisdom, it is not always so cut and dried. At least in Alaska, switching back and forth is possible for Jean Craciun, president of CRG Research and a QRCA member. "We can cross party lines," she comments. "Nationally, some groups don't do that, but we have been able to work for every party. So, for an ethical researcher with a good reputation in Alaska, it doesn't matter what party you have worked for."

Political and Consumer Research Comparisons

On the surface at least, the methodologies and techniques that political researchers employ resemble those used to research consumers. Although qualitative political professionals employ almost every tool in the qualitative toolkit, including in-depth interviews, ethnography, qual/quant hybrids and various online methodologies, focus groups are still the most popular and accessible methodology.

"The clients I work with are used to focus groups, (and) they watch every single focus group," Herbert says. "Campaign managers like to sit behind the mirror and watch this process. They are used to listening to people talk. They are able to make their own decisions."

Greenberg says, "In a lot of ways, traditional market research is more sophisticated, if you look at the methodologies, but it's often less strategic." Political campaigns are often won or lost based on the consultant's work, so their research "tends to be much more strategic and less descriptive."

Another difference is how a discussion guide must be structured in a political setting. "It's very, very easy to lead a group astray very, very quickly," notes David Atkins, a QRCA member who worked with the Courage Campaign, a Prop-8-related issue in California. In a qualitative discussion, political topics must be addressed

"in the appropriate order because people have clouds of ideas on social issues, politics and candidates," he says. "You have to work very closely with the client when you're casting phrases or talking points."

Because some political campaigns are waged outside of the major markets, the issue of security becomes much more important in small communities, Herbert points out. "I've had reporters show up on the second night of a focus group, trying to figure out what we're doing," he recalls. He also sees a greater chance of hostility on the part of respondents if they think you are working on the "wrong" side of an issue, so he advises moderators to be prepared to deal with respondent anger.

Group composition is also scrutinized more closely when conducting political work. Most of the consultants interviewed for this article prefer to segment their focus groups to obtain discrete homogeneous groups of respondents, rather than a heterogeneous cross-section of the electorate. "If you're in a room where there is incredibly strong emotion, you want as homogeneous a group as possible because you want people to feel comfortable and spill their guts," explains McInturff.

Celinda Lake agrees with this strategy. "We think we get more honest responses," she says. "You create a more comfortable space. We were doing groups (on racism) in Queens and Brooklyn, and we brought up a Southern moderator. We knew that Northerners feel that Southerners are more racist, so they would be comfortable sharing their views."

Generally speaking, qualitative political consulting firms do not stray from what they know best. And, when larger political consulting firms take on non-political work, it almost always has a political dimension, whether it is a public policy issue, crisis management for large corporations or employee-union issues.

"Crisis research fits in well with our campaign expertise because you've got to work incredibly quickly and work with changes every day," McInturff says. But "when I've been approached to (do) the classic brand marketing and consumer and corporate research… I am modest about trying to apply my skills way beyond the range of my [political] work."

Greenberg follows that same path, saying, "We're not in the business of product testing or marketing products."

Candidates vs. Ballot Issues

While many people may consider candidate campaigns the dominant form of political consulting, other lucrative areas for qualitative political consultants include non-partisan referendums, as well as public policy issues that may never come to a public vote. Bauman is involved with ballot issues year-round. "In Los Angeles, there are eighty-eight cities (and) over one hundred schools and college boards, as well as the repetitive state and federal elections, but there are constantly local elections of all types, and we engage in all of them," he says. "That doesn't mean we do research on all of them, but we do a fair amount of it."

"However, candidate work is more complex," reports McInturff, "because candidates are real people. Voters have incredibly nuanced reactions to other real people, so at a non-verbal level, they pick up huge cues [that affect] how they see that person." This can lead to awkward moments with a candidate client when the consultant must convey difficult or critical information. "That's a very sensitive conversation to have with a fellow human being," he says. And when these conversations occur, he recommends, "Try to do it in as small a group as possible. Also, try to provide perspective about (similar) situations you've been in, and try to provide constructive things that [the candidate] can change. And keep it as short as possible."

Herbert would rather deal with issues than with the personalities of candidates. "There are ego issues involved with a candidate," he points out. "You've got to give your client the truth, but it's also a delicate balancing act. On a ballot initiative, people don't tend to take it so personally."

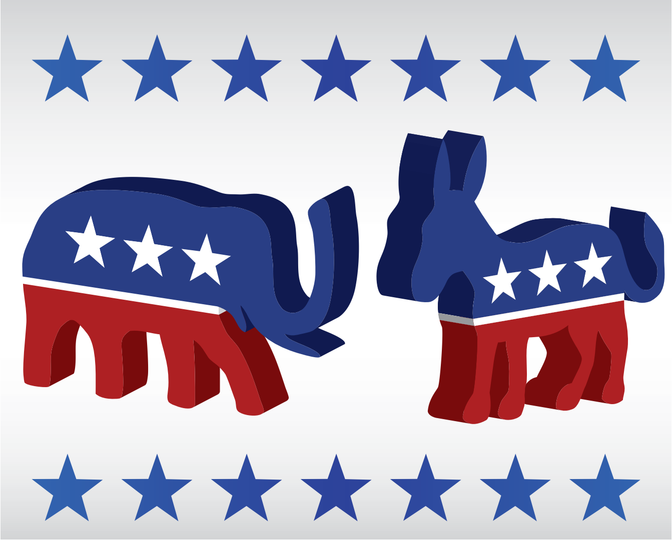
Working at "Warp Speed"

One of the biggest challenges that political researchers face is the breakneck speed at which major decisions need to be made. While these consultants try to set appropriate expectations ahead of time, in the long run, political consultants must keep pace with what Craciun calls the "warp speed" at which campaigns run.

McInturff explains that campaigns are under "enormous pressure to make decisions, with sometimes very incomplete amounts of data. We make increasingly important decisions with less and less information."

While Greenberg will still deliver a full report in a week or two, "It is not unusual to send an e-mail to the client with a summary of what you found (after) every night of the focus group," she comments. "We're very comfortable with, and frequently do give, a kind of quick read-out with all the caveats."

The reasons for this pace are quite practical. While Herbert eventually submits a full report, he says, "The really fast turnaround is on ad testing. It's not uncommon for my report cycle to be less than twelve hours, because the client is in the recording studio at nine the next morning, making commercials."



> One candidate once summed up his relationship to McInturff: "I see you as being kind of the confessional."

High Level of Engagement

With candidate work, because a person's career is often on the line, it is not surprising that the QRC gets a high level of engagement from his or her clients. Sometimes, though, "The candidate may only be tangentially involved," notes Atkins, leaving the staff to act on his or her behalf.

The level of political experience that the candidate or the staff brings to the campaign often determines how smoothly the relationship goes. Atkins added, "Usually, you are not dealing with total neophytes. Everybody's been through this process a million times." However, some under-funded campaigns must hire "whoever they can get," according Craciun. "If you have a bunch of volunteers, there's a lot of wasted time educating them" about qualitative research.

Some relationships between the consultants and the campaign professionals run very deep. Chris Herbert has developed long-term relationships over two-dozen years and remarked that some of his clients "are as much friends as they are clients." Bill McInturff has worked on Senator John McCain's campaigns since 1992 and has built a high level of trust with McCain's team because McInturff has been in other difficult campaigns with McCain and has made judgments that helped him win. One candidate once summed up his relationship to McInturff: "I see you as being kind of the confessional."

The Future

While these QRCs are already using a wide range of methodologies in their political work, most of them foresee an increase in the use of online research techniques, including bulletin boards, online ad testing, chat rooms and community panels. Chris Herbert sees the "younger political consultants" driving big changes in campaigning, which will "change much more dramatically with the use of social networking and a whole variety of internet-based campaign methods."

Anna Greenberg cited online narrative testing as an emerging technique, "where you take long paragraphs about an issue or a speech by a candidate and get people to react." She sees online research as a perfect platform for qualitative "because you get a very rich set of open-ended responses… Interviewers do a pretty terrible job of capturing the qualitative responses on the phone."

Hybrid and multi-model approaches are also ascending. Online ad testing, Greenberg concedes, "is strictly speaking quantitative because it involves a lot of numbers and is a hybrid because there are a lot of open-ended questions and people are doing a lot of analysis of the written responses."

Eric Bauman has used an internet-based polling company to conduct "a sort of hybrid where we got quantitative results, but we also had the opportunity to do a little qualitative testing of some visual images." He was happy with the ability to sample a large population of voters, but he has concerns with online methods being truly representative. "They could not ever convince me that the distribution of participants matched a democratic electoral," he points out.

Will these trends enhance the visibility of political qualitative research? Probably not, because online work does not lend itself to producing a good storyline for traditional media and journalists. However, as more political professionals adapt their campaigns to the internet, research methods are likely to follow. The major benefit to the candidates and the professionals who run campaigns will be the immediate feedback that online research provides, and this will allow campaigns to move even faster than "warp speed."

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Highlights of the Cross-Industry Research Report:

"Consumer and Market Trends During RECESSION"

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Quoting *Bloomberg* (July 26, 2009), "The worst U.S. recession in five decades probably eased in the second quarter of 2009 as trade and government stimulus mitigated the damage from declines in housing, inventories and consumer and business spending."

In August 2009, President Obama was similarly optimistic, declaring, "The worst may be over in the economic crisis."

Is it really? Are there signs of consumer recovery?

In TrendsSpotting's review, the latest findings of the Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life surveys contribute to the exploration of shifts in consumer behavior. Respondents participating in the April 2009 survey were asked about a range of belt-tightening strategies and behaviors triggered by the economic recession. It finds that eight in ten adults have taken specific steps of one kind or another to economize during these times. Almost six in ten adults say they are shopping more in discount stores or are passing up name brands in favor of less expensive varieties.

This brief review is part of TrendsSpotting's comprehensive research report for 2009, "Consumer and Market Trends During Recession," providing a broad perspective on consumers' changing behavior during the economic downturn. The consumer insights presented here are derived from marketing research expertise, along with TrendsSpotting's experience with research 2.0 methodologies (such as Search Trends and Blog Citations). Utilizing such tools to "listen" to consumer interaction and "follow" the consumer search process provides good indications of consumer interests and intentions. A link to the full TrendsSpotting cross-industry report is listed at the end of this article.

Food and Beverage

U.S. consumer research from The Nielsen Company reports that more than half (56%) of consumers eat dinner at home more often than before the downturn. The same percentage reports **eating dinner less often at restaurants.** More than one-third (37%) of consumers surveyed report going to bars or clubs less often.

In addition, according to a Consumer Report on Eating Share Trends (CREST®) by the NPD Group, total U.S. **restaurant-industry traffic declined** by 2.6% for the 2009 Spring quarter versus the same quarter last year (sharpest decline in industry traffic since 1981). While checks rose 2% during the quarter, the rate of increase failed to offset the decline in traffic, yielding a 1% decline in consumer spending at commercial foodservice this quarter.

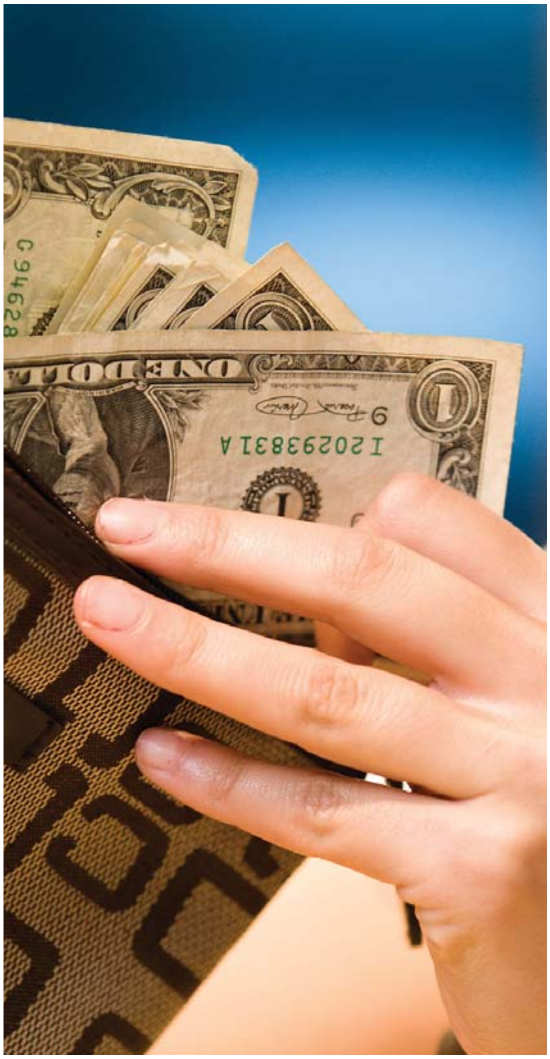
Consumers are changing their buying behavior in more noticeable ways. They show a **greater tendency to buy larger package sizes** (42%), U.S. products (28%), locally made products (25%) and known products (23%), versus experimenting with new ones.

In another Nielsen research study in August 2009, there are indications for a **sharp increase in the Private Label** food category (7.4% growth for the category). Consumers are sticking with basic purchases in categories like fresh meat, pasta and packaged dinners, along with baking mixes and supplies, as meal-preparation consumption comes back to the home.

Results from Technomic's consumer survey show that while over half of consumers are more concerned about their eating habits today compared to a year ago, 70% report that **healthier foods are increasingly difficult to afford,** 53% of them claim they often purchase less healthy foods because they cost less, and 44% say their budgets prevent them from eating healthier foods.

Americans did not change their coffee consumption (54% drink daily), but they appear to be **drinking more coffee at home** (83%, up 5 points from a year ago) than before, according to the 2009 National Coffee Drinking Trends survey.

In a survey conducted in April 2009 by Pew Research Center, 28% report they have **cut back on liquor or cigarettes.** That proportion increases to 39% among those under the age of 30, but falls to 12% among older Americans.



Media and Electronics

A Pew June 2009 survey finds that Americans are now embracing home broadband, contrary to the stagnant adoption rates in 2007. Broadband adoption stood at 63% of adult Americans as of April 2009, up from 55% from May 2008. Additionally, in 2009, existent broadband users paid for premium services, and 34% of home broadband users said they subscribed to a service that gave them faster access speeds, which was an increase of 29% from 2008. Consumers are **paying more for the extra speed** than they did a year ago.

Pew's April 2009 survey also reports that 22% of cell phone users (19% of all adults) have cancelled or cut back cell phone service in the past year. However, **smartphone ownership continues to rise,** with 37% of American adult consumers now reporting they own a smartphone, according to ChangeWave's June 2009 survey. Remarkably, 14.4% of the respondents said that they planned to buy a smartphone in the next 90 days, the highest percentage ever recorded in a ChangeWave survey.

Gartner Dataquest and IDC's Worldwide Quarterly PC Tracker both reported that the **worldwide personal computer (PC) market declined for the first time** in the last quarter, following roughly six years of growth. In the U.S. market, PC sales fell 6.1% from 2008, according to Gartner Dataquest, and 8.1% according to IDC.

Results from Pew's April 2009 survey indicate that 52% of the public perceives television as a necessary part of their lives. That is a decline of 12% points since 2006 and the lowest proportion since 1973. Pew's consumer survey also reveals that 24% of adults have **cancelled or reduced their cable or satellite TV subscription services** in the last year. This is a dramatic decline, as it was only at 15% six months before.

The recession has also hit the U.S. videogame industry, a business that was considered recession-resistant. **Sales of videogame hardware, software and accessories plunged 29%** from the same period last year, to $848.8 million as reported by the NPD Group in August 2009. July marked the fifth straight month in 2009 to show a sales decline. According to NPD analysts, customers are "squeezed by the recession." "They are being more selective about what video games they buy. Many are waiting for blockbuster game launches coming later in the year… and they are also hoping for gaming-console price cuts."

Healthcare

Future national health expenditures in the U.S. are expected to significantly outpace economic growth in 2008 and 2009 due to the recession, according to a report issued by the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services. IMS Health lowered its expectations for global pharmaceutical market growth in 2009 from 4.5–5.5% growth to 2.5–3.5%. The U.S. pharmaceutical market is taking an even bigger hit: it is predicted to decline by 1–2%. **This will mark the first time the U.S. pharmaceutical market has declined in the last 50 years.**

The Centers for Disease Control & Prevention and National Institutes of Health report that while Americans may complain about the high cost of health care, they are still willing to **shell out roughly $34 billion a year out-of-pocket on alternative therapies** that are not covered by insurance. That is a growth of more than 25% in the past decade.

Automobiles

Despite the economic recession, Americans' dependence on the family car remains strong. In the August 2009 Pew Research report, 88% of Americans rate an automobile as a necessity (nearly identical to 90% who felt this way in 1973).

Almost no other nation's citizens love their vehicles as much as Americans do. According to a July 2009 ING DIRECT survey conducted by TNS in nine countries, when asked to name the last three things that consumers would sacrifice to save money, 30% of Americans said their vehicle. Worldwide, only Brits love their cars as much (also at 30%).

The latest market research study by R. L. Polk & Co. finds that in the U.S. market, **new-vehicle sales have dropped** from a high of almost 17.5 million sales in 2000 to 13.2 million in 2008 — with a further decline to 10 million sales projected for 2009. Polk predicts that 2009 will mark the end of U.S. market share dominance for the domestic automakers: Asian manufacturers will capture 47% of U.S. market share, compared to 44% for American automakers and 9% for European brands.

Education

Students are planning to pay less for education: The National Association for College Admission Counseling Survey reports that 71% of high-school guidance counselors saw an increase in the number of students who this year chose **less-expensive colleges over their "dream school."** Nearly 60% of these counselors reported a rise in the number of students planning to enroll in public versus private colleges compared to last year, while 37% of them saw an increase in the number of students planning to enroll in community colleges.

Fewer U.S. consumers expect to reduce their spending on back-to-school items compared to 2008. According to a July 2009 survey by Deloitte LLP, 64% of consumers said they plan to "spend less money" on back-to-school items, compared with 71% in 2008. Four out of 10 (43%) said they will **cut back their spending** by more than $100, which was down from nearly 5 out of 10 (48%) last year.

"Consumers may be casting a glimmer of hope for retailers, but

> Consumer spending in most sectors is down, and there are signs that that the majority of consumers are unlikely to revert to their former spending habits in the near future.

the survey results indicate that value will top their shopping lists this year," said Stacy Janiak, vice chairman and U.S. retail leader for Deloitte LLP. "Although retailers may not see as many wallets snapping shut as they did in late 2008, consumers still plan to stretch their dollars, telling us that that their shopping remains constrained. Retailers should **focus on delivering the best incentives and in-store experiences** to get the most out of the back-to-school season this year."

In Summary

TrendsSpotting finds that many of the top markets previously empowering American industry are going through a major shift.

Observation of consumers' reactions suggests that they are quickly adjusting to the change in economic realities and adopting new consumer habits. They are focused on down-sizing strategies and are highly motivated by price.

The period marking the beginning of the recession to the present has been a time of trial and error for consumers. After initially cutting back across the board, consumers have reassessed their personal situation and have begun to employ a new set of priorities: They are checking out private labels, and if found satisfying, they will become loyal to them. Consumers are not sacrificing electronics, but they are reconsidering their options: Netbooks over desktop PCs or laptops; smartphones and internet connectivity over careless talk-time spent on mobile phones.

Recovery will bring a new age of consumers, much more aware of their expenses and their priorities. Consumers will not revert to their previous habits, as those were proven to be unsound. Recovery will come from markets matching consumers' new priorities.

If you have enjoyed these highlights, the full cross-industry report "Consumer and Market Trends During Recession" by TrendsSpotting can be purchased online at: http://www.trendsspotting.com/blog/?page_id=1560. TrendsSpotting presents web metrics findings in each industry reviewed in the full report to provide a broad perspective on consumer behaviors during the economic downturn.

UNDERSTANDING THE CONSUMER:

The Value of "Story-Listening"

By Carolyn Rose
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Telling a story offers a unique perspective and rich data points from which you can extrapolate a wealth of information. A consumer story, defined as a personal narrative of a particular incident or series of events, often reveals information that goes beyond what you might think to ask directly.

In an increasingly competitive landscape, most companies have realized that a solid understanding of consumer needs and preferences is necessary for market success. How, though, can you know what consumers really want? This challenge becomes even more difficult when those people developing the products (or services) are not consumers of them, which is often the case in niche-market offerings as well as in medical and toy industries. For example, how might a middle-aged marketing manager have an idea of what types of products will resonate with "tweens?" (Think Tom Hanks in the movie *Big*.) The answer is not necessarily to hire a resident 12-year-old (although this is one approach). Instead, it is to use the appropriate research methods to uncover the true wants and needs of your target audience.

Story-listening is a valuable research tool that aims to do just that — reveal market wants and needs through the voice of the consumer. Story-listening refers to the ability to elicit and learn from consumer storytelling. Telling a story offers a unique perspective and rich data points from which you can extrapolate a wealth of information. A consumer story, defined as a personal narrative of a particular incident or series of events, often reveals information that goes beyond what you might think to directly ask. This helps to create a "big picture," which includes all of the various aspects of use and interaction that entail the life of a product or service, as defined by the consumers of it.

In this sense, story-listening is particularly valuable when trying to understand a consumer product or market that is unfamiliar and/or extensive. It is an effective way to build frameworks that capture those considerations that are important and/or relevant to consumers without making assumptions of such.

Additionally, story-listening often vividly reveals the true rationale behind consumer behaviors and preferences. It enables you to understand the deeper "why," without directly soliciting it. For example, when asked what new feature would be desirable for a mobile phone, a participant might respond, "waterproof." When asked why, the likely explanation is that the phone would not get damaged if wet. If a story-listening approach was taken with this same participant, we might have initially asked if he had any "disaster stories" involving his current mobile phone, whereupon the consumer reveals that he once took his phone kayaking and watched it sink to the river floor when he unexpectedly capsized. In this case, we have a much better understanding of why a waterproof phone is desirable. In fact, one might argue that a floating phone might even better address this particular participant's concerns, a feature derived from a consumer need that likely would not have otherwise revealed itself.

Important Facets

The key to story-listening, as obvious as it may seem, is allowing the consumer to freely speak. Often in the research environment, the line of questioning and the structure of an interview or discussion limit the scope of participant responses and, consequently, prevent story-listening from occurring.

Consider a research session, for example, where the moderator has a list of 50 directed questions to ask the participant(s). These questions likely elicit a series of responses — yes, no, maybe, once daily, etc. Directed questions, meaning those that have a clear and definite response, often become the focus of research sessions because they lead to tangible "answers." The 50 responses by the group can be synthesized in a very real (and sometimes even mathematical) manner to easily identify patterns and inform development.

While this type of questioning is appropriate and effective for collecting fact-based information and learning details, it is less likely to lead to any surprising revelations, namely because the structure dictates the response. There is little room to learn something that you didn't already know to ask about. Research that is overly directed will ultimately be insular, often reflecting a skewed or incomplete representation of the true wants and needs of the consumer.

This tendency towards the concrete should be tempered by an exploration of the unknown. (Like a good diet, balance and moderation are recommended — thorough research will likely involve varying degrees of both.) A more exploratory investigation might employ a story-listening approach, where open-ended questions (and/or requests) are asked of participants.

> Results are less likely to be biased by any preconceived notions or assumptions, and they are more likely to reveal surprises and a deeper contextual understanding of the consumer.

For example, participants might be asked to describe a certain experience or to talk about a particular failure or success (typically surrounding a product or process). These types of questions do not have a clear or definite answer; rather, they incite personal expression and experience, and they encourage participants to tell a story. Consequently, responses are not limited or constrained by the way in which they were elicited. Results are less likely to be biased by any preconceived notions or assumptions, and they are more likely to reveal surprises and a deeper contextual understanding of the consumer.

Imagine, for example, that you were tasked with learning more about the consumer experience surrounding in-car navigation systems, to ultimately identify a new feature set for a next-generation product. A story-listening approach might begin by asking consumers to describe a time when they were driving and got lost. This open-ended approach is sure to elicit a prolific story that will reveal logistical circumstances, physical descriptions of space and time, and emotional states of mind. It is also likely that this story will unravel to identify user challenges and task-based solutions, all of which are critical layers of the user experience. The consumer may (indirectly) start to suggest and even prioritize potential features.

Contrast this with asking a directed question such as, "What features of an in-car navigation system are appealing to you?" or more directed, "Is the 3D map feature useful?" While these questions are not devoid of value and are ultimately the questions that need answers, they are overly focused if you are trying to understand the complete user experience. These questions will not help to create a "big picture," nor will they uncover new or unexpected opportunities. They immediately direct the participant and cue him or her, though perhaps not explicitly, to a limited set of responses. With this type of questioning, participants are more likely to give "canned" or less thoughtful responses (perhaps the first three features that come to mind, for example) because an expectation has been created and there is a lack of context grounding the response.

If every participant cited real-time traffic detours as an appealing feature, it is likely that it has mass-market appeal. However, it might also be that the traffic feature is one that participants are most aware of (recognizing marketing capabilities, rather than actual functionality), or it might mean that something that would better meet their needs just does not yet exist.

Story-listening, as evidenced in this comparison, makes no assumptions and allows the consumer to choose the focus of the conversation. In listening to stories of user needs and frustrations while being lost, you could deduce the feature set (existing and/or new) that would best meet these needs, supported by a colorful understanding of why those particular features are or would be appealing. Additionally, by allowing the consumer to speak freely about any aspect of the story that he or she feels is most important, consumer values are often prioritized without asking to do so directly.

Using the Technique

While story-listening might seem like a relatively easy research technique to implement, there are primarily two challenges critical to its success. The obvious and inherent challenge to the story-listening method is eliciting stories — a participant must tell a story in order for it to be listened to. Even with the tools to appropriately frame questions, it is not always easy to get people to share stories with a stranger, especially if the story is personal or emotional. From the participant perspective, it is often "easier" to answer a series of questions in a yes/no fashion, and it is more "work" to describe a scenario and explain the rationale. The key to eliciting a good story is participant engagement, which can be elevated by attitude, atmosphere and motivation.

The participant's attitude is often a reflection of the moderator's; generally, it is difficult to remain disinterested when someone in front of you is so completely engaged. Conveying sincere interest will go a long way.

Additionally, a casual and comfortable atmosphere is more likely to encourage story-telling. Even within a focus group or office setting, it is possible to create a more casual atmosphere through conversational interaction; think grabbing a coffee with friends versus a job interview. The conversation should be interactive and follow a natural flow, so that participants do not find themselves "waiting" for the next question.

Lastly, stories are easier to elicit when the participant has a clear motivation to share. It's helpful to let the participants know upfront how their role feeds into the larger process, that it is ultimately intended to improve a product or process in which they are likely intimately

involved. Generally, people want to help those who ask for it.

The other challenge encountered when implementing the story-listening method is to remain completely unbiased and assumption-less. This is particularly difficult when the research team has an extensive knowledge of the subject matter (as the manufacturer's marketing manager, lead engineer or otherwise). However, all preconceived notions, technical challenges, existing statistics, etc., need to be momentarily forgotten in order to listen and learn. Story-listening requires that the researcher treat the consumer as the expert. Story-listening will reveal consumer insights that can later build on, confirm or refute prior knowledge. However, this prior knowledge must not overly direct or influence the story, or prevent it from ever being told.

Successful story-listening is evident in nearly all meaningful innovation. When companies are willing and able to broaden the scope of research in order to truly understand consumer behaviors, attitudes and expectations, the results often deviate from what is expected and lead to a consumer affinity otherwise difficult to achieve. Findings revealed during story-listening are representative of the consumer in the truest sense. These unrestrained and colorful insights lead to products and services that directly target the consumer and consequently bear better market success.

Moderating with Spirit
and Connecting on a Deeper Level

By Ricardo Lopez
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What makes a good qualitative research consultant good? I have asked this question on numerous occasions to fellow qualitative researchers, and their responses almost always center around an intangible ability to connect with respondents and a feeling of deep satisfaction derived from the engagement. The knowledge surrounding research design, discussion-guide development, field management, moderating techniques and the interpretation/analysis of the findings is very important; it is not, however, what makes us good at what we do. In fact, most successful and seasoned qualitative researchers will agree that a rookie with little experience can be an excellent moderator if he or she possesses this intangible ability to connect and interact with people. Where does that ability come from? Can it be taught?

A number of years ago, I decided to do some research on this subject for a proposal I was preparing to present at the 2002 QRCA conference. My goal was to find a way to teach or convey the essence of what makes us good at what we do. The problem I faced was that I did not know what to call this intangible inwardness of a moderator. In seeking an answer, I searched for the qualities that make people great at what they do, regardless of their profession. I came across words like passion, dedication and inspiration.

> If we are all connected to a spiritual source, then we must also be connected to each other "in spirit."

That last word — inspiration — hit a chord with me because I always feel that, when I am at my best moderating a focus group, I am inspiring the participants to share their thoughts at a deeper and more significant level. To inspire, I also learned, means to affect, guide or arouse by "divine influence." Then it hit me; what if this intangible ability to be good at what we do is more connected to our spiritual side than to our cognitive nature? I named my presentation "Moderating with Spirit" and proceeded to find a way to teach what many have regarded as an innate ability that cannot be taught.

Why spirit? Most people believe that, at a spiritual level, we are connected to some greater power. Some will say it is a connection with God; others may think of it as a connection with the Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ, their Buddha Nature, pure consciousness or a universal energy. Regardless of what one calls this greater power, it stands to reason that, if we are all connected to a spiritual source, then we must also be connected to each other "in spirit."

The belief in a spiritual connection also has strong roots in the Native American heritage and is beautifully depicted in the Disney rendition of the story of Pocahontas. A line from one of my favorite songs from Pocahontas, "Colors of the Wind," states that "we are all connected to each other in a circle, in a hoop that never ends." My contention is that good qualitative research is often the result of a spiritual connection.

This article covers what I believe are ways to promote a spiritual connection and gain that intangible ability that makes us good, not only at moderating focus groups, but also in all other aspects of our work. How do we get connected? As you may surmise, it has more to do with your attitude and values than with procedure and technique. I have identified several areas that you can address to promote this spiritual connectivity.

Good Karma and Positive Energy

Following the belief that there is a universal spiritual connection that affects our business and personal interactions, it makes sense to pay close attention to how we address everything surrounding our work. Wikipedia defines Karma as "the concept of action or deed in Indian

religions, and it is understood as that which causes the entire cycle of cause and effect." In order to promote good Karma or positive energy, we must believe and think positively in all aspects of our work.

Believing in Yourself

Start by believing in yourself. If you do not believe in yourself, it is impossible to get others to believe in you. It is extremely difficult to pretend that you are good at something when you are not convinced of it yourself. Even good actors say that, in order to be good at playing a role, they need to become the character they are playing and be in tune with that mindset. Do you want to be superb at what you do? I want to hear you say, "I already am!"

The Client, The Brand and The Team

An extension of believing in yourself is believing in everything you do. My father was a huge believer in this concept; as an ad-agency creative, his job was to communicate and sell product benefits. My mother was not allowed to buy anything that competed with the products that my father's agency advertised, and my sisters and I were not allowed to even drink Sprite because the agency's client was 7-Up. I thought he was insane, but I now find myself doing the same thing.

When I was in 6th or 7th grade, I remember that my father brought home a toy that the agency was advertising. It was one of those little wooden contraptions with a string, a cup and a ball; the purpose was to get the ball in the cup by using a lever. I told him that it was crap, and he knew it. I remember hearing him mutter under his breath, "I will never be able to sell this!" He knew all too well the importance of believing in his client's product.

As a qualitative research consultant, I also find myself striving to "believe" in my client's products and/or services. Perhaps my rationale is not as straightforward as that of an ad-agency creative; yet, I do feel that if I am to succeed in conducting research and interpreting findings, I need to feel connected to the company, its products/brand and the client team. In my experience, clients treat you as a true consultant only if you are perceived to be a part of their team.

Part of my introductory speech in conducting focus groups includes telling participants that I want to see everyone having fun. In my experience, the more fun we are having, the better the group discussion.

Enjoyment

It is a well-documented fact that people are likely to excel at any endeavor that lies within the realm of their passion. It is easy to be good at something when you are having fun. I am also convinced that when people are enjoying each other's company, the communication is greatly enhanced. I love conducting interviews, and I always look to have fun. In fact, part of my introductory speech in conducting focus groups includes telling participants that I want to see everyone having fun. In my experience, the more fun we are having, the better the group discussion.

Part of having fun is also knowing how to use humor to your advantage. If you are too uptight and overly serious, it is difficult for respondents to understand that it is okay for them to share and open up to their true feelings because nobody is there to judge them. I promote this by poking fun at myself whenever the opportunity to do so ties with the research conversation.

Prejudices

Want it or not, we are all prejudiced in many ways. It is human nature to make judgments and assumptions based on the person's weight, race, appearance, gender and other physical characteristics. I work very hard to suspend all judgments before I enter the focus group room. Every moderator has an example of a participant who ended up offering the most lucid and insightful advice after being close to being dismissed based on appearances.

As I write these lines, a woman from Scotland named Susan Boyle gave a jaw-dropping singing performance on the television show "Britain's Got Talent." What made her performance so unforgettable and internationally newsworthy was that, as I am sure you know by now, she did not look the part. Because of her looks, nobody expected her to sing well; but everyone was mistaken. How many times do we stifle communication because of our own prejudices?

Beauty and Love

A good practice that helps in achieving a spiritual connection in qualitative research is to find beauty in everything a respondent says and to wholeheartedly appreciate those contributions. This does not have to be far-fetched; you can make it real because everyone is fascinating in one way or another. If you find the beauty in what a focus group participant is saying and love every bit of it, you will find that you hear things differently and learn at a different level.

Attention and Care

Paying attention to what respondents are saying goes further than listening. True paying attention also involves caring for what they have to say. I see my role as a moderator also as being the main advocate for the participants. I like to take care of them because, in my caring, they find a person they can trust and a person with whom they can share honestly.

I have many examples of situations when I have gone out of my way to address the needs of a participant, from the simple act of stepping out of the room to get a bottle of water to give someone who is coughing, to stopping the group to talk privately to a participant that I noticed had tears in her eyes. At a spiritual level, truly caring for the participants goes a long way to enhancing the level of communication.

Taking Down Walls and Sharing

I find that, in order to be open to a spiritual connection, you have to be open to the sharing of personal information about yourself. Communication is not a one-way street. In qualitative research, we often pretend

> I talk about my family whenever I can inject a comment without affecting the conversation, and it does wonders in elevating the level of communication.

that we can establish a meaningful conversation by asking questions and waiting for responses, without ever sharing information in the opposite direction. In my experience, it works best if the moderator engages the participants by taking down the walls and sharing his own personal information when appropriate.

Here, I must caution the reader that I do not mean contributing opinions regarding the subject of discussion, as that would undoubtedly introduce biases. There are plenty of opportunities, however, when it is appropriate to relate a personal anecdote or tell a story to the group. You want a research interview to flow as if you were talking to a friend, and friends expect the information to flow in both directions. I talk about my family whenever I can inject a comment without affecting the conversation, and it does wonders in elevating the level of communication.

Squelching Gossip

Gossiping is not productive because it interferes with the good Karma that we are trying to promote. I often find that, when I go to the back room during a focus group interview, my clients are engaged in gossiping. They make assumptions about the participants and infer behavior with very limited information. Sometimes the gossip is based on prejudices, while other times the client is just jumping to conclusions based on very little knowledge.

My advice is to resist being pulled into the gossip, especially if the group is still in progress. Participating in the gossip will invariably affect the group because the moderator will go back to the focus group with built-in prejudices that may be simply misplaced.

Addressing Conflict and Working Together

While my goal is always to avoid conflict within a group, there are times when conflict is unavoidable. A participant can become belligerent and uncooperative, and there may not be much a moderator can do but to address the conflict.

In an effort to be humorous, I once joked about something that a participant had said, but the respondent became agitated and said that I had insulted him. I immediately stood up and approached him with the most heartfelt apology. He accepted my gesture and later apologized himself by saying that he was wrong and that what I had said was indeed funny.

What I also find is that if you have been honest and connected throughout the session, the other participants will be quick to come to the moderator's aid at the first sign of conflict. Another story that comes to mind was with a disturbed participant in New York who, for no apparent reason, stood up and wanted to have a physical confrontation. I also stood up and told him to please leave. As I did, all of the other participants stood up to back me up. He left, and the group turned out to be a fantastic session with an even tighter connection due to the small altercation.

Risk

Taking risks is important when the goal is maintaining a spiritual connection. Sometimes the way the discussion is flowing and how the participants are interacting inspire the moderator with ideas for techniques and approaches that deviate from the discussion guide and research plan. Take these spiritual cues or "gut feelings" seriously because they are usually on the mark. A moderator who follows his gut and takes a risk is likely to receive praise for thinking on his or her feet and being creative.

Ethics

The spiritual world is an open book. Making up stories and/or

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telling lies to the participants in a focus group does not work because it interferes with the spiritual connection. Recently, someone during a group introduction told me about her son breaking an arm from doing something stupid, and I shared a story from when I was in high school and jumped a whole set of stairs, breaking my own arm in the process. Later, the client asked me if I had made that up. Of course I didn't! I also never tell lies to dismiss a participant or to hide from the group the fact that people who work for the company in question are watching behind the mirror.

Worries

I am not saying that achieving a spiritual connection is always possible. One sure way to break the connection is to walk into a group discussion bringing with you personal or outside worries. Sometimes, of course, this is unavoidable. For the most part, I am successful at leaving the worries behind by sitting quietly in the room before the group in meditation. In the cases when that does not work and I am able to share my worries, I do. Doing so drives people to immediately seek a connection with you.

Praying

Prayer or inner meditation represents a direct connection to the spiritual world and is always helpful to me. I meditate before every group on my desire to achieve a spiritual connection. I also say a silent prayer whenever I feel that I am losing the connection or the control of the group.

When Nothing Works, See the Perfection of It All!

At times, nothing seems to work. Those are the times when the most important tenet in building a spiritual connection needs to be invoked. Everything is perfect! Everything must be perfect because those are the cards you were dealt.

The truth is that if you look back at every instance when everything apparently went wrong, there is always a lesson that was learned, or the situation actually turned out to work to your advantage. The respondent who should not have been recruited provided the most insights; the person who had to be kicked out of the group for being drunk helped the other members form a very strong connection; and the person who stayed quiet most of the group ended up having radical ideas that would have been disruptive if shared earlier in the discussion. Everything is perfect the way it is — believe it, and you will be well on your way to moderating with spirit!

The Gold at the End of the Ladder

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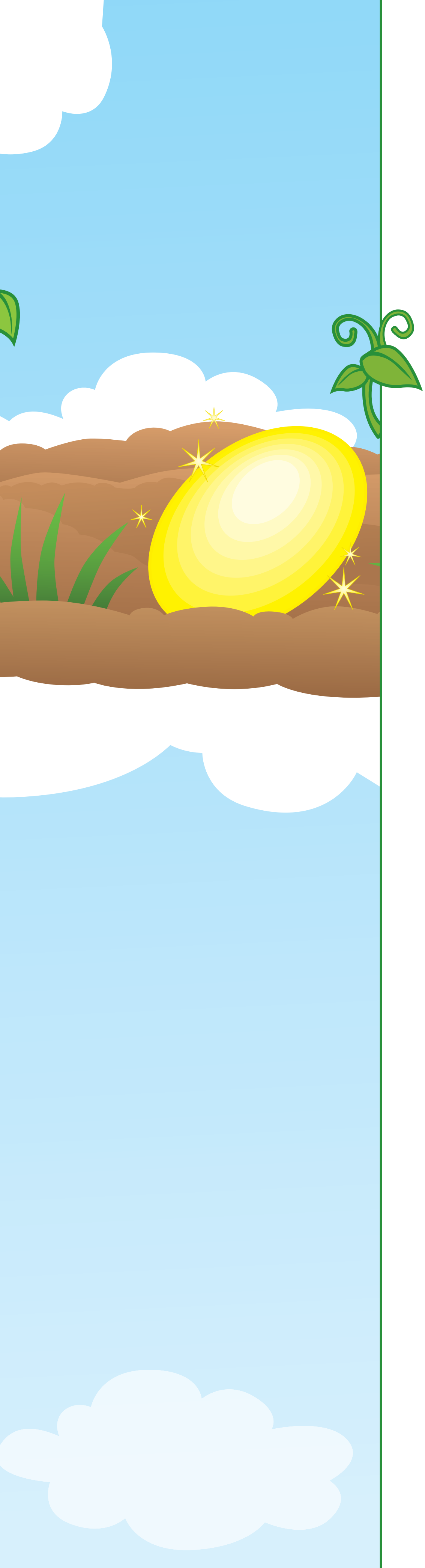


As consumers, we hate to admit it, but as researchers and marketers, we have to concede that emotions drive purchase decisions. We all buy products and brands that make us feel good about ourselves or enhance our sense of self-esteem in some particular way. For instance:

- Starbucks makes us feel pampered and luxurious.
- Nike makes us feel accomplished.
- Volvo helps us feel safe.
- Apple enhances our self-image as being creative.

With that in mind, smart marketers have learned to tie features and functional benefits to powerful personal values or emotional end benefits in all of their marketing applications.

The best marketing explicitly talks up the benefits of unique features, but then it communicates the emotional component *indirectly* through the mood and tone of advertising, package design and other marketing applications. Saying the emotional benefit out loud is often experienced as intrusive, or it is denied and rejected as nonsense. People don't like to feel exposed — "You idiot! I don't buy Starbucks because I like to look sophisticated and elitist; I buy it for its superior flavor! Well, uhmm, I dooo!"

There are a number of ways to identify the unique emotional connections to brands. One technique that has been enjoying a revival in recent times is the Benefit Chain or Laddering.

As you probably know, the line of questioning generally goes like this: *Start with a brand feature. The client chooses a brand feature as a unique differentiator for branding and advertising. Or, the respondent is asked to differentiate favorite brands by superior feature.*

This one is a spin on a familiar story that we have all heard in various products:

START: This calorie-free sweetener is 100% natural.

What's the benefit of that?
It has no toxic chemicals.

What's the benefit of that?
I can use it without worry.

What's the benefit of that?
I'll use it more often instead of a sweet or dessert.

What's the benefit of that?
I'll trim down.

What's the benefit of that?
I'll look sexier.

What's the benefit of that?
My husband will pay more attention to me.

What's the benefit of that?
I'll feel attractive and loved.

What's the benefit of that?
I'll feel better about myself.

This particular thread had two emotional end benefits. The major one was being attractive and loved, with a reassurance of being worry free.

Learning How to "Ladder"

My first experience with this technique was at the very beginning of my career when I worked for Grey Advertising. I was still in college and very excited to be gaining skill at one of the groundbreaking agencies in research design.

We were fielding a study on coffee. This meant I had to get out all the materials and train all of the interviewers on how to administer the questionnaire. For the coffee study, these included an interesting self-administered booklet called a Benefit Chain. Each booklet had a particular product attribute typed into the starting point, which led to an ultimate end result of 16 outcomes for that characteristic.

We always had to practice the questionnaire before sending it out. It was great fun to see how the succession of just asking "What's the benefit" could result in some emotionally laden response. At first glance, the last responses seemed totally unrelated to the initial product statement. It was like playing "telephone" or "whispering down the lane" when we were kids.

The purpose of the Ladder exercise is to reveal emotionally driven personal values of users and prospects in order to inform positioning and creative expression for the brand.

End-of-the-ladder benefits identified in our study included:

- Robust flavor sometimes resulted in being productive and getting recognition.
- Other times, robust flavor led to feeling powerful and sexy.
- In contrast, mellow taste led to relaxation and escape from pressures of everyday life.

One of the things I learned in fielding the study was that the tool did not seem to work very well as a self-administered form. While some participants followed through to the end, many people returned incomplete booklets. And, interestingly, what I later learned was, while it looked like a fairly easy line of questioning, it was not as simple as it seemed. Interviewers, not unlike the respondents working on their own, often were unsuccessful at getting to a meaningful, emotional, differentiating end to the chain of benefits.

What I didn't know back then was that the purpose of the Ladder exercise is to reveal emotionally driven personal values of users and prospects in order to inform positioning and creative expression for the brand.

As an aside (and one of my pet peeves), an emotional benefit alone is not reason enough for buyers to commit to a product. People purchase for emotional reasons and then justify with logic based on a feature and a functional benefit. So, if there's no feature to attach to the emotional end benefit, the reason for buying becomes diluted (at best), unbelievable and unsustainable.

Moreover, as suggested earlier, customers may even become embarrassed that the advertised reason to buy is an emotional one and deny it. That's why it is important to *suggest* the emotional value with the look and feel of marketing applications, while *stating* the feature and its key functional benefit.

Getting to the Gold

Analysis of benefit ladders teaches us how to make relevant links between brand features and the specific emotional values that are attached to them. The key word here is "specific." Novice interviewers often do not know when they have gotten to the core issue. They tend to make one of two critical mistakes, like those I noted in my early experiments with Grey's Benefit Chain:

- They allow the respondent to end the ladder too soon.
- They think the end point is some vague term such as confidence, pride or self-worth.

In fact, when it is done right, the end of any ladder is always **enhanced self-esteem** (as in, "I feel good about myself because I use this product or service, with this particular feature").

Clients have shown me results of laddering studies that point to various articulations of self-esteem — confidence, self worth, "I feel good about myself," pride. But, as marketers and advertisers, what do they then do with that knowledge? How can we dimensionalize an amorphous end benefit like confidence or self-worth? Each of those articulations of self-esteem signifies many different things to many different people. It is the particular personal value contributing to self-esteem that is the gold, the workable end benefit or value.

Here is a key. In terms of the actual process, the sought-after but often-elusive emotional value is generally the next-to-the-last rung on the ladder. It is what people tend to say just before they say the final benefit of "I like myself more/feel better about myself/have increased self-worth," etc. It is therefore critical to take the ladder to the end (to self-esteem) to be sure we have unearthed that explicit emotional value that makes one feel better about self. Without that learning, we lack the tools to give adequate creative direction.

Another Piece of the Puzzle Revealed: The Livingston Paradigm of Self-Esteem™

About 10 years ago, we decided to mine 6,000+ focus groups, in-depth interviews and ethnographies in which discovering emotional motivation and values was a goal. Our objective was to categorize key emotional drivers and determine how they tie to messaging and marketing success.

The results were dramatic.

Four clear and distinct categories emerged, matching the intuitive understanding of customer behavior that we had gained from the experience of actually conducting so many laddering exercises. While we identified over 100 unique emotional-value descriptors, most fell neatly into just four categories. (We have subsequently confirmed this statistically.) More importantly, each factor seemed to drive a critical and unique part of market behavior. We have labeled this coding model the "The Livingston Paradigm of Self Esteem™."

In the model, there are four buckets of emotional values that mirror stages of psychosocial development.

Category I: Self-Actualization and Healthy Narcissism

This reflects esteem derived from specific personal desires and beliefs about self. They include things like: performance, with its resultant sense of accomplishment (getting to a goal, whether in sports or in a test of some kind); the realization of one's abilities (learning how to use the computer, to do statistics, to write a paper); the development of one's talents (learning how to sing, paint, speak in front of an audience); and recognition from others with regard to these achievements (receiving rewards or applause).

In Category I, people resonate with personal value statements such as:

- I'm creative.
- I'm free.
- I'm accomplished.
- I'm productive.
- I have a sense of adventure.
- I'm financially successful.
- I'm in control.
- I have a sense of humor.
- I'm intelligent.

Category II: Interpersonal Love and Romance

This set of emotional end benefits is about healthy attachment, being able to connect with another on an adult level. It is often tied to esteem derived from one-on-one, romantic love relationships, but it is also about loving friendships and family affiliations ("I am a worthy person because I love and am loved by someone I hold in high regard").

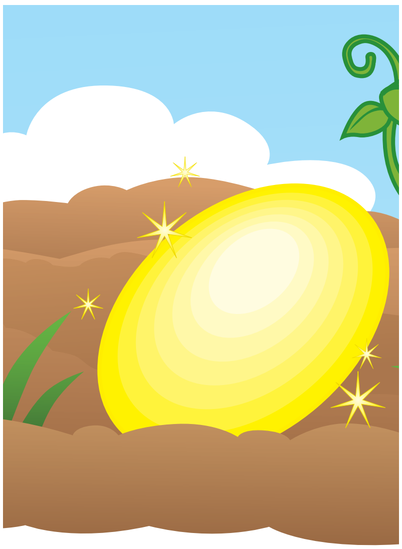
Examples:

- Being attractive will help me find a partner or improve my current relationship.
- I'm accepted; I belong.
- I feel loved.
- I feel secure in my significant relationship.
- I have better lovemaking or intimacy with my partner.
- I'm a committed partner.
- I'm a good friend.

Category III: Nurturance and Parental Esteem

This category focuses on esteem derived from taking responsibility for the well-being of others. There is an awareness that a dependent's sense of security and self-worth can be enhanced or diminished by one's ability to "be there" physically and emotionally for him/her/them. In addition, associated esteem and pride are experienced from the appreciation of accomplishments of these same others. We know the look of pride in the eyes of a beaming mother who tells us about her "son/daughter, the doctor."

> The best branding and messaging strategies lead with promises linked to Categories I and II, and they provide support (give reasons why) with functions and form that are relevant to Categories III and IV. In doing so, the positives of ego and conscience, excitement and sensibleness, are incorporated.



Examples:

- I'm a good parent/pet owner/teacher/boss.
- My children love me/appreciate me.
- My family/people can count on me.
- I'm a nurturer; I feel good about myself when I take care of others.
- I touch others and have a meaningful impact on them.

Category IV: Altruism and Societal Esteem

This reflects esteem derived from the belief that one has contributed to the broader well-being and welfare of society. This is similar to Steven Covey's notion of the desire of healthy individuals to "leave a legacy" for the upcoming generation, or the notion that one's purpose on the planet in some way transcends one's own needs and those of immediate loved ones.

Examples:

- I am altruistic.
- I am charitable.
- I am socially conscious.
- I further the development of others (larger scale than family or immediate environment).
- I improve the quality of other people's lives.
- I give back to society.
- I'm helping to make the world a better place for future generations.

Examples would be avoiding disposable products that add to the landfill, buying fuel-efficient appliances that consume less energy or voting for a political candidate who promises to take care of society at large.

Behaviors and Typical Product Features Associated with Each Category

Categories I and II are connected to highly charged emotions. They make us feel excited, poised for action. They are generally associated with image and performance benefits (e.g., "sparkle," "invisible," "slimming," "red," "powerful," "effective," "fast").

In contrast, Categories III and IV are the "shoulds" of society, doing what is right. These tend to be connected to practical, measurable benefits (e.g., "long lasting," "saves time," "economical," "safe," "biodegradable").

And here's the critical "aha!"

In most product arenas, Categories I and II lead to trial. Those categories are attached to exciting, highly charged actions, images and emotions that are sparked by a rush of adrenalin. They create impulses to purchase that satisfy our needs for <u>immediate gratification</u> and are associated with approaches that create trial.

In most product arenas, Categories III and IV lead to repeat purchase. By contrast, the sense of personal <u>satisfaction</u> for Categories III and IV seems to be longer term and more serious. Those categories are more sedate and profound — the building blocks of societal values that grow and maintain our culture — but they are initially less motivating.

Here's an exciting revelation. The best branding and messaging strategies lead with promises linked to Categories I and II, and they provide support (give reasons why) with functions and form that are relevant to Categories III and IV. In doing so, the positives of ego and conscience, excitement and sensibleness, are incorporated.

To wrap up, here's an example of differentiating the emotional values in the four Self-Esteem Categories. A great percentage of my practice over the years has been in pharmaceuticals. I have tested competing promises of efficacy and safety so many times that I can predict the outcome of laddering on those two claims:

- With physicians, efficacy ladders up to feelings of accomplishment and being a hero (strong Category I gold).
- Safety leads to the security and calm of Category III.

Safety as the only differentiator, though, is the kiss of death. While doctors want to keep their patients as reasonably safe as possible, they are drawn to medications because they work. If the medicine works, they get adulation from their patients, as well as referrals and financial success. Safety, as a support, is strengthening, but generally it is not a powerful-enough claim on its own to make doctors switch or stay loyal in the face of a more efficacious brand.

The Last Step

There's one more step in a Laddering exercise.

The reason for probing so deeply is to give as much texture as possible to guide the creative expression of your brand. Once you have identified an emotional value, ask one more question. Ask the participant to tell you a little story about any time he or she experienced that particular emotional value. You might be surprised.

We were working with a brand and creative team on a product geared to kids under age 12. The belief was that the brand was all about "fun," and at times, participants did say the emotional end benefit was "fun."

Interestingly, the creatives' idea of fun was quite different from the kids' perception. The creatives had images of rebellion and acting out — kids teasing other kids somewhat meanly, breaking guitars, shoving and pushing. When the kids in the study were asked to describe what they meant by fun, they recounted different scenarios. What they described were incidents of accomplishment at something they liked — hitting a home run, protecting a soccer goal, getting an award on stage. It was performing and succeeding that were fun.

Laddering is a great tool to unearth the emotional underpinnings of brand selection. Just remember these few tips:

- Be sure to get to the end of the ladder. Your safety valve is taking the ladder all the way to improved self-esteem and analyzing the steps just before it.
- Check the result against the four Categories of Self-Esteem.
- For clarification and dimension, invite the respondent to tell a little story about the emotional value.
- Then, in your creative applications, **talk** about the feature and functional benefits, but **show** the emotional value.

Have "fun" with it while you have an important impact on your brand's communication strategy. Feel free to email me with questions at sharonl@tlgonline.com.

Twitter: WHAT ARE YOU DOING? (I Really Do Care!)

By Amy Savin
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"Twitter has provided an extraordinary platform to observe unfiltered discussions about a company's brand experience or to test a product concept." — Patrick Strother

Using Twitter for marketing is a hot topic. Many marketers believe that we are only beginning to harness its power. Based upon my personal experience with Twitter, I agree. I use Twitter for virtually all of my qualitative research and marketing strategy consulting projects, and I constantly find new ways to use it effectively.

While experienced Twitter marketers sense its enormous potential, new Twitter users typically wonder how it could ever provide any business value. This is understandable; Twitter poses the question, "What are you doing?" and when you begin following people on Twitter, you get a streaming commentary about their lives that initially appears to be mundane. For example, you begin to hear what people had for lunch or what they thought about a new movie. Among that commentary, however, are leads to powerful insights about companies, products and brands that can be mined to help a client.

Let's take a quick look into the ways many companies (and clients) are using Twitter now, and then we will look at some of the ways QRCs can effectively use Twitter to gain powerful consumer insights and help their clients achieve their objectives.

> While experienced Twitter marketers sense its enormous potential, new Twitter users typically wonder how it could ever be used for business or, well, anything! So how are QRCs using Twitter to uncover and mine deep insights?

Your Client's Twitter Presence

Many companies today are establishing a presence on Twitter by creating company profiles, then actively intercepting comments about their business and joining the conversation. Prescient companies staff their social-networking departments with senior-level employees who can evolve social-networking strategies as Twitter unfolds.

The first task for most companies is to "listen and observe." As Patrick Strother of Strother Communications Group comments, "Twitter has provided an extraordinary platform to observe unfiltered discussions about a company's brand experience or to test a product concept. We advise all of our social media clients to initiate their experience on Twitter and other social media by first observing and monitoring."

Most companies begin their foray into Twitter by creating a centralized system to monitor "buzz" about their products, their company and the categories in which they compete. In doing so, companies can bypass their own bureaucracy to hear about problems before they become major operational or public relations nightmares. Such problems can range from comments such as "Why can't I find it in my store?" alerting them to an out-of-stock issue, to "My phone hasn't worked in five days."

In addition to observing and monitoring, some companies are setting up a formal "consumer response" presence on Twitter, which can have a powerfully positive impact on customers. As with individuals, you can follow companies, and they, in turn, can follow you.

For example, I found the Comcast corporate homepage on Twitter, and I "tweeted" them about an issue. Within seven seconds, I received a response, which led to an offer for a service call the very next day. Now they follow me, and I follow them, and we can send messages back and

forth freely. Similarly, The Home Depot employees appear to be on Twitter at all hours, answering customers' questions about projects and sympathizing with their bad experiences with the company.

Through Twitter, companies can create a dialogue with customers, just as Comcast did with me. A consumer who believes she followed the microwave instructions exactly and still burned lunch may never buy the brand again. If she tweets Customer Support, though, the company can ask her about her experience and even offer her a coupon! A positive Twitter interaction may forge deeper ties between companies and their users. And consumers who get quick responses to their questions in a format and language that is convenient to them may grow to trust a company.

However, there is a critical danger for companies to consider. Twitter is a meeting of friends, family and colleagues; it is not a hard-edged marketing tool. Therefore, companies must ensure that their interactions with consumers are truly in keeping with the familial feeling of Twitter; tweeple (people who tweet) may get angry if a company intrudes on their personal space.

For QRCs, it is very helpful in many projects to tap into the information flow emerging from any centralized social-networking efforts of a client. I will touch on this more below.

Establishing Your Own Twitter Presence

To prepare to mine consumer insights on Twitter, you should create your own Twitter presence. However, there are several things you should consider in order to do things effectively.

First, you must understand that Twitter is about "offering" before "taking." Consider offering something of value to encourage tweeple to follow you. This can be done in many ways. Perhaps the simplest is to create an interesting and credible homepage before proactively reaching out. For example, you can create links to valuable articles, blogs or other sources of information; you can tweet about newly available products or services; or you can provide a unique or funny commentary that is interesting to others.

Also, you should consider creating a unique Twitter account for each new project. This way you will have a distinct screen name and homepage — a distinct persona — for each project. Tailoring the information you provide to the target group for each distinct project is critical, as information that might entice a working mom who stresses about dinner each night will differ from information that interests an athlete looking to maximize her workouts. Using the same screen name and homepage for both might appear disjointed or bizarre.

Using Twitter to Mine Consumer Insights

Gaining consumer insights on Twitter involves using the available tools to observe consumer comments about a brand or category, or to directly engage consumers in a dialog regarding these arenas. The strategies below represent just some of the ways you can do these things.

Observing the Relationship with the Brand

For a QRC, one of the simplest, most powerful uses of Twitter is to observe the relationship that users have with his/her client's brand and category. When I am unfamiliar with a product or category, I immediately search Twitter for mentions of the brand, the category and the competition.

Recently, I wrote a proposal for a food brand used by less-affluent consumers. Not only had I never eaten the brand, but also I had never heard it mentioned in all my years of food consulting. Imagine my surprise when my search yielded deeply emotive tweets about the product being the perfect solution to an otherwise-disastrous day or as the perfect comfort food when a relationship is on the

Twitter Glossary

Tweet: A message sent via Twitter.

Tweeple: People that use Twitter.

Retweet: To forward someone else's tweet to your network.

D username: sends a private message. These can only be sent to someone who is following you.

@username: sends a message to the user as well as to everyone else who is following you.

rocks. Even more telling was the scarcity of tweets about competitors. Using Twitter reframed my view of the brand and helped me think more broadly about the innovation consulting and qualitative research I proposed. And gaining this valuable insight took only twenty minutes!

Harnessing Your Client's Twitter Presence

If your client has a presence on Twitter, you can tap into this treasure trove of information in different ways. If the company's presence is established, you can simply mine its information flow. If it does not have a presence on Twitter, or if you are unable to tap into its information flow, you can use the search function to try to observe, and perhaps contact, valuable users.

While some projects may benefit from passively observing tweets, others may benefit from reaching out to certain tweeple to gain valuable information. For example, you can ask them questions or ask them to take certain action (e.g., try a new cooking method). Keep in mind that you can't send a "direct (private) tweet" to someone who is not following you, so you must be creative in your approach.

Understanding Evolving Trends

Twitter allows you to witness trends first-hand and develop your own interpretations about what is driving them, rather than simply reading about them in *Brandweek* or *Good Housekeeping*. It is easy to find out the hottest tweet subjects each day; trending statistics appear on your Twitter homepage and are also readily accessible on most third-party applications.

When mining trends, pay particular attention to multiple themes that come up among the same people. For example, are those who tweet about weight-loss problems also tweeting links to recipes? To weight-loss programs? To medical articles? This might trigger new ideas for marketing, products, tie-ins or spokespeople.

Twitter is particularly unique and powerful because it provides respondent-generated communication that is spontaneous and in situ. Tweets will certainly digress from your topic. Yet, if you can stay with them, your broader insights can be quite intriguing.

Using Twitter to follow trends is best suited for your regular clients. Not only will you be more likely to notice changes over time, but also the time it takes to monitor trends is enormous.

Co-Creating

Twitter users are unusually eager to give their opinions. Thus, you can work with them to co-create quite effectively. Simply find people who have tweeted about your client's brand, establish a relationship with them and solicit suggestions for new flavors, line extensions or packaging. Ask them about product benefits. Solicit thoughts about the latest advertising campaign. You may get a lot of answers, but they will all be short! You just might find some great candidates for an ensuing online "ethnography."

Recruiting Respondents

Searching the term "market research" on Twitter reveals the variety of ways that market researchers are using Twitter to recruit research participants. Some researchers are recruiting respondents with a broad sweep. For example, one search yielded the following: "We are interested in gathering feedback and opinions from people from all walks of life. Follow us, and you could get paid for your opinions!" This is not the approach I take.

I use Twitter to recruit hard-to-reach respondents, and I generally don't mind the bias inherent in finding them via Twitter. I simply tweet people who appear to have an interest in related fields, and I then ask them for referrals. For example, I may request that marathon runners refer me to people willing to discuss their nutrition needs during training. Tweeple typically are quite helpful and will readily "retweet" your request. Once these leads have been screened using traditional methods, they then can then be funneled into any qualitative methodology, whether online or in person.

Creating More Powerful "Homework" Assignments

Imagine having respondents think about your category or brand the week prior to the research. Sure, you can have them record their thoughts in a diary. However, they likely will do so only when they get home after work — if they even remember to do so.

Alternatively, they can tweet in the moment during the day. It is quick and easy, and respondents will feel engaged before the in-person or online qualitative starts. Encouraging your respondents to be observant about specific things (e.g., "Tweet every new website you use during a day") may help them be even more thoughtful during the groups. It also will give you a great view of which respondents

Twitter is particularly unique and powerful because it provides respondent-generated communication that is spontaneous and in situ. Tweets will certainly digress from your topic. Yet, if you can stay with them, your broader insights can be quite intriguing.

The Twitter Basics

1. Go to twitter.com, select a screen name and join.
2. Create a profile for yourself, and select graphics for your profile page.
3. Send some Tweets that are representative of who you are.
4. Use the "Find People" tab to find people to follow.
5. Use the search function to find Tweets on topics that interest you and to find more people to follow.
6. Select a third-party application to use for accessing Twitter from your computer and/or your mobile device.
7. Have fun, and learn a lot!

you will eliminate if you have over-recruited.

Note that if you use Twitter for homework assignments, you should raise the incentive by a small amount, and make sure you build sufficient time into the recruiting schedule.

Keeping in Touch with Respondents after Projects

After completing a project, have you ever wondered whether participants had additional thoughts, tried a product that was discussed in the group or purchased something different after seeing advertising copy? Ask them to tweet you! As an incentive, offer a $50 prize for, say, the best new product idea. Although your completion rate likely will be low, the insights gathered could be quite rich. Focus groups are only a two-hour window into the respondents' lives — further reflection at different times and in different places might lead to some great additional ideas.

Conclusion

Although Twitter and other social networks are in their infancy, they may provide interesting, meaningful or cost-effective ways to get at the deep insights that drive success for our clients. However they evolve, some are certain to become important tools for us to add to our arsenal of qualitative insight mining tools.

Build Stronger Customer Relations with Email Marketing

By John Arnold
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As a qualitative researcher, and a business owner, you understand the value of information and the importance of saving time. You know how long it takes to research a topic correctly or how an hour of your time is measured, and you also know how good information supports an argument or compels a prospect to read or purchase a report.

When it comes to marketing your own business, you also need great tools that can help you leverage these two elements — time and information — so that you can successfully attract customers and keep them interested in your services. One of the best of these tools is email marketing.

Email marketing returns an average of $45.06 for every dollar spent, according to the Direct Marketing Association.

Email marketing saves time by leveraging the information you already possess and by delivering your information easily and effectively. It is easy to create professional email-marketing campaigns that demonstrate your expertise, promote your services and ultimately build stronger relationships with your customers. Effective email marketing depends largely on content that is valuable and relevant to your readers — something you have in abundance. Coupled with a professional email-marketing service, you can create and send compelling emails that get results in short order.

This article introduces email marketing and shares tips and best practices to help you get started with an engaging email-marketing strategy.

The Value of Email Marketing

Email marketing is by far the most useful method for communicating with prospects and staying in touch with your existing customers — almost everyone uses email. But the value of email marketing goes far beyond reach. For instance, email marketing costs up to 20 times less than direct mail, and email marketing returns an average of $45.06 for every dollar spent, according to the Direct Marketing Association.

Also, when it comes to ease of use, no marketing method is as user-friendly as email marketing.

It is easiest and most effective to use an email service provider to manage your email strategy. Email marketing services handle all of the hard work, allowing you to focus on promoting your business.

> When done correctly and in compliance with anti-spam regulations, email marketing delivers numerous benefits for your business, including shorter sales cycles, improved customer relationships, repeat business and referrals.

Good email-marketing services provide lots of professional-looking email templates that you can use to insert your content and match your brand. They also deliver your emails with proper protocols and develop relationships with internet service providers (ISPs) to ensure that your email is delivered to a high percentage of the inboxes on your list. And they work with you to ensure that your emails are in compliance with anti-spam regulations. In addition, these providers offer numerous tools to help make your emails as successful as possible, such as list management, tracking and reporting, and much more.

Remember that you will derive the most value from email marketing when you use a permission-based email list. Do not buy or rent a list, and do not send email to total strangers.

When done correctly and in compliance with anti-spam regulations, email marketing delivers numerous benefits for your business, including shorter sales cycles, improved customer relationships, repeat business and referrals.

Satisfied Customers Buy More

Email marketing not only helps close new sales leads, but it is also an effective method for maintaining customer satisfaction and driving repeat and referral business. Research shows that repeat customers spend up to 67% more on average than new customers. Since it also costs more to acquire a new customer than to sell to existing ones, customer satisfaction is an important goal for any business. Fortunately, email marketing is particularly well suited to this task.

There are several reasons why email marketing is a great way to influence customer satisfaction. For one, your current customers are more apt to open an email from you because they have an established relationship with you and are interested in your business. Secondly, your customers already think of you as an expert in your field, or they would not have purchased from you in the first place. You can leverage that perception to your benefit with a good email newsletter.

Unlike promotions, which tend to focus on short-term goals, newsletters are uniquely suited to accomplish the long-term goals of customer retention and loyalty. Your customers know that you provide a good service, but they will be surprised and pleased to learn that you also offer advice, interesting insight and valuable resources in your regular newsletter. By providing relevant information about your products and services, and about other related topics, you educate and inform your customers. This ultimately leads them through the sales process. When they need a service or product that you sell, they are more likely to turn to you because you have established a trusted top-of-mind relationship with them.

A newsletter, however, is just one way to use email marketing. You can also send promotions, press releases, announcements, invitations and any number of other communications to your email list. It is important to divide your email list into different groups, such as prospects and customers, and send emails to only those subscribers who are most likely to be interested in receiving the content within them.

Getting Started

Getting started with email marketing is not difficult, but there are some important elements you should address before you start. As mentioned earlier, one of the most critical elements of email marketing is using a permission-based list of email addresses. Permission is vital to the success of your email-marketing efforts. Sending email to people who have not explicitly given you permission to do so is considered "spam," which will result in spam complaints and unsubscribe requests — *not* the leads and happy customers you want to attract.

Permission often comes in the form of an opt-in action by a subscriber. That is, the person chooses to sign up for your emails. Alternately, you may receive verbal or written permission from a customer, colleague or prospect in conversation. Regardless of the method used to gain permission, once you have it, it is important to note that it *is* perishable and is *not* transferable.

Building a permission-based email list is much easier than you might think. The best place to start building your list is to leverage the places where you connect with your customers and prospects the most.

Do you have a website or a blog? Add a prominent link or button for visitors to sign up to receive your emails. You should also place a guest book in your office and at trade shows for visitors to leave their email addresses. Make sure to verbally ask your clients for their email addresses during phone conversations and ask them for permission to add them to your email list.

Networking events are also perfect venues to build your email list. And do not forget that your personal email signature is a great place to add a link to sign up for your email newsletter.

Plan for Success

When beginning an email campaign, as with any marketing effort, it is important to plan for success. Start by thinking about what you want to accomplish, what you want to communicate and how often you can realistically send email communications. Other things to consider include:

- **Your goals —** It is a good idea to determine your main objectives. Is it new-customer acquisition, retention, repeat sales? You cannot know if you have achieved anything unless you have goals to aim for.
- **Your audience —** This depends on your goals for each campaign. You should segment your email list by group to ensure that you send relevant messages to each. Groups might be divided by interest, type of customer, geographic location and more.
- **Your message —** You can use many kinds of email campaigns, such as promotions, newsletters or new-product or service announcements, etc. Spend some time determining which type of email you want to send, and craft the message to fit your target audience and goals.
- **Define success —** Before you send any email, you should determine what success means to you. Is it a specific number of leads? Is it phone calls? Website visitors? Closed sales? You should also evaluate the results of your campaign, including click-throughs, unsubscribes and so on, and use that information to improve the next campaign.
- **Develop a schedule —** Ideally, you should take the time to set up a schedule of email campaigns. This helps with consistency and frequency, and it gives you a big-picture view of the topics and information your emails will cover.
- **Frequency —** How much communication is too much? This is a tricky subject because every business is different. Think about your information and how often customers and prospects need that information. After that, let your click-throughs, unsubscribe rates and customer feedback be your guide.

Once you have established your plan and identified your audience and message, it is time to design your email campaign. As mentioned previously, most email service providers make it easy to develop an email with pre-designed templates and email wizards. Just upload your email list, choose a template and populate the content, and you are ready to send.

Email Content

Relevant, valuable content is at the heart of any successful marketing campaign. This is particularly true of email newsletters that can be easily deleted if not deemed relevant or valuable to your readers.

One way to maximize the number of people who read your email newsletters is to include valuable tips or advice about your services. For example, you might include some interesting findings from recent research and offer some related advice for how your readers can apply it to their business. This kind of information attracts your readers and keeps them coming back for more.

Your content should also be relevant to your customers. Many email marketers have found success with an 80/20 rule: 80% of your newsletter should be about your readers, and 20% should be about your business. Perhaps this seems counterintuitive to you. After all, the idea is to market your business. True enough, but you have to keep in mind that your recipients are busy people. Demands on their time make it very easy to delete promotional emails. However, if they know that your newsletters offer them valuable, interesting and engaging information, advice, tips and ideas, there is a much higher chance that they will open and read more of your emails.

Market Your Way to a Relationship

Remember that the ultimate goal of any marketing program is to build your brand and reputation and to ensure that your customers think of you when they are ready to make a purchase decision. Email marketing is an easy, inexpensive and effective marketing method, but remember that every email is sent to a human being with feelings, emotions and a desire to form meaningful relationships. Remember to think of every email as a catalyst to creating a bond that must be reinforced over time and built into a relationship of trust. With a permission-based email list, relevant and valuable information, and a focus on relationships, your email marketing efforts will be rewarded with more sales and improved customer satisfaction.

Starting Out During the (Second) GREAT DEPRESSION

By Margie Fishman
Atlanta, Georgia ▪ www.margiereports.com

So, there I was, wearing pantyhose for the first time in six months, chatting up a CEO who advertised herself as the "global leader of consumer spa research." So what if she had no clients and no real training in market research, a website littered with generalities and grammatical errors, and an office that could double as a broom closet?

I had just wrapped up a project that involved interviewing football fans about Chick-fil-A on New Year's Eve. She was offering a four-part moderating contract, plus free spa visits. Shouldn't I just take what I can get?

The contract collapsed, as did my momentum.

Sometimes, I wonder had I not been the product of Baby Boomers, would I feel so entitled to reap life's limitless possibilities? Or would I simply be satisfied

I had a higher calling: I wanted brands to "get" consumers and their idiosyncrasies. I wanted consumers to feel that their brands were serving them well. I wanted to connect the dots. I wanted to be a moderator.

working as a janitor somewhere instead of trying to transition to a new career during the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression?

Yet here I am, a 31-year-old journalist-turned-would-be-moderator, shamelessly begging friends of friends for pro bono work, email-blasting QRCA's leadership for advice and *politely* harassing headhunters from coast to coast.

I have had my share of missteps along the way. Like the time when a research firm balked at my proposed hourly rate, saying that my number was more in line with a "major metropolitan researcher." Responding to an email query, one facility director informed me that I might want to "consider cutting down a large portion" of my cover letter and resume.

But I have also learned creative tips from veteran QRCs about how to stay current and competitive in this unfortunate job climate. Because we have all been there — well, not here exactly, but we all remember what it is like when teetering on the edge, trying to land that all-important first gig.

How Did I Get Here?

That guy with the mullet picking up cans by the side of the road interests me. So do those poofy-haired ladies who carry their terriers into drugstores. My first exposure to qualitative research came as an undergraduate sociology major, consumed by a 10-month field study exploring cynicism and journalists. Instead of pursuing sociology in graduate school, I took a reporting internship in Pennsylvania Dutch country after graduation.

I am what marketers dub an "involved consumer." I research every purchase to death. One day, I decided I might as well get paid for it, so I began freelancing for a website similar to *Consumer Reports*. Then I began moonlighting as a mystery shopper, snooping around the service desk to make sure that employees greeted me with the proper tone and inflection. That led to work as a telephone recruiter and field interviewer with a market research firm here in Atlanta, learning to gracefully get hung up on in three different languages and negotiating intercepts at the ballpark and the crafts store. Eventually, I landed a part-time gig conducting IDIs with retailers and suppliers for an investment research firm.

I had a higher calling: I wanted brands to "get" consumers and their idiosyncrasies. I wanted consumers to feel that their brands were serving them well. I wanted to connect the dots.

I wanted to be a moderator.

I began devouring any book on qualitative research I could get my hands on, including Hy Mariampolski's *Qualitative Market Research: A Comprehensive Guide* and *The Mirrored Window* by Judith Langer. I hunted for graduate programs devoted exclusively to qualitative market research (hint: there aren't any). I ended up nixing MMR and MBA options because they seemed too heavily focused on quantitative.

"It's a very competitive field now, and you have to bring something to it," says Langer, president of Langer Qualitative LLC in New York and a researcher with more than 30 years of experience. Like other QRCs, Langer stumbled into qualitative after feeling mismatched in a quantitative role at a public-opinion research firm.

Newbies in every profession often complain about the "Catch-22" of securing that first job: Everybody says you need experience but no one is willing to give you a chance.

Create your own experiences, advises Langer, such as producing a demo tape for clients featuring you leading a focus group on a relevant topic with members of your peer network.

Follow the Money

Telephone recruiting taught me that if you dial enough numbers, eventually someone *will* talk to you. So, I contacted every moderator in the Atlanta area and the entire QRCA board (thanks to the online directory) for insights on how to "repurpose" my skills. I ended up speaking to a half-dozen QRCs. One even agreed to meet me for lunch, show me tapes of his focus groups and try me out as a contract report writer!

I learned that RIVA training was an important credential. One research firm with which I interviewed said it was a prerequisite for hiring any qualitative researcher. I decided to pay for the "Fundamentals of Moderating" course out of pocket, and I informed my friend from college that I could no longer afford to fly in for her wedding.

Naomi R. Henderson established the RIVA Training Institute in 1982 during another fantastically bad recession. After two failed partnerships, she started the Rockville, MD, training institute and research firm to address a gap in the market.

"In a recession, somebody makes money," she says. "Not everybody is going under. Not everybody is clipping coupons and eating tuna fish."

A "starry-eyed optimist," Henderson benefited from laid-off workers in the early 1980s looking to repackage themselves during a recession. She jumped from two trainings a quarter to two trainings a month.

In a tough economy, enterprising researchers need to determine which companies are making money, but also which companies are downsizing their marketing departments to make room for contractors.

"Sell yourself and make it exciting to buy," suggests Henderson, who once landed a project

More Job-Hunting Tips for the Novice Moderator

- Demonstrate that you have pioneered and/or mastered a specific research technique or skill, or have background knowledge in a particular industry, says Langer. "Clients always want to know what is your experience in this category."
- Apprentice to an established moderator and make it a win-win, suggests Henderson. Agree to handle the logistics, such as booking facilities and transcribing tapes, so that the moderator has more time to prospect for new clients. When the work rolls in, you will be first in line to handle the overflow.
- "If you're desperate for work, it drips off of you," notes Wagenlander. In the beginning, price yourself lower than the competition or offer pro bono work to nonprofits to test out different moderating techniques and watch respondents' personalities unfold. Observe as many moderators as you can by offering to do note-taking for free, she suggests. Eventually, you may work yourself up to detailed findings. Just be willing to sign a confidentiality agreement, and be honest that you are there to learn.
- If clients are worried about slashing their market research budgets next year, ask if they would be willing to book and pay for a study in advance, says Henderson.
- Go where your prospective clients hang out, including industry association meetings and trade shows, suggests Henderson.
- Finally, break the mold! I pitched this story to *QRCA VIEWS* to help others in my situation but also to get my name out there and connect with some of the brightest minds in the business. Henderson suggested developing this article into a webinar with a catchy title like "Tips from Mt. Olympus." Hmm…

chatting to the guy next to her on an airplane. "If you just ask, you have a fifty percent chance of something happening."

It's All About Relationships

With my new credential in tow, I followed Henderson's advice and contacted every nonprofit organization to which I belonged and every focus group facility in the metro area to offer my services as a pro bono moderator. I figured, in this economy, hiring someone for free was a no-brainer.

Then I waited. There is nothing quite like being ignored when you are offering your skills for free. I did manage to score two focus groups about dog fighting for The Humane Society of the United States.

Some of what I heard was downright disheartening. The market was saturated for full-time work, and research firms were increasingly turning to seasoned QRCs who could furnish a ready-made roster of clients. I would have to pay my dues, such as overseeing projects for a focus facility, working in the marketing department on the client side or shadowing a veteran and praying for a "baptism by fire" in the event of a cataclysmic snowstorm.

By scanning job postings on Quirks, I found two headhunters specializing in market research who were kind enough to talk to me about my credentials. I learned that while interviewing and writing skills are useful, I needed to prove my mettle in the specific functions of the job or carve out a niche in media or trend research, two areas with which I had direct experience.

"It's all about relationship management," says Kate Wagenlander, owner of KCW Global Research in Chicago. Wagenlander struck out on her own three years ago after learning every facet of the research process "from the bottom up" in her previous job. She observed some 1,000 focus groups to get a sense of what worked and what didn't.

Relationship building is not only about mingling with other QRCs and clients, but it is also about "keeping yourself top-of-mind," she says. Once you have a lead, you need to manage it in a thoughtful way. Some QRCs distribute e-newsletters; Wagenlander sends out personalized Valentine's Day cards.

"You have to make sure that the way you do it is a way that fits who you are," she says.

"The Rest is Still Unwritten"

Seven months in, I am not giving up — tenacity is a reporter's, and QRC's, strong suit.

Sure, my cup overfloweth with "should'ves." Should've tabled my ego to gain the experience. Should've been pounding the pavement with my business card instead of my mouse pad. Should've been nicer to my PR contacts when I was a beat reporter.

But I have become part of a community of welcoming professionals, and I have learned an incredible amount about where I'm going. Because when the job climate inevitably improves, my contacts just might give me a call (especially after receiving my latest installment of market research Sudoku).

And the next time I visit a spa, it will be on my own terms.

TRAVEL SMART WITH YOUR SMART PHONE

By David Van Nuys, Ph.D.
e-FocusGroups ▪ david@e-focusgroups.com

Are you still lugging around your laptop on your market research junkets? A growing number of business travelers are beginning to question the necessity of doing so. With the ever-expanding capabilities of today's smartphones, even that three-or-so pound "netbook" computer may seem to be too heavy and too bulky.

One blogger even speculates that an unintended consequence of the latest generation of smartphones will be the destruction of the cargo-pants industry. Who needs all those pockets, now that your cell phone, still camera, video camera, recorder, daytimer and so on are all rolled into one tiny, multifunctional device? In reality, that little "phone" in your purse or pocket is a powerful computer, probably with more computing power and memory than the computers that put the first man on the moon!

This article focuses on the iPhone and the Blackberry. While these are not the only smartphones available, they are quite dominant, especially in terms of the quantity and quality of applications available for them. Consider this: Apple's App Store for the iPhone offers over 100,000 applications available for download, and there have been over 1.5 billion downloads in the first year of its existence, and Apple sold 1 million of its newest model iPhone in the first 3 days.

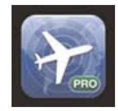
(At this point, I better fess up that, despite my advanced years, I am what is known as an "Apple fanboy." I owned a Blackberry for several years and was a huge fan and evangelist for that phone. I still think it is an excellent choice. As a long-time Mac user, however, I switched to the iPhone as soon as it became available, and I am now on my third one — the 3GS.)

Even if you have a smartphone other than the Blackberry or iPhone, there may be comparable applications for your phone to those reviewed below. Or, what you discover below may inspire you to consider making a switch. Either way, read on!

I should hasten to mention that the list below is in no way exhaustive, nor does it necessarily represent the best choice in each category. Within most of the categories, multiple applications are available, and the "best" application is a matter of your particular set of needs and personal preference, among other factors. Be sure to search for reviews before purchasing.

Finally, all of the iPhone applications below are available from a single source — Apple's App Store, which is accessed through iTunes. The Blackberry applications, by contrast, are from a variety of vendors and can be found via web search. Moreover, there are many Blackberry models with varying features, and you need to make certain that any app you consider buying works on the model you own.

> Who needs all those pockets now that your cell phone, still camera, video camera, recorder, daytimer and so on are all rolled into one tiny, multifunctional device? In reality, that little "phone" in your purse or pocket is a powerful computer, probably with more computing power and memory than the computers that put the first man on the moon!



Trip Planning (Airlines, Hotels, Car Rentals)

iPhone

- **Flight Track Pro** ($9.99) gives up-to-the-moment status of thousands of flights (including international), as well as the arrival gates, baggage carousels and more.
- **Travelocity** (free) gives you all of your flight, hotel, car rental and travel info while you are on the go, including itineraries, flight status, schedules for different airlines, wait times and delays. Plus, you can book travel with the airline, hotel or car-rental company of your choice.

Blackberry

- **WorldMate Live** (free) transforms your BlackBerry into a Personal Mobile Travel Assistant, with hotel bookings on the go, real-time flight alerts and schedules, weather, clocks and other travel tools, including itinerary-sharing with colleagues and friends.
- **TrainSchedule GPS Blackberry Edition** (U.S. only, $7.50 for 6-month subscription) shows schedule information on upcoming trains for the next 24 hours and also includes a railroad trip planner. Optionally, provided your phone has a GPS capability, it lets you track yourself while on the train to find out if your train is delayed. A number of train schedules on the U.S. East Coast, Chicago area and California are combined into a single network. Select the train lines you are interested in, and then the corresponding schedules are downloaded and stored locally on the phone.

Opposite page, bottom row left to right: *Yelp!* (review on page 62), *WeatherBug* (review on page 62), *RunKeeper* (review on page 66) and *Where* (review on page 62).

En-Route Entertainment

iPhone

The App Store on iTunes has thousands of audio and video podcasts (most, for free), with movies and TV shows also there for rent or purchase. Think the iPhone screen is too small to enjoy feature-length films? Think again. I regularly keep four or five major Hollywood films on my iPhone for watching on my exercise bike or the plane or airport, etc. The only caveat is that subtitles for foreign films may be too small. In addition, I keep my iPhone stocked with audio books downloaded from both Apple and audible.com.

- **Kindle** (free) software from Amazon.com lets you purchase books from Amazon's growing library of Kindle-enabled titles. They are easy to download right onto the iPhone and quite readable.
- **Pandora Radio** (free) streams personalized music to your iPhone. Just start with the names of your favorite artists, songs or classical composers, and Pandora will create a station that plays their music and/or music like it.
- **Wurdle** ($1.99) is a fun, flexible and fast-paced word game, perfect for coffee breaks or the subway. The iPhone is widely praised as an incredible game platform.

Blackberry

- **Guitar Hero Mobile**, a popular game among the younger set, can be purchased in two models: a one-time purchase of $14.99, which allows for updated songs, or a $4.49-a-month subscription. Three new songs are released every month, and you can update them easily from the application.
- **Transformers** ($6.99) lets you battle as Optimus Prime and fight Decepticons across the world. What more could you want?
- **Chess** (free) allows you to play against either an artificial intelligence or against others. The more you play, the higher your rank becomes in the community built around this game.

Getting Around (GPS, Maps)

iPhone

- **Google maps** (free) has built-in access with a compass and GPS.
- **City Transit** ($2.99) provides mass transit maps for NYC, as does **Tube London City** ($9.99) for London and **iBart** (free) for San Francisco.
- **Taxi!** (free) finds taxi services throughout the U.S. based on your location.

Blackberry

- **e-Mobile GPS Companion** ($24.95). Need a map? An entertainment guide? Traffic conditions? Directions to the zoo? e-Mobile GPS Companion offers all this and more. Plus, connect with friends in the area.
- **NYC Transit** ($4.95) provides train, bus and ferry schedules (including Metro North train, NJ Transit, train and bus, and NY Waterway ferry schedules) within seconds and with no network connection required.

Weather Reports/Forecasts

iPhone

- **Weather Bug** (free) is a great source for live, local weather, providing access to the largest network of professional weather stations in the U.S. and thousands of locations around the world. I have programmed my copy to monitor my own list of frequently traveled cities.
- **The Weather Channel** (free) takes your weather experiences to the next level with in-motion radar maps, traffic cams and more.

Blackberry

- **e-Mobile Weather** ($17.95) provides comprehensive weather information with detailed data for the day and forecasts for up to four days. Supports cities across the world. Automatically updated every 30 minutes. No subscription required.

Wi-Fi Hotspot Finder

iPhone

- **Wireless Hotspots Finder** ($1.99) uses iPhone's built-in GPS to locate all nearby Wi-Fi hot spots within the radius you specify.
- **Free Wi-Fi Finder** (free) finds free internet hotspots wherever you are in the world.

Blackberry

- **Free WiFi Café Spots** ($2.99) lists more than 14,000 cafés and restaurants with free Wi-Fi in the United States, Canada, Europe and Australia. The location of these cafés and restaurants are stored on your BlackBerry, so that you can find them even without access to the internet. You can list all cafés near your current Geo location or select a city/neighborhood by name or ZIP code.

Local Attractions (Dining, Museums, Theater, Etc.)

iPhone

- **Urban Spoon** (free) uses GPS to find restaurants near you, with the ability to filter by neighborhood, cuisine or price.
- **Where** (free) is a location-based application that helps you connect with the hottest restaurants from Yelp, the nearest Starbucks, movie times and directions, cheapest gas, nearby Zipcar locations and more.
- **Yelp!** (free) offers quick links to nearby businesses, bars, restaurants, cafés and more using a GPS location finder and includes reviews from other users.

Blackberry

- **Where2Eat** ($4.95) helps you find the best restaurants near you using information drawn from the Yelp website. Get a list of restaurants (and other businesses) with their rating, type of food, phone number, prices and reviews. Supports USA, Canada and the UK.

What Time Is It? (Foreign Times, Alarms, Calendars)

iPhone

- **iTime Zone** ($1.99) not only shows you the current time in other cities, but it also lets you flick the wheel into the future or past and calculate selected cities' date and time, using all Daylight Savings Time transitions. This is one of my favorite apps and works better than any similar desktop app I have found.

Blackberry

- **TrackIt: Time Zone Edition Lite** ($5.95) gives you access to over 500 time zones and cities worldwide. This is an excellent tool for any traveler or individual calling friends, family or business offices in other cities.

Keeping Current (Online Newspapers, News, Radio/TV, Stock Ticker)

iPhone

- **Stocks** (free) is a standard iPhone app that comes with the device and allows tracking of stocks and related activities.
- **News Addict** ($0.99) provides quick access to 23 news sites, including *USA Today*, *NY Times*, Digg, CNN, ABC News, Fox News, *Wall Street Journal*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, *Washington Post* and more.
- **Television** ($2.99) gives you the latest sports, news and entertainment from 85 TV shows from 45 channels on demand, all pre-recorded content from the USA, UK, France and Germany.

Blackberry

- **Stock Ticker** (free) lets you track your stocks with real-time quotes.

Plus, you can bookmark your favorite stocks for easy access.

- **Associated Press** (free). The Mobile News Network provides users with a single access point for news from more than 1,000 sources, offering an unparalleled breadth and depth of news.
- **Videos4BlackBerry** is a website that provides a ton of video content for viewing on capable Blackberry models. Some examples are “The Muppet Show,” “Weeds” and “Hung,” as well as news content.

Taking Your Important Documents (E-Wallet, Rolodex, MS Office Docs, PDFs)

iPhone

- **eWallet Secure Password Manager** ($9.99) provides secure storage for passwords, usernames, PINs for bank accounts, financial info, health info, credit cards, insurance and everything else you need to keep private, protected by strong 256-bit encryption.

iTreadmill (review on page 65)

- **1Password** ($4.99) securely stores your important information and logs you into websites automatically with a single tap. No need to remember the username, password or even the website address.
- **ReaddleDocs** ($4.99) is a complete document- and file-management solution for the iPhone and iPod Touch. It reads all common office documents (.doc, .xls, .ppt) and PDF files, and it copies files directly from any Mac or Windows computer, plus many more features.

Blackberry

- **Documents to Go** ($69.99) offers native MS Word, Excel and PowerPoint document viewing and creation.
- **File Manager Pro** (free beta) is a file and Zip archive manager, supporting advanced features such as selecting multiple files, sorting by name, size, date or type. Will extract Office and PDF documents from Zip attachments and open them with Docs-To-Go. It can also compress documents and send them as attachments.

Money Management (Online Banking, Currency Conversion)

iPhone

- **MOMPF Currency Converter** ($0.99) allows you to easily switch among currencies and to store favorites.
- **Bank of America – Mobile Banking** (free) allows you to check available balances, pay bills, transfer funds and locate ATMs 24/7.
- **Wells Fargo Mobile** (free) also facilitates on-the-go banking for Wells Fargo customers.
- **E*Trade Mobile Pro** (free) lets you manage your investments with streaming real-time quotes, breaking market news and more.
- **Invoice2go** ($9.99) allows you to create invoices on your iPhone and send them as PDF docs, so you can prepare invoices right after the project when all the hard work is still fresh in your mind.

Blackberry

- **Travel Mate** ($25.99) is an all-around travel planner with various travel-created modules, including a currency converter.
- **Currency Exchange Rates** ($6.99) uses a professional currency exchange-rates provider, with over 120 currencies! An internet connection is required.

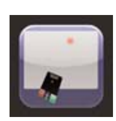
Capturing Research Data (Still/Video Camera, Audio Recorder)

iPhone

- **iPhone 3GS** has built-in video recording, still-photo and audio-recording apps (free) that can be used for capturing on-site research data that can be emailed or posted online remotely.
- **Recorder** ($0.99) has just recently distinguished itself by adding the ability to record phone calls. IDIs anybody?

Blackberry

- **VR+: Voice Recorder** ($29.95) lets you transform your BlackBerry into a Dictaphone. Create voice recordings, and email them in mp3 format. Upload voice messages to the free online storage, and post them to Facebook, MySpace, Twitter or Blogger right from the application.
- **Video capture software** (free) is available for various Blackberry Curve models.



Presentation Tools (PowerPoint, Remote)

iPhone

- **Pointer Remote for PowerPoint and Keynote** ($0.99) lets you control your PowerPoint or Keynote slide presentation on your computer from your iPhone. It can also show presenter notes on the iPhone display along with a timer.

Blackberry

- **Impacta ShowMate** ($289.99) is a hardware add-on, said to be the first device of its kind to allow BlackBerry users to project PowerPoint presentations directly from their handhelds, without the need for a laptop computer. The pocket-sized device weighs nine ounces, and it reportedly supports rich text, images, charts, graphs, animations and slide-transition effects.

Keeping in Touch (Email, Skype)

iPhone

- **iPhone's built-in email client** (free) now features "Push," and AT&T will soon roll out SMS. Synchronizes with Gmail, Yahoo mail, Mobile Me and corporate-exchange servers. Open attachments including Excel, Word, PowerPoint, PDF and .vcf files, and send text messages.
- **Skype** (free) gives you free calls and instant messages to anyone else on Skype, plus you can call landlines and mobiles and send SMS anywhere in the world at great rates.

Blackberry

- **e-Mobile Today Professional** ($29.95) is a personal information manager (PIM) for handling contacts, appointments, tasks, emails, calls and calendar appointments. Provides at-a-glance view of missed calls and today's agenda. Add more with e-Mobile Today News plug-in, e-Mobile Today Stock plug-in and e-Mobile Today weather plug-in.
- **ISkoot** (free) enables you to use Skype on the Blackberry.

Keeping Healthy

iPhone

- **Find Gold's** ($0.99) automatically determines your current location using GPS and finds all the Gold's Gyms in any area across the United States.
- **Fast Food Calorie Counter** ($2.99) provides nutritional information including calories, fat, carbs, fiber and protein on 7,075 menu items from 62 top fast-food restaurants (not that you ever go there!).
- **iTreadmill** ($2.99) turns your iPhone into a pedometer that tracks the number of steps, distance, pace, time and so on. It works for walking, running and treadmills. And you can listen to your music at the same time!

- **RunKeeper** (free) uses the built-in GPS in the new iPhone 3G and 3GS to enable runners, cyclists, hikers, skiers, walkers, etc., to track duration, distance, pace, speed, total rise, elevation vs. speed, and path traveled on a map.

Blackberry

- **Glycemic Index and Calorie Counter** ($9.99) is packed with nutritional information for hundreds of common foods and comes with a range of recipes to follow, a BMI and GI Index and a Junk Food checker.
- **Exercise Tracker** ($12.99) provides a large database of exercise types to calculate the calorie consumption after you work out and to keep track of your exercise details.
- **Running Log** ($14.99) helps you track your running workouts, supporting conversion between miles and kilometers. It also calculates your pace and calories burned, among other features.

Foreign-Language Assistance

iPhone

- **Lonely Planet** ($9.99) offers phrasebook apps in ten languages, providing assistance not only in text but also in a suave, audible voice.
- **Babelingo** ($5.99) displays phrases such as "Please take me to the airport" in big, bold type in any of seven languages.

Blackberry

- **Transclick Translation and Travel Software** ($5.00) is an award-winning travel tool for language translation over mobile messaging. Its patented technology provides business-quality, real-time translation. Includes support for 16 languages and translation over email or on-screen, specialized subject dictionaries for industry-specific, context-sensitive jargon and more.

Check Out Our TWO NEWEST PODCASTS

Over the past two years, QRCA has brought you a dozen podcasts of interviews conducted by QRCA members with influential leaders from qualitative research, strategic consulting, academia and other relevant fields. You can listen to these interviews right on the QRCA website as streaming audio, or you can download the mp3 file to your laptop or portable player for listening on the go. You will find the podcasts under the Publications link at www.qrca.org.

Most recently, we have added the following two new interviews.

Dave Siegel

Dave Siegel is the founder and "Big Daddy" of WonderGroup, the largest independent U.S. agency specializing in marketing and advertising to today's moms and their kids. After serving as the president of WonderGroup for the past ten years, Dave has moved over to take the presidential reins of WonderGroup's Launchforce Division. This premier innovation consultancy includes clients such as Kellogg's, Purina, Sara Lee, Nestle, ConAgra, Tate & Lyle, Anheuser-Busch and others.

Dave has spent the past 30 years immersed in youth marketing and new-product development, advising some of the country's top corporations in the fields of food & beverage, household cleaning products, health & beauty aids, toys, entertainment, clothing, retailing, technology and others.

Dave has also spoken at or chaired dozens of conferences throughout the world on youth marketing, marketing to moms and new-products marketing. He served as an associate professor and lecturer at the University of N. Kentucky, Thomas More College, Ohio State University and, currently, Xavier University (where he is also on the Advisory Board to the Business School)

Dave Siegel is the author of several books. His latest is *Innovation Myths and Mythstakes* (Paramount Market Publishing), which he co-authored with Tim Coffey and Mark Smith. He also wrote *The Great Tween Buying Machine* (Deerborn Publishing), *Marketing to the New SuperConsumer —Mom & Kid* (Paramount Publishing) and the soon-to-be-released *Market Smart Design* (Crescent Hill Books).

He is interviewed here by *QRCA VIEWS* managing editor, Dr. Sharon Livingston.

J. Robert Harris

J. Robert (J.R.) Harris, president of JRH Marketing Services, has over 40 years of diverse marketing and research experience, including media, packaged goods, international and ethnic marketing, as well as research assignments from major corporations, agencies, organizations and government ministries. He is also an experienced qualitative research consultant who has moderated thousands of focus groups. He is a founding member and past president of the Qualitative Research Consultants Association (QRCA).

For more than 20 years, he chaired the QRCA's Bylaws Committee, and he continues to be active in QRCA as chair of the Professionalism Committee. Harris is an elected member of the Market Research Council honorary society, and he is a past chairman of the Research Industry Coalition (RIC).

When not at his desk, J.R. pursues his avocation as an adventurer and explorer. His resume includes more than 40 wilderness expeditions over the past 30 years to remote places such as Alaska, Tasmania, Iceland, Patagonia, Lapland, the Australian Outback, Greenland and Tanzania. Many of these treks were solo. In recognition of his experience, he was elected into the Explorers Club in 1993.

Dr. Sharon Livingston interviews J.R. in this podcast about his adventuring trips.

Find these, as well as interviews with Scott Berkun, Bill Buxton, Stephen Covey, Paul Gillin, Judith Glaser, Kenneth Gronbach, Jackie Huba and Ben McConnell, Andrew Kent, Jim Loretta, Dr. G. Clotaire Rapaille, Linda Kaplan Thaler and Robin Koval, and David Vinjamuri, all at www.qrca.org.

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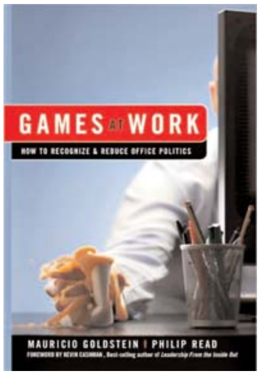

Games At Work: How To Recognize & Reduce Office Politics

Mauricio Goldstein and Philip Read
Jossey-Bass

Review By Rita Lamkin
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Fear and anxiety in the workplace are causing people to play counterproductive games more frequently and intensely than ever before. As a qualitative research consultant and coach to public and private organizations, I thought I had seen all of the games. I was wrong.

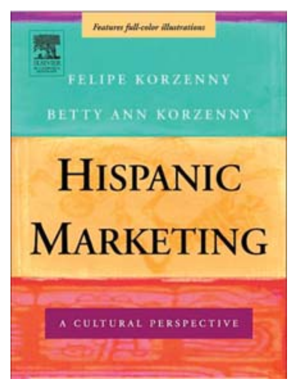
In *Games At Work: How to Recognize & Reduce Office Politics*, global organizational experts and authors Mauricio Goldstein and Philip Read deliver an entertaining yet practical guide to diagnose dozens of games that drain people's time and energy. More importantly, the authors provide tools to diminish office gamesmanship.

This is not a tedious, theoretical study of game playing. Through storytelling of actual cases, Goldstein and Read reveal how people play interpersonal, leadership and budget games to manipulate, deceive and cast blame. One example illustrates how the "Marginalize Game" is played by colleagues of Brendan, a whiz kid perceived to be a job threat to them. When Brendan comes up with a promising idea, they nitpick the idea to death and "forget" to brief Brendan before a key meeting. In another example, Harold, a senior manager, calls a meeting to discuss results of a management-feedback survey. He plays "Token Involvement," pretending he wants his group's input but actually pursues his own agenda. Harold plays "Gotcha," to catch and punish people who had given negative responses about him in a confidential survey.

According to Goldstein and Read, counterproductive games with negative consequences for any organization have five traits in common: manipulation, paradoxical consequences, repetitiveness, contagious effect and require a group of two or more people to play, one of whom is often the group leader. The authors gently coax the reader/leader to discover his or her own involvement in games by including progressively intimate self-assessment exercises at the end of Chapters Two through Four.

By Chapter Seven, the reader is set up to **A**waken to the reality of game playing, **C**hoose not to play and **E**xecute interruption of the game (ACE). The authors show that to interrupt a game effectively, it takes a series of discrete steps such as those described by Eric Berne in his book, *What Do You Say After You Say Hello?* (1972). Mr. Berne describes games as following a six-step sequence: The Con, The Gimmick, The Response, The Switch, The Cross Up and The Payoff. Similarly, Goldstein and Read demonstrate how the steps for interrupting a game play out, including real-world, multicultural examples.

Why is this book an important addition to the toolkits of qualitative research professionals and our clients? Many organizations are downsizing or requiring unpaid furloughs at a time when increased productivity and growth are mandatory to compete. Games flourish during times of high anxiety, and as the final chapters of *Games At Work* point out, dialogue is a natural antidote to games. Speaking openly and honestly discourages counter-productive game playing. Understanding the games people play and how to interrupt those games are valuable skills for those of us who spend our careers understanding and evaluating human motivations and behavior.



Hispanic Marketing: A Cultural Perspective

Felipe Korzenny, Ph.D., and Betty Ann Korzenny, Ph.D.
Butterworth-Heinemann

Review By Marta Villanueva
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Through a unique cultural approach, Drs. Felipe Korzenny and Betty Ann Korzenny have written a book that illustrates an in-depth understanding of the Hispanic segment's cultural pillars. *Hispanic Marketing: A*

Cultural Perspective provides insight and a thorough understanding for those interested in the Hispanic market and the key cultural drivers behind it.

In this book, the Korzennys completely immerse the reader into the Hispanic mind by setting a firm foundation in history, demographics, socioeconomics, geography and other aspects of the Hispanic experience. Taking the reader deep into complex concepts such as archetypes, core values and beliefs, the Korzennys provide effective models and approaches for successfully targeting the Hispanic market.

Reading each chapter of this book is like putting together a puzzle that completes the picture of the Hispanic experience. The first time through this book, readers will want to complete the entire piece from start to finish, consuming each chapter to gain an understanding of how all of the pieces of the Hispanic experience work together and influence this market segment. For later readings, the best approach might vary depending on the specific areas of interest.

The best aspect of *Hispanic Marketing: A Cultural Perspective* is the reinforcement of the information through various means to meet not only individual reading styles but also the informational needs of the different readers. Every chapter contains great details for those needing context and background; the case studies provide clear applications; and the conclusions and implications sections in each chapter beautifully pull out the key findings, providing practical implications.

Different sections will contain greater appeal to different readers. Top-level executives and researchers will definitely appreciate the *Conclusions and Implications* section presented after every chapter. This section provides a quick summary of the chapter, making it easy to refer back to key insights and actionable implications.

Agencies and marketers will benefit from the book's "how to" approach and use of practical applications, such as how to bring the most effective message to the Hispanic audience, the most effective media to use and how to deal with translations, to name just a few. Plus, the case studies of high-profile companies will ground the reader in the practical applications for the concepts presented in each chapter.

The richness of this book comes in the easy way it explains the complexities that exist in the Hispanic market, tackling complicated issues like going beyond "superficial" Hispanic marketing, English- and Spanish-language usage, acculturation dimensions and archetypes, among others.

If you are an experienced qualitative researcher focusing on the Hispanic market, you will find yourself nodding in agreement with the many examples and themes, and you will even pick up some practical applications for developing screeners, creating discussion guides and generating reports, just as I did. More importantly, you will greatly appreciate the models and approaches that bring these insights to life.

As a non-Hispanic-industry reader, you will feel engaged by the rich stories in this book, which will provide you with a different perspective on the impact that the Hispanic culture has had, and continues to have, on the United States.

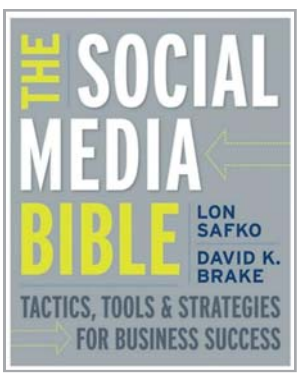
"The overwhelming message is that this is a substantial population segment that marketers will either ignore at the peril of their competitiveness, or take notice of for potentially great benefits for their companies."

The authors strive to arm you with pragmatic approaches to key emotional drivers and effectively guide you in navigating the "perpetual mix" of English- and Spanish-language usage, as well as the many dimensions of acculturation. The proposed acculturation models are helpful milestones in understanding the process and dimensions of acculturation, leading to communication effectiveness.

The Hispanic market has definitely gained greater attention from marketers, but unfounded assumptions about the Hispanic market still exist and impact marketing to this segment. It is impossible not to fall in love with a book that nobly strives to dispel false assumptions about the Hispanic consumer.

"If this book achieves the aim of communicating to marketers and advertisers that the Hispanic consumer requires modifying and changing assumptions, it will have succeeded in its mission."

Accomplishing the daunting task of effectively catering to a wide variety of readers interested in the Hispanic market, this book will leave you feeling much better equipped to target that market. With a solid foundation of basic knowledge, practical applications and high-level concepts, *Hispanic Marketing: A Cultural Perspective* is a **must-read** book that will never collect dust on your shelf… you will find yourself referring to it again and again for its wealth of insight and breadth of cultural knowledge.



The Social Media Bible: Tactics, Tools & Strategies for Business Success

Lon Safko and David K. Brake
Wiley

Review By Susan Saurage-Altenloh
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The questions swirling around social media and its application to business success are like hurricane winds: they are relentless and stinging and frustrating and overwhelming — even threatening — to an individual's or organization's well-being. What is social media? Why does it matter? Must one engage in social media and social networking? How does one begin using it? Is there a place to learn how to "do" social media?

Happily, authors Lon Safko and David Brake have organized answers to hundreds of questions about social media in a comprehensive 800-page manual called *The Social Media Bible*. It is an amazingly thorough resource that includes instructions, how-to guides, mini-evaluations and assessments, and implementation strategies. This manual is the ultimate cheat sheet for the social-media neophyte.

This massive tome is well organized into three sections: (1) background basics and tactics, (2) tools and (3) strategy. The first section establishes a general framework of understanding about what social media is and how its applications are categorized. The second section is a juicy compilation of more than 100 tools and applications, what they do and their role in a social-media strategy. The final section includes the exercises to conduct a social media SWOT of your company, followed by a guide to crafting and executing a social-media strategy relevant to your individual needs.

The background section is exhaustively detailed, but in a highly readable and entertaining way. Each chapter addresses a specific application or tool (blogs, wikis, forums, podcasts, etc.) and answers the following basic questions:

- What's in it for you, and why you would want to use it?
- Why it exists: where it derives, how it grew or developed.
- What you need to know about it for decision-making.
- Providers: where to access the tools/applications.
- Expert insights from key knowledge leaders, founders, creators.
- Commandments on using the tool: the very best learnings!
- Resources: readings, downloads, podcasts, credits.

"Commandments" are choice tidbits designed to bring the reader up to speed quickly, prevent social-media faux pas and provide rules of thumb for effectively using a particular tool or resource. These provide fast expertise on implementation actions in a few short bullets. An example: "50 tips for power blogging" includes suggestions on posting frequency, microblogging (tweeting), what to avoid, how to make Facebook work with your blog, ways to title your blog to take advantage of SEO, why you should read other blogs and so on. This is truly indispensable advice for the novice blogger.

The second section addresses 15 major tools — from social networks (Facebook, LinkedIn, Friendster) to RSS (Feedburner, RSS 2.0) to virtual worlds (Second Life) to aggregators (Digg, Yelp, Google Reader) to productivity applications (ZoHo, SurveyMonkey) — in great detail. Each chapter lists the primary players in the category and, for each, answers the kinds of questions that populate cocktail chatter and online forums: what it is, how it's used, who uses it, company details (such as founder, number of employees and revenue model) and its relevance to the prospective user. Each of these chapters offers a scorecard to help you quantify the internal and external value of the tool to your business. At this point, you really begin to understand how much of your resources should be invested in the tool.

The third section focuses on strategy through activities — assessments, a social-media SWOT analysis and strategy development — to help you develop and connect content to your unique audience. Not only do the authors help the reader understand the "pillars of social-media strategy: communicate, collaborate, educate, entertain," but they also explain how to apply the various tools and applications to successfully engage customers, prospects and employees.

Extras: Not surprisingly, there's a website at www.TheSocialMediaBible.com for hands-on business executives who have purchased the text. The site includes links to every social-media site, tool and application listed or referenced in the book. Additionally, free downloads, templates and exercises are presented by chapter.

Bottom line: As you work through this well-organized text, the idea lightbulbs will begin going off in your brain as you begin to "get it." Once you work through the strategy section using the scorecards (tools section), a cognizance of the application of social media for your purposes begins to take shape. Ultimately, you can develop a simple 12-month social-media strategy based on what is relevant and actionable for your organization.

The authors of *The Social Media Bible* recognize the incredible number of unanswered questions about social media, as expressed by business professionals, and they address them succinctly and helpfully. As quoted on the book's back cover, "If you want to grow your business... *The Social Media Bible* will show you how to harness the collective wisdom and viral value of your stakeholders and stay ahead of your competition." This book fulfills its promise.

Taking the shortcut to establish your presence online by applying what you learn from these authors is nothing short of brilliant: you can now get up to speed online as a defined presence by investing just a few hours in *The Social Media Bible*.

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