Russell RESEARCH

10 TIPS TO IMPROVE B2B RESEARCH

Business to Business (B2B) research is shrouded in mystery and folklore for many.

B2B projects can seem too complex and expensive to undertake – enough to make otherwise rational researchers try to avoid it altogether.

It doesn't have to be that way. Through experience, you learn how quantitative B2B Research is subtly different from consumer research – and what nuanced approaches work better.

Based on thousands of B2B quantitative market research projects, here are10 tips to make your next B2B project more manageable and efficient.

1. Move mountains with a compelling "elevator pitch" when recruiting respondents.

- Business decision-makers value productivity and take steps to make each minute of their day count.
- Develop a sales pitch similar to how you would for your business – tell them how they would benefit from participating. This includes personal incentives and how the information will ultimately be used to help them professionally.
- Be able to succinctly communicate this pitch in emails and initial conversations with potential respondents

2. Motivate and incent with information.

- Professionals are often interested in the opinion of their peers on hot industry topics; however, the information isn't always easy to come by.
- Develop a few questions which are more interesting to them rather than your organization. And when drawing respondents from a client-provided database, share these findings to increase participation rates. It's often the nudge which secures participation (in addition to more traditional incentives such as cash, donations, or other gifts).

3. Be strategic with limited B2B audiences.

- B2B audiences are much smaller than general consumer populations, but online can still be a viable methodology. However, depending on the total number of potential respondents you have, you might need to consider alternative methodologies.
- A telephone survey methodology is often more effective for targeted B2B audiences, whether limited by title, vertical, responsibility, behavior, or geography.

4. Use qualitative to better understand the nuances of B2B decision-making processes.

- With the rapid adoption of video communications, senior B2B decision-makers are more comfortable with and open to participating in one-on-one interviews.
- In-depth discussions among senior and mid-level professionals can help you understand purchase journeys, business decisions, and other issues which are often complex and include several stakeholders.
- Qualitative research also affords access to audiences which are typically unattainable or cost-prohibitive in quantitative sample sizes.

5. Business decision-makers have both human and digital gatekeepers.

- Unlike consumers, most B2B audiences have formal gatekeepers.
- Companies want to protect intellectual property and employee time.
- It is still possible to convince the right people to participate in a mutually beneficial research project if you arm yourself with transparency (see Tip 1 above), experience, professionalism, and a killer elevator pitch.

6. Respect their time.

- While you can regularly have consumers reply to 20-minute surveys and 2-hour focus groups, make 10-15 minutes (max!) your goal for quantitative B2B research and 45 minutes for qualitative.
- Unlike consumer interviews, where the time can often be stretched beyond the communicated length at the outset, B2B participants will often conclude the interview exactly at the stated endpoint, so get to the end of your survey before they get to the end of their time.

7. Don't ask what you already know.

- If you are working with customers, append data from customer profiles to enrich the primary data set.
- For qualitative or in-person research, this educates the interviewer with individual respondent context.
- Combining reported data with behavioral data can unlock powerful insights and can allow you to expand the learnings across larger data sets.

8. B2B decision-makers are humans.

- Far from the rational, process-bound paper shufflers, B2B audiences spend most of their lives as consumers.
- All of the elements that make consumer markets complex (emotions, peer influence, System 1 processing, repetitive habits, etc.) are also at play in B2B buying decisions and behavior.

9. Don't get hung-up on titles.

- Titles are not consistent across all organizations – screen for function/role/responsibility to find the "right" B2B respondents.

10. Ensure your sample is representative of the real-world marketplace.

- Similar to consumer research, you want to make sure you have an accurate cross-section of your target audience. Take into account factors such as company size, revenue, vertical, geography, and brand market share to achieve a sample which is reflective of reality.
- Consider weighting your data set if complete representation cannot be achieved.

B2B Research can be intimidating and challenging, but these tips should help you successfully complete your project and acquire the game-changing insights that you need.

Call us to discuss your B2B research needs!

Russell Research can improve your B2B research. Contact us to talk about how to make your next B2B project more manageable and efficient

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