

Choosing A Market Research Company

Contributed by Vision One Research
Tuesday, 09 November 2010

Introduction

If you are a regular or first time market research buyer, here are some tips for on how to commission a market research study and how to find the right research company for you.

Investing time and effort in preparing a research brief and identifying what you really want, will make a dramatic difference to the effectiveness of the overall research programme!

Doing the groundwork is key

Before you invite any research agencies to quote for a piece of work, always allow yourself some time to prepare your thoughts and ensure you fully understand what you want before you pick up the phone. The better you understand your own needs, the easier it is for a research agency to deliver the best possible solution. So put your head down and write a research brief! (There are numerous tips on how to write a research brief available online, but if you need a hand to get you started then take a look at [How to write a research brief](#))

Initially, when planning your research brief, it is essential that you are very clear what both the business and research objectives are -Â donâ€™t concern yourself too much about the approach, as most research companies have the skills to design the right programme for you. So take your time preparing the background and ensure you fully explain what you would like the research to achieve.

The business objectives should centre on the outcomes and the business decisions that will be taken once the research has been concluded (e.g. to launch a new product, to develop a new service, to change the brand name, etc). Whilst the research objectives should concentrate on the information you need in order to make any business decisions. For example, research questions might include; Who will buy my product or service? What are the barriers to buying my brand? How much are customers prepared to pay for it? What do customers think and feel about my brand?

Finding a research agency

The UK Market Research Society (MRS) is the worldâ€™s largest research association serving everyone with professional equity in provision or use of marketÂ research, business intelligence, market analysis, customer insight and consultancy. A list of leading MRS Company Partners (who adhere to the Code of Conduct throughout their operations) can be found on the MRS site at http://www.mrs.org.uk/companypartner/companies_full.htm . Alternatively, if you belong to a trade association, it may be able to advise you of any specialist research companies with expertise in your field or industry sector.

Beyond Market Research World , there are a number of reliable marketing and market research directories on the web which list leading UK research specialists, including: Marketing and Creative Handbook , the Association of Qualitative Researchers (AQR) or MrWeb an online resource for the market research industry.

Most fieldwork and full-service research providers have particular skills or specialise in specificÂ market sectors. Company size is another factor; larger research companies may have the resources to handle large scale projects, whilst smaller agencies may offer more specialist knowledge or a more personalised service. However, assumingÂ that you now have a good understanding of your research needs, then a quick look at various research agency websites should be enough to tell you what each agency offers. At this stage you should try to eliminate any unsuitable agencies to make sure you have a manageable list â€“ typically we suggest a minimum of two and a maximum of five or six.Â Once you have selected several agencies you are happy with, send them your brief and await their response.

The final selection process

Once you have collated and digested all the research proposals, you should be able to spot the company or companies that best meet your needs. You should always take time to meet one or two of the short-listed companies, as this will give you the chance to ask any questions and to probe any areas of interest. However, it will also give you a chance to check out and meet the people you might be dealing with. If it is a high profile project where communication skills are important we suggest you ask each agency to present their proposal - as this will help establish if they have the skills to engage and motivate your intended audience. And donâ€™t forget to insist that you only meet the team who will be working on your project and in particular the person you will be dealing with on a day to day basis.

A word on costs. Try to avoid choosing a research agency just on the basis of cost â€“ you often get what you pay for! Cutting corners, such as using smaller sample sizes or cheaper forms of research or using cheaper/inexperienced people can all affect the accuracy and quality of the insights and recommendations. So, set yourself a budget at the start

and then choose the company that understands your requirements and has shown how to get the best quality information possible.

About Vision One Research (Ltd)

Vision One Research is a full service market research company offering qualitative (focus groups, depths, eye-tracking and observation) and quantitative research methodologies including; CATI, Online, Face to face and IVR Research. We specialise in both business and consumer research “from customer satisfaction research to new product development. Not only are we experts in market research, we also specialise in brands, marketing and strategy and our analysis delivers clear guidelines and recommendations to transform and grow your business. Please feel free to contact Tony Lewis or Jas Gidda on 0207 692 0702 or visit our website www.VisionOne.co.uk .

26 October 2010