

Using external research companies

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 Commissioning

In some cases a firm may need to commission an external research company, as resources may need to be supplemented or additional skills are needed to understand the findings of the research.

When commissioning a research project, business needs and objectives must be identified. The following are a few questions that help firms thinking about commissioning research and need to be documented in a brief to be able to work with an external research company:

What is the issue?

What is the key business issue that needs to be investigated?

What is the business need?

What is the objective or outcome that the firm hopes to achieve through investigating the issue? How will the results of the research be used? Who are the stakeholders that have a key interest in the business outcome?

Is there any previous knowledge?

Has any similar research been conducted previously that may help in planning this research? If so, this will allow for comparisons of results and trend analyses to be established.

What is the required coverage?

Is there any specific category of client that needs to be included in the research?

What will be the cost of the research?

How much does the firm have to cover the costs of conducting the research project?

When a firm commissions an external research company to provide support in a research project it is important to complete the following:

- A discussion on the project background and objectives;

- Preparation of a detailed proposal by the external research company including information on the best methodology, sampling and related issues, costs and schedules;

- Once commissioned, the external research company should submit a detailed project action plan;

- A further meeting with the external research company is required to discuss the final content and format of the questionnaire;

- During the progress of the fieldwork it is important to discuss and agree the project analysis specifications related to the required level of analysis and format of deliverables – the presentation, research report and data tabulations;

- When the analysis is complete there should be a further meeting to discuss the initial results and discuss the research findings, conclusions and recommendations;

-A final meeting may be needed on submission of the final project report to review outstanding issues and questions.

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