

Insights from the world of market research

Data, facts and intuitive interpretation: The best analysis includes all of them

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Field research first, or intuitive interpretation

N.W. Ayer, an advertising pioneer, is credited for conducting the first organized research project in 1879. The next milestone for marketing research occurred in 1911 when C. Parlin started “snooping” in people’s garbage cans. As a sales representative for the Saturday Evening Post, he had failed to sell advertising space to the Campbell Soup Co. because the firm believed the magazine primarily reached the working-class market. Campbell believed Post readers made their own soup while its products focused on a higher-income population who could afford to pay for convenience.

Parlin decided to test out Campbell’s marketing strategy. His intuition told him to snoop around in a very unconventional way. He went out and began counting the soup cans in the garbage of different neighborhoods. To Campbell’s surprise, Parlin’s “hands on” research revealed that more canned soup was being purchased by the working class than by the upper class, who had servants to make soup for them from scratch. Campbell Soup quickly became a Saturday Evening Post client. Multiple meanings are part of what market research offers. Giving voice to your intuitive interpretation is likely to give your initiative an advantage over “research” alone.

Leveraging research and intuition for maximum exposure

In the early 1990s, Tonka Toys introduced a new product different from the toy cars and trucks for which the company was known. This new toy was different because it could be manipulated and changed from a vehicle into a robot and back again. Tonka was the first toy company to come up with this concept and could have named it anything. However, since their corporate culture was “trucks” and these new toy vehicles became robots, they decided on the name “Gobots.” The toy became an overnight success.

A few years later, Hasbro introduced a similar product. They too had a choice of

names. They could have called it anything but “Gobot.” But before they made that critical decision, Hasbro spent time researching what children were really buying when they purchased a Gobot. They watched children playing with the toys and discovered children liked the process of changing the vehicle into a robot. They weren’t nearly as interested in the fact that the toy started out as a vehicle and ended up as a robot as they were in the process of changing it from one to another. Based on this finding, Hasbro named their new toy “Transformers.” Their ads focused on the process, which is what attracted the children in the first place. Hasbro positioned their marketing for what the customer was buying and knocked Gobots off the shelf. Eventually, Hasbro purchased Tonka Toys. Bet on this summer’s “Transformers” movie building new attention for this toy and generating numerous activities that expands their “transforming process.”

Consumers don’t merely purchase products and services. They want to secure solutions that look like products and services. Crayola Crayons provides assorted products that are fun to use and designed to inspire creative self-expression but that looks like colored wax sticks. FedEx is dependable security for our precious ideas and items but it looks like overnight, on-time delivery of packages. Why do your members come to your organization? What is your research and intuition telling you regarding the solutions your members are seeking?

Assns are more than deliverers of product commodities. With the proper use of market research and employment of intuitive interpretations, much more is possible. Aren’t assns stagers of transformative events and crafters of influential communications offering solutions that go beyond simply problem-solving? And don’t assns foster ethical behavior through leadership development; encourage enhanced communication skills; support the development of relationships nurturing personal growth while building professional confidence? Doesn’t your assn expand the professional and personal life skills of your members?

Consider:

- What is known about your members? Their wants, needs and decision-making habits? □
- How do you plan to stay ahead of your members’ preferences? □
- How is field research being leveraged with staff and volunteer leader intuition? □
- What warning signs are being used to measure member expectations and

misjudgments?

“It is futile to try to guess what products the future will want. But it is possible to decide what idea one wants to make a reality in the future, and to build a different business on such an idea.” – Peter Drucker, Managing for Results

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