How the IRG members *strengthen* marketing research!

Getting the truth out!
# Contents

**The IRG Supersearcher’s blogs, 2016.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Why these blogs?</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TECHNIQUES</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data saturation – numbers left out in the rain, or something else?</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power of choice</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The thorny business around Marketing Mix Modelling</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three steps to more effective focus groups</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changes in questions and in methods can improve insights and clients' budget effectiveness</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Triangulation – cross checking research findings</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefitting from what you already know about your customers</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is all error bad?</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>BENEFITS</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quant can measure your brand – only qual can tell you how to build it</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How compelling research helps Sensis demonstrate its expertise and…</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authenticity</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to build trust quickly</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>PERCEPTIONS</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s not you, it’s me</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration &amp; agility – essentials for future success?</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do you mean?</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>THE BUSINESS ELEMENTS</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behind the business: Like father, like son</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I did it myself</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behind the business: Homework</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behind the Business: Homework</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What the IRG – the Independent Researchers’ Group is.</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Why these blogs?

The Supersearcher IRG Blog

The Supersearcher IRG Blog is an initiative of AMSRS Independent Researchers Group members and the blogs are written to help market research business, market research techniques and specifically, written to help clients using the IRG members to maximize the return on their research investments.

This ebooklet contains the IRG Supersearcher blogs from 2016, as a convenient summary and exposition of the skills, range and capacity of the IRG members.

As most of the IRG members’ research is undertaken for the clients specifically, we cannot release information from those projects, but we do write blogs that contain information about improvements made - in products, services and research techniques.

That knowledge is public domain and we share that with you to show how marketing research can strengthen your decisions, and so can improve your marketing budget outcomes and assist you to maximise the returns from your marketing budgets.

There are four sections to this booklet:

1. Techniques.
2. Benefits.
3. Perceptions.
4. The business.

If have further questions about these blogs, contact the writers directly. If you have further questions about marketing research, use the AMSRS Directory to assist you to identify which researchers specialise in your sector, and if you have any other queries, please contact Olena Sydorenko, Marketing Manager at the AMSRS at Olena.Sydorenko@amsrs.com.au or on 02 9566 3000.

We hope you enjoy and find useful this 2016 blogs booklet.
TECHNIQUES
November 30, 2016

Data saturation is a term used in research to indicate that no new information is expected to be added that will enhance or change the findings of a study. Data saturation is important to achieve. It is reached when there is enough information to replicate the study, when the ability to obtain additional new information has been attained, and when further coding (identification of themes) is no longer feasible.

Yet the concept of data saturation is considered to be a neglected one. This is because it is a concept that is hard to define. What is data saturation for one is not nearly enough for another.

There are two ways in which data saturation plays itself out in research:

1. **Data saturation in sampling**

When a researcher chooses respondents for a study (conducts ‘sampling’), they may do so using ‘theoretical sampling’. This means they will continue adding new units to the sample until the study has reached a saturation point; that is, until no new data are produced through inclusion and analysis of new units. Theoretical sampling is an approach to acquiring respondents for research that is related to an approached called ‘grounded theory’ and is characterised by the fact that the collection of data is controlled by the emerging theory. The researcher has to constantly look for new units and data, and justify the theoretical purpose for which each additional group is included in the study. This type of approach to sampling is uncommon due to the constraints of a fixed budget which determines the design of the study and its sampling parameters.
Researchers often struggle with knowing how to estimate how many interviews will be required to reach data saturation and again, are often dictated by project budgets. When deciding on a study design, researchers should aim for one that is explicit regarding how data saturation is reached. To best achieve data saturation, good care should be taken in sampling a cross section of populations of interest, so that a full range of views is likely to be heard.

2. Data saturation in qualitative interview

In-depth interview and focus groups are two commonly used methods of qualitative research. They each involve the search for depth of meaning, unlike a quantitative survey which tends to focus on close-ended questions such as yes/no or rating scales. A focus group or in-depth interview is an exploratory form of research. It is open ended and less formally structured than a survey. The interviewer needs to investigate the topic of interest with the respondent until there is nothing left to add. This may be done by using questions at the end of the interview such as ‘Anything else?’ or ‘Do I need to know anything other than what I have asked you?’ This is done to ensure that saturation has been achieved; that there is nothing else to add to the topic of interest.

Failure to reach data saturation in qualitative research has an impact on the quality of the research and compromises the validity of the content. However, there is no one-size-fits-all approach to obtaining data saturation. There are data collection methods that are more likely to reach data saturation than others, although these methods are highly dependent on the study design.

Unfortunately, data saturation can really only be known after the fact, once qualitative interviews have been conducted and data has been analysed. Yet market research is typically planned, justified and costed ahead of time. So, achieving data saturation in reality, must be a combination of sensible sampling, good research design, well designed research tools, and the reality of the commercial parameters to the project.

Otherwise, your findings may as well be left out in the rain.

Natalie Fisher, NFS Consulting
Professionals marketing products are always striving to change the marketing mix to optimise sales, revenue and most importantly profit. This is all based on influencing the consumer and there is ample evidence that this does happen! But is it in line with expectations? In terms of normal price discounting, there generally is an understanding of the impact on the product based on historical outcomes. Nevertheless, cross product implications are not as obvious. It becomes less so when the marketing initiative is not reflected historically (e.g. assessing a price increase for a product). Marketing mix modelling is usually the statistical technique that is applied in this environment although a “gut feel” input is also applied. It would seem that everybody is an expert in driver analysis and how can you dismiss realism. Nevertheless, the associated complexity behind this modelling process (e.g. understanding lag relationships with promotional activity) creates high risks in terms of profit and should be left to the experts. At the same time, its applicability is questioned when the initiative is not reflected adequately or not at all in the data. So is there an alternative?

There is a suit of alternative methodologies in terms of pricing research applications although the most reliable is **choice modelling**? This type of application relies on the use of a controlled environment where demand drivers are tested across a range of initiatives (i.e. including initiatives not reflected historically)! The controlled environment is reliant on experimental designs which are generally orthogonal (i.e. zero correlation between attributes). In terms of modelling product drivers such as price or impact of new products, we measure buying intentions of consumers to change. This in itself is a turnoff to
modelling practitioners who doubt whether intentions translate to actual buying behaviour. My experience suggest a close fit although study set-up is critical to this outcome. Other considerations impacting on accuracy are:

**Structure of Experimental Designs**

Experimental designs are based on attributes/levels. In new product development applications, the attributes are product characteristics (e.g. pack sizes) while the levels reflect different options associated with each attribute (e.g. different pack sizes).

The price reflects an attribute. In this case, its application in terms of the utility curve for price is an average across all product options. It does not give us a product specific assessment for price. This requires a change in thinking where the attribute is the product and price options needs to be built into the levels. This approach enables the calculation of product specific price elasticities!

**Choice tasks**

The configuration of the experimental design translates to choice tasks. Each choice task presents the products and the appropriate prices associated with the choice task.

The underlying question associated with the choice task is historically presented as “Which product do you prefer based on associated product prices?” or “Which product would you buy based on associated product prices?” This approach is not realistic in the marketplace, especially with FMCG, as buyers purchase across a repertoire of products based on household needs, usage occasions, preferred product choice not included in product range and even for ‘just a change’.

This can be accommodated through changing the question to “Based on your next 10 purchase, which products would you buy based on associated product prices?” This alternative question is picking up a degree of acceptance among practitioners. Still, it remains inadequate when the focus is on volume.

To handle this requirement, there is a need to look at purchases over a period of time, e.g. “What products and how many would you buy over a normal monthly period based on associated prices?” The period of time should cover at least 2-3 purchasing cycles which would result in more significant variations from one pricing scenario to another and also minimise the impact of stockpiling. Even so, there are practitioners who will model volume based on the next purchase cycle.

**Cross Product Movements**
Within choice modelling, cross product impacts of a product pricing decision relies on fair share allocation (i.e. based on existing market share). This is an underlying assumption rather than a statistically supported assessment. Accordingly, it reflects an "achilles heel" to choice modelling.

Respondent level modelling was a major advance in choice modelling (e.g. CBC HB). Its advantage was in more effectively handling cross product switching. This again relies on fair share but at the respondent level and that alternative choices are based on price. Unfortunately, there is still a risk in estimating cross impacts, especially for FMCG, as for the reasons outlined above. It also has other deficiencies! One is the number of choice tasks for modelling at a respondent level; usually very small based on the number of products to be modelled.

A solution is to model switching behaviour through the choice tasks. This is only possible across the whole experimental design where the data reflects a good spread of interaction across all own and competitor prices. This approach is effective for products with high market share but modelling complexity increases for lower market share products.

BTW, understanding switching behaviour can also be addressed outside the choice tasks based on the experimental design. My own methodology of measuring cross impact through a substitution approach has proven quite effective and accurate! Just reach out to me if you want to explore further.

**Factors driving Sample Size**

Many clients seeks to include all products in the category in assessing pricing. This usually translates to too many products which require extremely large experimental designs with associated large sample sizes. This has big cost implications for the client and can be a turn-off for research.

In regard to pricing studies, the number of products included should reflect the market under consideration i.e. include products that are competing with each other. Within a category, a competitive group of products can depend on different product considerations (e.g. quality, product characteristics and product size).

There are other ways of reducing the number of core products to be used in setting up the experimental design. One approach is to treat products as a group when their prices move together (e.g. same product across flavours).

The end objective is that the results for each choice task should reflect the market and number of products is restricted to the competitive group. Number of respondents
completing each choice task would have to increase with higher number of products (i.e. definitely becomes an issue with greater than 32 products).

The other consideration with implications on sample size relates to the number of choice tasks per respondents:

- Not too few as speed to complete each choice task would increase as the respondent becomes familiar with the task
- Not too many due to the onset of fatigue
- Varies between 8 – 16 choice tasks, depending on country, complexity and interest.

My preference is to conduct modelling at an aggregate level with sufficient sample to generate accurate own price and cross price elasticities!

**Volumetric Impact**

Choice modelling is a share based methodology although most studies require a volumetric assessment. Choice modelling practitioners usually assume constant demand at the aggregate/category level. This largely ignores the impact at the category level of changes to number of consumers or changes to consumption levels of existing consumers. Understanding category level implications can be modelled but it relies on the sample, the experimental design and each choice task. Potential new consumers need to be identified through the questionnaire in terms of the likelihood of buying within the category based on accessibility, price considerations and product availability. Recruiting existing category users is usually the minimum sample requirement to capture changes in usage levels. Within the experimental design, enabling volumetric modelling largely depend on the question associated with each choice task. This question needs to measure number of products purchased across a timeframe (weekly, fortnightly, monthly or longer). My benchmark relies on capturing at least two to three purchasing cycles as per highlighted previously. Modelling is based on data across the choice task where products volumes are aggregated to a total level for each choice task.

**Impact of New Products**

A key advantage of choice modelling over marketing mix modelling is its ability to effectively handle new products. It needs to be highlighted that many existing choice modelling practitioners are also not handling new products correctly. This is largely driven by the experimental design they are using – it does not specifically reflect the scenarios under consideration. The choice tasks needs to be realistic in terms of the scenarios options:
• Include all products that you expect to see on the shelf

• Based on the experimental design, additional new products need to be included in over a majority of choice task but there needs to be sufficient choice tasks covering the scenario for when it is excluded. This requirement enables modelling to assess impact for when product is not available.

• Based on the experimental design, new product replacement of existing products and existing product (looking to be replaced) need to be included in the choice tasks but not together. Again, we need to enable modelling based on the different product availability scenarios.

• Based on the experimental design, existing products that are under consideration for withdrawal need to be handled as per new products.

The other crucial considerations with new product introductions or product withdrawals/replacement is the cross product movement when they are introduced or withdrawn and associated implications at the category level.

Lucio Milan, Milan & Associates
The thorny business around Marketing Mix Modelling

October 25, 2016

In the Australian supermarket sector, the market is dominated by Woolworths and Coles. Woolworths is the market leader although its share is declining at the expense of Coles. Also, Aldi market share is growing strongly in line with its expansion into the Australian market. Both Coles and Aldi gains in market share seem to be at least partially on the back of price discounting/low prices. In this mix, we also have Private Labels which are also performing well in a depressed market.

How are these macro drivers impacting on recognised brands and what strategies are available to maintain profitability? For this type of market intelligence, there is reliance on marketing mix models (MMM) using historical weekly data (i.e. scandata from Coles and Woolworths). Data is usually available over a 3+ year period. This is applied across competitive products within a category. They usually include product prices (own and competitors), promotional activities (BTL) and a measure of advertising effectiveness (ATL). Category implications usually reflect a bottom-up aggregation of product level models.

This approach has proved quite effective but there are limitations:

- Does not handle the implications of new products
- Price range restriction to historical levels while the implications of higher prices not covered in the data
- New promotional ideas not covered
- Usually ignores implications of other categories
- Usually ignores state of the economy

The other major limitations are in the modelling process itself. We will go through a number of issues:

- The biggest difficulty relates to measuring cross product price implications relative to own price. Even though overall price elasticity reflects the market, the individual components are less obvious with own price elasticity inflated by difficulties in measuring cross product price elasticity. The culprit is multicollinearity (i.e. significant level of correlation among the competitor price factors). In fact, some users ignore multicollinearity even when correlation between competitor prices is up towards 0.7. The implications of multicollinearity impacts on the reliability of coefficients. Solving this problem is a challenge! Accordingly, the approach of aggregating product level results to a category level usually give an inflated outcome for category level price elasticity. A true estimate of category price elasticity can be obtained through modelling at a category level. A bottom-up / top-down approach to modelling price elasticities can improve accuracy outcomes!

- Another deficiency that can arise from MMM at the product level is the presence of autocorrelation (errors from model performance assessment are correlated). One of possible reasons behind autocorrelation is due to missing information in the modelling process. The impact is again on the coefficients (i.e. less than optimal). As the focus of MMM is on controllable market drivers (e.g. prices and promotional activity) on sales, it usually excludes general drivers (e.g. economic climate or changes in product perceptions such as healthiness of margarine vs butter). It would be more appropriate to handle these macro drivers at a category level (i.e. top-down).

- MMM on how advertising is handled is another area of model difficulty. Key to measuring advertising effectiveness is understanding the lag relationship. This introduces another complexity to the modelling process. Expectation is that lag relationships decreases over time. Modelling this decline is usually non-linear and this makes it a more complex modelling exercise to solve. Modelling methodologies are available to handle this characteristic! But do practitioners have the expertise to handle this complexity?

- A more micro focus on price movements (e.g. change to everyday price, promotional price discounting, EDLP, Discounting with Condolas, handling threshold price points)
is also difficult to assess in MMM. This is largely due to not enough variations in the data to model each price characteristic. Modelling across a longer time frame may help but this still depends on level of variations. A better way of gaining an understanding of these micro price characteristics is through Choice modelling which users a more controlled environment for modelling. This approach is also effective for the limitations referred to above.

A lot of FMCG companies only use MMM to their detriment. They are missing out on the benefits associated with pricing research which can be just as effective and in fact can cross validate results between the different methodologies (i.e. MMM based on historical data vs. Choice Modelling type application) as well as value add to the requirements of the organisation.

Lucio Milan, Milan & Associates
October 11, 2016

People are influenced by where they live and where they live influences their purchase behaviour.

These geographically-based differences in attitudes and behaviour can affect your sales.

So when looking to understand the influence of these geographically-based differences on your sales, face-to-face focus groups can be a useful research tool.

But face-to-face focus groups across the country can be costly.

The researchers may have to travel from Dubbo to Darwin and to Doncaster and beyond to ensure your key customer or prospect segments are researched.

And you can’t always be there yourself to see what they are saying.

This is the tyranny of distance in Australia – and beyond, if you have an international business.

But there is a solution.

That solution is that of online webcam focus groups.

These can run with people selected for relevance to the research and from a range of areas. All participate at the same time. They use their screens and webcams, so they can see each other, you as moderator can see them, and they can see you. And, with permission, your clients can watch the group live, from where-ever is most convenient.

The participants can see the images, words or videos we want them to see, and can comment on those just as we do in face-to-face focus groups.

With three key differences.
1. The participants are in their homes (in Sydney or in New York, in Bendigo or in Idaho, in Penrith or in Perth) and I’m in my office. No travel. No travel costs.

2. You can watch each group from work or at home as fits your time.

3. You can, via the researcher, seek more comment on a participant’s comment, while that topic is relevant and fresh.

Online video focus groups are not necessarily a replacement for face-to-face focus groups, if the face-to-face elements are important to the research project, but are an additional tool in the researcher’s armoury.

You can use to set up your own online video focus group service, if you wish, or can draw on one of the existing commercial suppliers.

And, frankly, using these online focus groups is probably the only way I’d get to hear a Bostonian say (I think admiringly) ‘Gee – you’ve got a cute Cary Grant accent – even though you are from Australia’.

We’d be interested in other members’ views on this tool and look forward to our AMSRS colleagues’ advices.

Philip Derham, Derham Marketing Research Pty. Ltd.
Changes in questions and in methods can improve insights and clients’ budget effectiveness

September 22, 2016

Change in tracking studies can improve insights and clients’ budget effectiveness, as a recent experience when taking over a long-running tracking survey about repair service response speeds, showed.

A new client had us continue a long-running telephone satisfaction tracking survey.

We added a separate mobile sample and also an online sample, to see if these additional survey methods would add audience coverage or be less expensive replacement methods, while generating results that were consistent with past findings.

The mobile survey questionnaire replicated the existing landline survey, as did the online survey, though with the addition of “Can’t say” options to questions, where needed. (Had we written the original landline telephone survey, we would have included “Can’t say” options in that as well.)

This year, we repeated the previous years’ interview practice of having the telephone interviewers repeat the question unchanged if a landline or mobile phone participant answered initially that they couldn’t answer a question.

When the three surveys were complete, we compared the answers from each method.

For all but one question, the answers were the same. This matching of answer proportions suggested the less expensive, more inclusive online survey approach could be used in future, with significant budget savings for the client.

But there was one sticking point – the question asking whether the speed with which the client responded to emergency service requests was appropriate.
With each survey method, 4% of people said the standard response time was not appropriate (not fast enough). Conversely, 94% of those who answered in the landline and the mobile surveys said the standard response time was appropriate.

Only 58% of the online sample said the standard response time was appropriate. 36% said they "Can’t say" whether the standard time was appropriate.

The difference between the online and the landline/mobile telephone survey findings suggests that repeating the question unchanged, if there is no “Can’t say” option, forces an answer where no answer may be known. Whether forcing an expressly positive or expressly negative answer is appropriate if the participant answers that they “Can’t say” is a question we should consider.

The practice of repeating the question if a "Can’t say" answer is first given in telephone surveys may lead to perhaps unwarranted assumptions of service satisfaction.

The more accurate measure (which in this case, would include a “Can’t say” answer) should be used, we suggest. Used because knowing the proportions of customers which really had a view on the appropriateness of the repair speed standards, would enable more effective communication of what service speeds are appropriate. Without this more precise measure, such information is less likely to be included in the client’s communications campaigns, and so those could be less effective than they should be.

These findings show the impact of minor changes in this tracking survey (adding a “Can’t say” answer option), and show the benefits of trialing such changes before changing the tracking survey questionnaire or survey method.

The findings also show, now the “Can’t say” issue has been identified, that there are marked budget savings available, should the client chose to change the survey method to the less expensive online survey method for their future tracking surveys.

We assume that we all now include “Can’t say” options in our telephone, mobile and online surveys, so this specific finding may be more of historic interest. But our view is that we, as professional researchers, should review our techniques and our questionnaires regularly for improvements; and then see if the improvements will benefit our clients’ understanding and their budget efficiency.

Of course, one study, just as one swallow, may not herald a new spring, and these results may be an outlier. We’d be interested to see whether these findings are replicated in other studies and look forward to our AMSRS colleagues’ advices.

Philip Derham, Derham Marketing Research Pty. Ltd.
Triangulation – cross checking research findings

September 19, 2016

An important consideration when conducting research and evaluation is whether you can rely on your data as being a true portrayal of the views or position of your population of interest. It is important to be sure that the findings being presented have not been unintentionally skewed because of how the questions were asked, or something unique about the respondents that you may have overlooked.

Triangulation is about using a range of techniques to provide insight into a topic that is particularly useful as a way of cross-checking the research findings.

It is particularly useful as there is often never one ideal way to conduct research; there are many ways to find information, and each method has its advantages and disadvantages.

Triangulation is also referred to as a mixed methods approach to research. It enables you to validate data through cross-verification from more than two sources. By using triangulation you are testing the consistency of the findings and increasing your chance of controlling any threats to the validity of the results.

There are four main reasons for triangulation, as outlined on the Better Evaluation website:

- **Widening and deepening** your understanding of the findings.
- **Disproving a hypothesis** using more than one approach.
- **Confirming a hypothesis** provided by one approach, by using another.
Explaining more fully—using multiple techniques—the meaning behind the data.

I am currently conducting an evaluation of the Small Town Transformation initiative for Regional Arts Victoria. The research I will conduct to inform my evaluation will comprise lots of data from six regional towns, lots of viewpoints, a range of perspectives and both qualitative and quantitative data. I intend to use a range of methods to collect this data, including:

- focus groups
- in-depth interviews
- surveys
- observations
- secondary research
- stakeholder interviews and
data monitoring

Using each of these approaches I may be asking the same question of different respondents, or even the same question of the same respondents but in more than one way. By exploring the topic using different techniques I can be sure that my results will not hold bias. For example, I will check that what I learn in qualitative discussions supports my survey findings, and that these results have been supported in results from other similar studies from secondary research sources. I will cross check what I observe in the small towns with what people tell me through both qualitative and quantitative research, to be sure that what I observe is consistent with what others perceive is going on. I will not just rely on evidence from one town; I will compare and contrast both qualitative and quantitative findings across all six towns, to look for consistencies, or else reasons for inconsistencies. I have set up community panels of residents in each of the six towns and I intend to re-visit them over time to allow me to compare and contrast their views with other similar participants.

This hopefully explains the importance of triangulation. If you commission research or evaluation be sure that your consultant has an opportunity to look for ways in which the findings can be validated using more than one method, to be sure you can rely on the results.

I intend to embrace the triangle as I go forth and evaluate!

Natalie Fisher, NSF Consulting
New information about your customers from surveys and focus groups is always exciting – and can often reveal needs or attitudes perhaps not fully expected.

A second source of exciting information about your customers is your own customer database. Analysis and reanalysis of that can often reveal additional opportunities.

We can’t tell you about other clients’ database analyses, but can tell you about our own reanalysis of Melbourne University’s Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia survey.

That database first showed that happiness, analysed by age, is U shaped. That is, people are happier when young, less so when middle-aged, and happier again when older. The first-run analysis stopped there.

Our reanalysis of this database found marked differences by commonly recorded database details.

These differences included varying satisfaction according to home type, home location and neighbourhood; age, gender; and the often-collected details of personal finances and personal health.

As examples, people living in separate houses were markedly more satisfied than those living in flats. The neighbourhood influenced satisfaction and perceptions of personal safety; and home type and health were linked.

This reanalysis of an existing database identified immediate opportunities for particular types of loan, for home security products, for specific types of insurance, for particular
foods and beverages, for health services, and for modifications to existing products or services.

Surveys or focus groups that may be needed after can be more specifically directed because of the database analysis, which is a powerful step in identifying more customer opportunity.

The business opportunities are clear and database analysis can be rewarding for our clients just as other techniques can be. As always, it is a matter of looking at the information need and using the more appropriate and the more cost-effective tool, as this double step ensures our clients benefit most from their investment in the marketing research process.

Philip Derham, Derham Marketing Research Pty. Ltd.
Evaluation and research inquiries are about exploring the truth, about difference – also known as ‘variance’. For example:

**What are the different ways that this program or service delivered its outcomes?**

**How did different community groups differ in their perception of the new client service?**

These are both fairly common evaluative questions. And common to both of them is the word ‘difference’. Understanding difference—or variance—is often at the heart of an evaluative or research inquiry. We may be looking for a specific type of difference, or maybe we just want to describe differences as we find them emerge in our inquiry, using an emergent design. Other times we are trying to create that difference—through experiments or interventions—or we may be looking to describe the causes of the differences we have observed.

However, in every study there will be many other differences (variances) that are not necessarily related to our areas of interest. That is a euphemistic way of saying we have ERROR.

Before we can know if all error is bad, we need to identify some common types of error that may emerge in our research:

**Random errors**

Random errors are caused by unknown and unpredictable changes in a research study. Even through they occur, they are not related to the differences we are trying to understand in our inquiry. Some example of random error include:

- The mood levels and alertness of respondents
- The noise in the room in which an interview is being conducted
- The time of day we interview respondents
These are considered errors because they are not in our control. Yet they shouldn’t affect
the outcome of the inquiry in a systematic way. This is because if we could see all of the
ersors that impacted on the study, they are likely to average out (some having a negative
impact on the study, others having a positive impact). So, random error is not bad error. If
averaged out across a study, random error can just be considered to be ‘noise’ in the data.

**Systematic errors**

Systematic errors, on the other hand, are not ideal and are important to minimise. They are
ersors associated with a flaw in the equipment or design of the study. Systematic errors
should be easier to estimate than random errors, as they are within our control. They can
influence the outcome of the inquiry or experiment. Examples of systematic errors include:

- A faulty measurement instrument such as a stopwatch
- Interviewer bias, including using leading questions in interview
- Evaluators imposing their own values on the interpretation of outcomes

**Reducing measurement error**

Although not all error is bad, it is ideal to try to reduce as much error as possible. There are
a number of ways to do this:

- Pilot test survey instruments to gain feedback from respondents regarding how easy
  or hard the measure was and how the testing environment affected their
  performance
- Train interviewers thoroughly to ensure they do not introduce bias inadvertently;
- Verify any quantitative data;
- If using quantitative measures, use statistical procedures to adjust for measurement
  error;
- Triangulate the findings, that is, collect data from more than once source, in more
  than one way, to get a more accurate sense of what is happening.

Just like good fats and bad fats, it is important to understand what type of error is an
acceptable part of research design, and what types of errors may adversely impact on the
validity of a study. Once we are aware of this, we can embrace good error and eliminate the
bad.

*Natalie Fisher, NSF Consulting*
Quant can measure your brand – only qual can tell you how to build it

November 30, 2016

Quantitative Research can tell you how Your Brand is doing (e.g. awareness, use, advocacy and intentions), but only Qualitative Research can tell you what to do with Your Brand.

Quantitative Research can tell you if your Brand message is getting through, but only Qualitative Research can help you develop and express the most powerful and appealing proposition Your Brand can make.

Only Qualitative Research can identify then match the key needs of the category’s consumers with the values of Your Brand best able to satisfy those needs. These ‘determinants of choice’ need to be understood and discussed in depth, rather than merely ‘rated’ against each other, or ‘voted upon’, in Quantitative Research.

Only Qualitative Research can discover:

- what is expected of your Brand;
- what consumer needs can best be satisfied or met by Your Brand;
- and whether these needs can be well enough satisfied and promoted by Your Brand to ensure that it becomes a brand of choice.

While Quantitative Research can tell you the functional values of Your Brand, it can tell you very little about what should be Your Brand’s expressive values (the image its consumers or customers want to project or feel, or the badge they want to wear, by using Your Brand) and core values (those values that tap into their central belief system).
Quantitative Research can tell you whether they *know of* Your Brand, but not what they *know about* Your Brand (which can be alarmingly little, or horribly negative).

Qualitative Research is the best way you can fully understand Your Brand’s:

- **reputation** (the esteem in which it is held);
- **relevance** (whether current customers or consumers are happy to continue their brand relationship, and whether prospects are likely to consider a relationship with Your Brand);
- **present or potential point of difference** (the most successful and resilient brands are built outwards from their inherent point of difference, which is perhaps better called their *distinct buyer advantage*).

Qualitative Research is also the best way to understand *how to improve Your Brand’s reputation, relevance and distinctiveness*.

Qualitative Research is also uniquely able to identify and understand in-depth:

- the language used about brands;
- the perceived personalities, identities and characteristics of brands;
- feelings about verbal (name, logotype, claim, proposition, products) brand identities and visual (logo, symbol, colours, packs, storefronts, other visual elements) brand identities;
- brand switching drivers, triggers, inhibitions and barriers;
- how respondents position Your Brand against others (and how this compares with how you position Your Brand);
- the appeal of present and potential alternative brand propositions;
- which values of Your Brand best support or prove the most appealing brand proposition;
- and how well your present and/or potential advertising communicates this proposition and these proof points.

So, next time you review Your Brand, please remember that Quantitative Research can tell you where it stands, but not where it ought to stand, nor what marketing communications can best help get it there. Qualitative Research will always do those things best.

**Chris Martin Murphy, Interface Research & Strategy**
How compelling research helps Sensis demonstrate its expertise and build reputation in the media

November 28, 2016

A key goal of Sensis is to connect Australian consumers with businesses, especially small and medium businesses (SMBs) and government via its various products and digital services. An enabling factor is having a positive reputation – Sensis is known as a trusted marketing partner to SMBs.

Market research plays a major role in helping Sensis regularly scrutinise the marketplace to better understand relevant trends and issues. This in turn assists Sensis to develop products and services which help customers achieve their marketing and business goals.

Through various studies conducted each year with businesses and consumers Sensis demonstrates its digital know-how and has established itself as a thought-leader in this space, which contributes to a positive reputation.

The studies include:

The Sensis Business Index which has tracked SMB confidence and behaviour quarterly since 1993.
Sensis relies on Di Marzio Research for advice about survey design as well as analysis and interpretation, which are critical elements of the process. The credibility of the research is a high priority given it is published, shared and discussed in public forums through multiple media channels.

Hugh Tobin (Senior Manager, Media and Communications at Sensis) highlights the main benefits.

“The studies play a crucial role in building and enhancing the reputation of Sensis in the marketplace. They position Sensis as a thought leader in the small and medium business space, as well as on all things digital, by demonstrating our depth of knowledge and connection with these industries.”

“The way the research is conducted with a reporting focus on the results and implications help Sensis to be a credible authority. The insights also guide product development and provide our sales team with updated snapshots of what is happening in the market, which assists with their conversations with customers.

“The media landscape is cluttered with organisations pitching stories every day so the research gives us something unique to talk about which helps drive cut-through of our key messages.”

The Sensis e-Business report tracking the online experiences and technology uptake of SMBs and consumers yearly since 1998.

The Sensis Social Media report which has monitored social media uptake and behaviour annually over the last six years among SMBs and large firms as well as consumers.
Views from SMBs are influential because they comprise 99% of Australian businesses. Consequently, when SBI results are released, politicians talk about them and they are often quoted in Parliament or by industry bodies and other stakeholder groups.

Apart from a national and industry focus, Sensis also prepares state based media releases, which increases overall coverage.

This year, notable media coverage of the Sensis research included:

- TV coverage of the Sensis Social Media research on high rating programs such as Today on Channel 9, Channel 9 News, ABC News 24 and live interviews on key metropolitan radio stations such as 3AW and 2CC in Canberra.

- Opinion pieces which appeared under Sensis senior executives’ names, including an article with the top five tips for SMBs to put together a social media strategy which was published in The Age, Sydney Morning Herald and across the Fairfax digital network.

- Discussion of the Sensis Business Index results by politicians in most states and territories, across both traditional and social media and in Parliament.

“Our reports have helped to improve the positive coverage of Sensis in the media. Ninety-four percent of media coverage of the Sensis brand was positive last financial year, which was an improvement on the previous year and is very high by industry standards,” says Hugh.

Sensis also presents the research results on digital media channels. A recent initiative was hosting a ‘Tweet Chat’ with the Social Media report discussed in a Twitter Q&A with the online community. Sensis digital experts answered questions using the hashtag #sensissocial. The hashtag trended on Twitter with over 400,000 impressions across Facebook and Twitter.

Sensis also seeks to measure the impact of the research in the media. As Hugh explains: “ROI is
important to everything Sensis does. We measure value from the quantity and quality of the media coverage we generate. Using the Advertising Space Rate we work out how much it would cost if we paid for this media coverage.”

Last financial year Sensis generated $5.6 million worth of media coverage from its research program, as measured by third party media companies’ iSentia and Meltwater. Including syndicated coverage, there was a total of 1,886 media mentions – 1,124 online, 435 radio, 140 print and 187 mentions on TV.

It is both fascinating and instructive to see first-hand the types of impact such research can have in the media and in turn, how that has brought value to Sensis.

Paul Di Marzio, Di Marzio Research
Having spent much of the year working on diverse clients, but all with authenticity in common, I wasn’t surprised to hear that authenticity is the new ‘it’ word of 2016.

The authenticity trend is a tricky one to tap into. Authenticity is fundamentally about sharing a truth – a truth that absolutely must be genuine given today’s technological reach. Further, the idea of using authenticity to sell something is kind of self-contradictory and ironic, because the whole point of being authentic is not being strategic but instead behaving in a way consistent with true underlying identity and values! So, to be authentic, you can’t tell people you are authentic, although there are several elements that consumers will observe as proof of your honesty which I touch on below.

.. And why is authenticity such a big thing at the moment? The causality is perhaps due to the lack of trust (in big corporate, in the media, in leadership…and more.) Or some surmise it is due to a loss of identity, that we’re all trying to individuate ourselves. Either way, if you get it right, consumers will respond.

One way to demonstrate authenticity is tell the (real, true) story of your brand. Stories can be from the past: maybe it’s a brand that people grew up with, or cultural integrity has been preserved in a different country or a product has been handed down for generations. Yet a new brand can also have a story to tell, particularly about its role in facilitating ethical choices, promoting diversity or supporting the environment.

Consumers are a suspicious bunch these days. They are very alert to marketing tricks and often assume that you are trying to deceive them in some way. It’s important to keep your language simple and to the point to help people believe in your narrative.

Consumers are also searching for more personal connections with brands, evidenced in the transparency trend which ties to authenticity. They seek honesty in companies, both about the company goals and products. This can be evidenced in seeking to understand areas
such as who made a product, what it was made with, where it was made, and how it was made.

**How it is made** is a particularly interesting part of this trend. In a rejection of the shiny perfection of mass production, many consumers now seek *imperfection* as a demonstration of uniqueness. ‘Celebrating differences’ is a higher level theme in today’s society, (the current Paralympics TVC being a great representation of this) so it makes sense that this is rippling down to other areas of their lives.

Looking for a way to tap back into the authenticity of your brand? Be inspired by the words of John Heggarty, the creative director at BBH in the 1980s. John was responsible for the iconic Laundrette TVC for Levis, a brand that is thick in authenticity – but losing relevance. His advice? ‘I’d tell them to go back to their roots. Whenever a brand gets into trouble you go back to what made you famous.

Sasha Cordeiro Bedrock Insight
How to build trust quickly

October 20, 2016

Nowadays, speed and ease drive our communication. People are switching from longer forms of communication to quicker forms. In fact, it seems we are reverting to hieroglyphics with our most recent cultural emphasis on communicating through emoticons.

Our face-to-face communication is also surrounded by an increase in impatience. We try our best to fight the urge to dismiss too quickly, to give people time to explain themselves, to show their true character, but how good are we? Indications suggest, not so good.

So, we (generalization) like quick communication and we don’t give people long before we place them in a category, or a box, or something.

COMMUNICATION FOR INFLUENCE

What happens when we are the one needing the relationship to work? What happens when we are the ones asking for the time or the help? We have to build rapport even though we know there is impatience and bias on both sides. When we have time to build a relationship this becomes the main tool we have to guide us in mutual benefit. With more time, come more opportunities to work against the other person’s biases and to enlist their trust to make the rapport grow.

COMMUNICATION FOR INFLUENCE WITH STRANGERS

But what if we don’t have time. How do we manage that? How do we work quickly so we don’t get dismissed? How do we keep the other interested? How do we gain rapport for influence when we only have a short time?
Let’s take this into the workspace (oh how useful it would be in the romantic relationship space! Hmmm…. another blog….). Let’s think of specific industries, I’m sure you can see others…..

- **Researchers** need to forensically find facts, insights for their clients or for knowledge gain. A misjudged interaction in the first 5 minutes could break rapport, leading to low quality or even totally ‘wrong’ insights.

- **Medics** have short appointments within which to determine the best outcome. Poor rapport building skills will mean poor disclosure, which means poor diagnoses or ‘door knob’ questions.

- **Paramedics** working in extremely time sensitive slots will have an increase in distress, poorer compliance and potentially higher spend on medicines if the quality of rapport with the patient or their supporters is not strong.

- **Business development** opportunities rely on the ability to find mutually beneficial outcomes. Will you get the opportunities if you haven’t built rapid rapport – probably not.

So what happens in this speeded up world. How do we make connections that are of value when we expect so much to be done so quickly? Our need to make connections remains. Our need to influence through our communication remains. But does our skill? Here are 3 of the 10 main points that underlie the process of Rapid Rapport: Build Trust Quick.

1. You need to judge where the ‘other’ is on the trust curve that underlies yours and their needs. If they are not in the right spot you will need to change that.

2. You set the trust with validation, empathy and respect. You choose how you respond to the other. Respond through choice, and choose wisely. Every choice counts.

3. Work on your ability to be transparent. If you can’t be transparent, know you are risking everything and understand how your body might betray you. No trust, no rapport.

**Dr Amy Silver, Brave New Thought**
It’s not you, it’s me

October 6, 2016

Attribution is the psychosocial process of discerning the causes of things – something we all do every day.

Something great happens to you. Who takes the credit?

Something not so great happens to you. Who do you blame?

Fundamental attribution error (FAE) is the intriguing and subjective phenomenon that describes the tendency to overstate attribution internally (i.e. to one’s self) or externally (i.e. to one’s surroundings and/or circumstances), depending on the recipient of the good or bad “event”.

Here’s how FAE works – a 30 second version:

**Something good happens to me**

THE BACK PAT

“I’m amazing! I totally did that! It was ALL ME!! I always knew I had a secret talent for winning raffles!”

**Something bad happens to me**

THE FLIPPING OF THE BIRD

“That had NOTHING to do with me. That idiot pulled out in front of me!”

**Something good happens to someone else**

THE EYE ROLL

“That result was clearly nothing to do with her – she only passed because the Professor fancies her.”

**Something bad happens to someone else**

THE RAISED EYEBROW JUDGEMENT + HEAD SHAKE

“All. Their. Fault.”

Interestingly, this pattern of credit and blame is observed more in individualistic societies
(e.g. the Western world), whereas in more collective cultures FAE occurs less. But is this typical? I don’t know…

Does FAE exist for some people in reverse – let’s call it “Reverse FAE”, or RFAE?
Are any of these familiar?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Something good happens to me</strong></th>
<th><strong>Something bad happens to me</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>THE SELF-DEPRECATING SHRUG</strong></td>
<td><strong>THE WALLOW</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Well, I can’t take much of the credit. After all, I did have a lot of spare time to cure cancer. No big deal. Anyone could’ve done it…”</td>
<td>“She didn’t call me back… It’s all my fault!”</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Something good happens to someone else</strong></th>
<th><strong>Something bad happens to someone else</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>THE PEDESTAL ELEVATION</strong></td>
<td><strong>THE GENEROUS OVERSTATEMENT</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Well, I’m sure Donald Trump has some good policies up his sleeve…”</td>
<td>“He only hit that parked car because it was raining…”</td>
</tr>
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I would argue that the size and type of FAE (or RFAE) can depend on factors such as:

Mood and present state – Are we having a good or bad day?

Previous experience – Has something similar happened before? and

The other person – the “someone else” – Do we know them? Do we like them? Are they a friend, acquaintance or stranger?

I would also argue that at times fundamental attribution error isn’t actually an error, but is an accurate surmise of the situation!

But I could be mistaken…

Marianne Campbell, Director, Mint Research
Many have said that mankind’s progress for the past 5 millennia has been driven by three basic motivations:

1. Greedy people wanting more
2. Lazy people wanting to do less
3. Frightened people wanting to be safe

Today, competition and self-interest, .... taking the easy options when things look too hard, ....and risk-aversion are part of the business world, MR is no exception.

We see three different values necessary for future prosperity; they will change the way we operate, the desired skill sets, and how agencies and clients work together.

Agencies, conditioned to compete for everything, will instead collaborate both to win clients’ business and then to service it.

We see idleness as the blind adoption of ‘the method we used last time’...... or ‘quick and dirty’ research used to justify a decision already made. This will be replaced by agility – smart thinking and technology combining with ‘fast and focused’ research to provide competitive edge.
Benefitting from collaboration and agility involves risk-taking – clients and agencies will be in new territory and so be more open not only to sharing but also to experimenting with new, untried methods often covering emerging areas of consumer behaviour. The payoff is potentially bigger gains from deeper insights and understanding.

In determining the desired skill sets we first consider the client imperatives then match the skills to fulfilling the demands of those imperatives.

When it comes down to it, the two main reasons to undertake research are for

- Enhancement and
- Innovation

Amongst the many skills sets available, these four stand out

1. Integration
2. Agility
3. Understanding new brand relationships in a digital world and,
4. Staying true to the fundamentals

Enhancement is improving the existing brand portfolio by launching extensions, adjusting price, increasing performance –actions to keep the brand competitive by avoiding commoditisation.

It is time-sensitive and demands ‘good’ information speedily delivered. This has driven much of the innovation in mobile and online along with the emphasis on ‘fit for purpose’
research. But you cannot determine if something is fit for purpose unless you have a strong understanding of the fundamentals.

Enhancement demands ‘agile’ skills. Agile research is not just about technology where costs and time are saved then decision making is based on the most recent state of the ‘market’.

Agile research is about being flexible in design and not necessarily following standard methodologies to address common questions. It’s the agility of thinking and framing the issues that generates the potential for a new insight or perspective.

Innovation is a multifaceted challenge, continuously undertaken in a complex and fast moving environment. Recently, in ESOMAR’s Research World, the industry as a whole was criticised for not meeting the demands of innovation. MR was not exploiting new thinking and technology to generate innovative ideas. It was only using innovation for operational efficiency.

The adoption of new and innovative ideas is frequently a daunting task for any researcher, research team, and even research organisation. But by collaborating across the research spectrum, the integration and synthesis of disparate data sources, for example, becomes less of a challenge and more attractive.

So collaboration is a new soft skill but for agencies and for clients. Buyers need to re-engineer their research agency relationships by engendering cooperation where rival agencies can work together without compromising competitive advantages.

Furthermore, if clients demand agile research they need to embrace the increased risk inherent in innovative applications of research methods. Those clients will be rewarded with
the best and brightest vying for their business – the top researchers always push to work with the most interesting clients!

David McCallum, Gordon & McCallum

Elements of this blog first appeared in “Partnership, Marriage, Hook-up, or One Night Stand? – Client & Agency Relationships in the Digital Age” by Tomoko Nishi & David McCallum at ESOMAR APAC, Tokyo, May 2016
August 25, 2016

It’s easy to ask someone a question, and to report the response.

It’s harder to ask the right question, receive the response, and interpret that response for its meaning. The responsibility of a qualitative researcher is to look beyond what someone is saying, and extract the true meaning; the real deal.

When working with attitudes and behaviours that challenge social expectations, getting to the truth can be a minefield. Unmasking the papier-mâché of bias and unravelling the complex webs of justification require a researcher to be delicate, yet unafraid to gently confront.

I’m going to discuss only two of the many behavioural and attitudinal conundrums a social researcher faces daily.

When we think about our own behaviour, a lot of what we say and do is driven by social pressures – some we are conscious of, while others are engrained in the collective conscience and begin shaping our behaviour from tiny human stage. This is social desirability bias – the tendency to act and respond in a way that we believe will be looked upon favourably by others. It presents in many forms across a wide range of theories and paradigms (Azjen’s ‘subjective norm’, Kahneman’s ‘System 2’, and even cameos in social identity and obedience theories – e.g. Tajfel, Zimbardo and Milgram, to name a few). It even underpins today’s vernacular – “I should…”, “I shouldn’t…”. This superficial veil has a lot to answer for, and social researchers must be particularly mindful of SDB’s traps when working with a myriad of topics sensitive to this bias – from addiction, mental health, and prejudice, to physical appearance, income, and charitable behaviours.
If that’s not complex enough... another paradigm commonly observed in social research is Festinger’s **cognitive dissonance** (a personal favourite of mine). A complex paradigm, but here’s a 30 second version:

It’s common to hold two or more contradictory or inconsistent beliefs, values, needs, behaviours, etc.

This causes psychological discomfort.

For instance, for simplicity’s sake, picture a health-conscious person who eats quinoa and kale, and washes it down with a bottle or two of (biodynamic) wine every night.

*What does this person do to reconcile their internal inconsistency?*

Cue “band-aid” solution. A band-aid sits over the top and justifies the inconsistency; ergo “Wine helps me unwind and relax, which is most important to me”.

The band-aid could be an ineffective plastic one that slides off or rips, causing the person stress, which might motivate them to change one belief or another, or find another way to rationalise, in order to regain comfort.

Or the band aid might be a strong fabric one; a fool-proof justification, allowing someone to forge forward, bluffing themselves with imagined internal consistency.

This is just a tiny slice of what a social researcher is faced with – disentangling the elements of a response, a behaviour, an interaction (or hundreds) that are driven by bias and underpinned by justification, and peeling back the band-aid to gently expose the raw and sometimes unpleasant truth.

*Marianne Campbell, Mint Research*
THE BUSINESS ELEMENTS
Behind the business: Like father, like son

October 4, 2016

In the first of a short series of blogs entitled ‘Behind the Business’ Paul describes what it is like to work in a family business alongside ‘the boss’ Kim.

Kim (left) and Paul together early in Paul’s career.

Wow! This year marks my 10th anniversary of working in Market Research, most of which I’ve spent working in the industry alongside my dad. This got me thinking, I wonder how many others work in a business with their family and how do they find it. So I thought I’d put my skills as a researcher to good use and try to find out.

After consulting with one of my most useful research partners, Mr Google, I came across the 2014 Family Business survey conducted by PWC which states in a short video:

“In Australia, there are 340,000 families who own and run a business.”


The report is littered with useful statistics about the family businesses in Australia (and globally) and provides some interesting case studies about such businesses. But it did not answer one of the most common questions I get asked from colleagues which is “what is it like to work with your dad?” This is quite often followed by a statement like “I could never work with my dad.”
Usually my response is we have a similar temperament so it works well for us. But there is much more to this work dynamic than aligning personalities so I thought I'd provide some insight (as a researcher should).

At the outset, I viewed it as a Master and Apprentice relationship where I was the apprentice and Dad was the Master. This is when I began calling him 'the boss'.

I learnt the ropes as he taught me important skills about managing market research projects and running a business. However, it was not without its hiccups along the way with some tension and frustration felt at times (usually by the apprentice). But each of us were open to listening and always respected each other's viewpoints and as I gradually gained confidence and realised that I played an important role in the success of the business (and was not just an employee within it) our relationship evolved into a partnership. Now it's rare for us to have disagreements, if there is a difference in opinion it usually is resolved through a healthy debate which enhances our work.

Even though the evolution of our relationship has gradually shifted, I still call him 'the boss'.

Paul Di Marzio, Di Marzio Research
I did it myself

August 15, 2016

Knowledge should be gained, experiences should be given, but true growth requires self-efficacy. Self-efficacy is one’s belief in one’s ability to succeed in a task or a situation. If you don’t believe you can do it, it has a huge impact on your behaviour. It is slightly different from self-esteem (which I will talk about in my next blog!).

In psychotherapy, one of my markers of a good intervention was that my client attributed their success to themselves, as opposed to me. If they attributed their gains to me, the therapist, I knew something had gone wrong. Not in a catastrophic way of course, progress is progress and who knows what would happen next to keep this progress going. But, it did signal to me that an extra step might be needed in the intervention. In an ideal world, the client would leave the therapy thinking that they had done it all themselves saying, “thank you for sticking with me while I figured it all out” or slightly harder for my ego to handle but maybe even better, “looking back I just needed to do x, y and z, I didn’t really need your help”.

Fast-forward 10 years of working in the leadership space, and whether I am working with individuals or teams/groups, I still keep an eye out for the individuals’ self-efficacy. I am amazed at how often people have gained knowledge, have been given experiences, but their self-efficacy lags behind. When this happens there is a common pattern that I’m sure you will recognise.

With low self-efficacy, people don’t believe they can complete goals, tasks or challenges. People who are caught in this place will withdraw from taking on tasks, find it very hard to take on new responsibilities or work successfully in a changed environment. With the current norm of disruption looking to stay with us for a while, this can cause real issues. For people with low self-efficacy there will be a reliance on being told what to do, or doing things in the way they have always done them. They stay safe within their ‘known’, scared to fail in the ‘unknown’, doing the same thing that got them this far, even if it is irrelevant now. They become rigid, the opposite of innovative. For their colleagues it can be frustrating
or can lead to a culture of people doing the minimum required rather than striving for growth.

People sometimes arrive in our workplaces with low self-efficacy. Other times, unfortunately low self-efficacy can be encouraged by a culture at work. If we want people to grow, we must ensure self-efficacy is fostered. Our work cultures need to be promoting self-efficacy and I see so many examples of wonderful managers, teams and organisational cultures who embrace this either explicitly or implicitly.

Here are a few tips if you want to develop self-efficacy for your colleagues:

1. Let's start off with the one everyone is talking about at the moment, enabling and embracing failure. This is essential for innovation and growth.

2. Check there is task clarity. Making sure everyone knows the rules in the game is key to success. Break down the goals into smaller checkable steps so again you build on clarity of expectations.

3. Ensure there are suitable guided experiences with a role model and mentor. Role modelling is essential to learning. This person might need more support from a mentor than you think or you are able to give. If it can’t be you, find someone who it can be.

4. Work on your honest feedback conversations, learn to get comfortable with giving the truth. False praise is not the answer. Hiding the learnings in amongst praise, is not the answer. The answer is truth. Keep empathic to the person but keep dispassionate about the task, keep solution focused.

5. Give positive feedback to the individual about process, as opposed to outcome.

6. Work on purpose, values and meaning with the individual to increase their motivation.

7. Look for self-efficacy when recruiting.

8. Challenge cultures or practices that undermine people’s self-efficacy.

Knowledge should be gained, experiences should be given, but true growth requires self-efficacy.

Are you focused on fostering your own self-efficacy and that of your colleagues?

Dr Amy Silver, Brave New Thought.
Behind the Business: Homework

August 4, 2016 Career in Research 7

Homework. It’s generally a term people associate with school but in my case, it has carried over into my working life. In fact, I’ve spent quite a lot of my career based at a home based office (6 years). Funnily enough, it’s the study at my parents’ house (which was converted into an office) and is the same space I did most of my homework in high school.

The same can’t be said for ‘the boss’ Kim who spent over 30 years battling traffic into a city office which was the catalyst for setting up a home office. It was one of the best decisions he ever made and I’ve been lucky to go along for the ride.

Interestingly, more and more people appear to be spending time working at home. A 2013 ACMA (Australian Communications and Media Authority) report revealed that 4.6 million Australians did at least some work at home each week.

It’s a working arrangement which is accepted by many employers who are open to a flexible working environment. It is also more feasible now due to digital technology but I feel as though my situation is somewhat unique. I haven’t come across anyone who has spent a significant proportion of their career working from a home based office in a family business. This is something I get asked about quite a bit so here is my perspective on it…

Flexibility is an obvious advantage and probably the most appealing aspect of working from home although sometimes it’s easy to become complacent and enjoy this benefit a bit too much. This can be detrimental for myself and the business so it’s imperative to ‘get out and about’ regularly. With today’s technology, it’s easy to remain in the cocoon of our office and still feel as though we are ‘connected’ to the world but in my opinion, face to face interaction is essential for learning. Whether it be meeting clients (current and potential) to
learn more about their business or just a catch-up with colleagues who work in the industry, I find this stimulating and energising which enhances my work.

So I enjoy working from a home based office and it definitely has its advantages but I've learnt if you don’t balance it with social interaction you become stale which isn’t ideal for your education (kind of like doing too much homework).

Paul Di Marzio, Di Marzio Research
What the IRG – the Independent Researchers’ Group is.

The IRG (Independent Researchers Group) represents independent market researchers who are working as consultants or freelancers.

The Group provides:

- A forum for networking among independent researchers so they can share ideas, experiences and problems specific to them, and address issues specific to them, and represent the special needs of independent researchers to the AMSRS and other relevant places.
- Opportunities for collaboration and shared workload when required.
- Professional development facilitation through information exchange, discussion and education about market and social research issues, latest techniques and skills.
- An opportunity to keep members abreast of business issues affecting the industry and of evolving industry guidelines.
- A promotional venue to showcase the value of independent researchers to research buyers.
- A resource for larger research agencies needing freelance help.

Membership is open to all AMSRS members who are research consultants operating independently, freelance or in small alliances to service clients. IRG members are either sole traders or work in a group of no more than 3 consultants, under the definition of a micro business (1-5 EFT employees) where the balance of staff may include support staff, full, part-time or casual.

Membership of the IRG is not open to research buyers or suppliers of research support services as their needs are met by membership of other sub-groups of the AMSRS.

If you are eligible and interested in joining the Independent Researchers Group, please click here for an application form.
IRG GRAPEVINE

The IRG has an online forum, known as the Grapevine, where dissemination of information and discussion amongst members can operate on an on-going basis. Subscription to the Grapevine is free, and the AMSRS automatically subscribes new IRG members, unless they specifically ask not to.

The IRG has regular meetings in Sydney and Melbourne. These meetings involve sharing or presenting information and add a social element to the group. These events are advertised by the AMSRS throughout the year.

For general enquiries and Grapevine help:
Stuart Vawser, email irginfo@vawserandassociates.com.au or phone (03) 9733 0996.

For membership enquiries:
Irene Swil, email irene.swil@bigpond.com or phone (02) 9880 7957.

LinkedIn:
The AMSRS also has a LinkedIn subgroup: the AMSRS Independent Researchers Group (IRG), which is open only to current members of the IRG. Applications for membership of that can be reached here: https://www.linkedin.com/groups/3903561

DIRECTORY OF INDEPENDENT RESEARCH CONSULTANTS

Some IRG members are listed in the AMSRS Directory of Independent Research Consultants, outlining their services and relevant contact information.

The online Directory of Independent Research Consultants can be viewed here.