Why VeraQuest

VeraQuest occupies the "white space" between omnibus research and custom research. That means we're able to exploit the cost, timing and sample advantages of omnibus research and maintain the creativity, flexibility and strategic orientation of custom research.

Our Business

VeraQuest furnishes responses from 1,500 completed interviews in approximately three business days. Drawn from a representative sample of online respondents, our proprietary weighting system allows us to project to the total U.S. population. We are committed to making every client experience easy and enjoyable by providing consultative support from the beginning of the survey process to the end. Our keen understanding of how to leverage an omnibus survey enables our clients to maximize their research investment.

Our goal is to make our clients look smart. We do that by staying engaged with our clients every step of the way. As one would expect from a more traditional custom survey company, we start with our clients' objectives and work from there. We help our clients determine which questions can best accomplish their goals. Our broad understanding of client issues, coupled with years of survey-writing experience helps us to frame our clients' issues into the questions which will give them the best information quickly, accurately and at the lowest possible cost. Understanding our clients' issues helps us make sure we're thinking about their business the right way.

We also work with our clients to produce data tables and reports that are easy to read and simple to understand. In situations when data is for public release, we review the release to ensure that it accurately reflects what the data say and that it's free from any ambiguity that might confuse or mislead the reader.

We emphasize three broad areas: data accuracy, product flexibility and client service.

Data Accuracy

Sample Source

We use uSamp as our primary sample provider. We occasionally use other providers, but only when there is a need for a large number of narrowly defined targeted respondents that uSamp is unable to identify (i.e., commuters in the northeast corridor). We believe it's preferable to use a single sample provider when feasible given the need for consistency field-to-field.

We use "double" opt-in sample only. In other words, our respondents can't end up in our surveys accidentally. Moreover, we don't use "river" sample. River sample consists of respondents who are picked up on the fly from websites. Since some clients depend upon our service for tracking purposes, it's critical that we target our sample in a consistent, structured manner. That consistency requires that we target respondents with known characteristics.

Balancing and Weighting

Virtually all marketing research companies that survey the general population weight their data in some capacity. Weighting allows respondents who are under- or over-represented in the sample to take on the correct level of importance so that the data are accurately projected to the universe. However, the more out of balance the sample is on the front-end, the greater weights need to be on the back-end to bring them into alignment.

At some point, the act of weighting actually diminishes rather than enhances data accuracy. To minimize weighting effects, we worked with one of the foremost experts in the world to develop a rigorous sampling plan that increases weighting efficiency. uSamp was the first company to agree to our unusually stringent six-dimension quota sampling requirement: age, region, gender, income, education and ethnicity. Some companies are very lax when it comes to quota sampling, including just age, gender and region, while others add income to the mix. Our six-dimension criteria enables us to create a sampling system that requires a minimum level of weighting, while still ensuring that the data are representative of the general population.

Data Checks/

Here are five words from IT that can make one cringe. "Theoretically everything should work fine". We all have had the experience of working with the phone company, the IT guy or our mechanic. The expert works on our phone, computer or car, but forgets (or more likely) doesn't have the time for a test drive. We then get something back that doesn't work properly.

Market research is no different. Many suppliers simply don't have the time or the inclination to check their work. It doesn't matter if the first 99% of a project goes off without a hitch. If the final deliverable is not right, it's as if the whole project is not right. We at VeraQuest take this aspect of the job very seriously. Not only do we double and triple check the survey after its been programmed to make sure that every question and every response works the way it is designed to, but we scrutinize the data tables and check and recheck every report until we're certain it's 100% accurate.

Flexibility

Most companies that provide omnibus services are not flexible. Move outside of their normal processes and it's as if they're being asked to solve world hunger. Their systems have evolved as a function of the internal metrics that reward profitability. Moreover, if someone dares to step "outside the box" there's always someone there with another agenda protecting their "turf" ready to push back.

We understand the impact rigid policies have on clients. In fact, it was our thorough knowledge of these flawed policies that enabled us to exploit the white space that exists in the market. Our flexible approach to omnibus research didn't evolve over time; it represents the premise on which our company was founded.

Sample

Most omnibus services are inflexible when it comes to augmenting sample. Although we'd probably love it if our regular weekly sample of 1,500 respondents covered the needs of our clients all the time, the truth is it doesn't. Whether we're doubling the sample because the number of denture adhesive users is too small for a meaningful analysis or adding unacculturated Hispanics because one of our quick-serve restaurant clients is focused on understanding the Hispanic market, we're continually adding something to the mix. Yet, we never lose sight of how important consistency is to our standard weekly field.

Number of Questions

We prefer to keep most surveys to 20 minutes or less because of the sudden increase in the number of suspends that occurs around the 20-minute mark. Other than that, we have no other real limitations. Many companies will place a limit of around ten questions for any given client on any given topic. The primary reason for the limitation traces back to those individuals that manage the custom end of the business who believe that after ten questions, the survey is "worth something" and therefore belongs to them. The truth is that the same survey done in a custom group may cost the client five times as much as had they fielded it through their omnibus service. It's painfully obvious that the limitations often imposed on omnibus services exist to benefit the supplier not the client.

Types of Questions

VeraQuest uses the same software as custom research companies; therefore, our survey construction capabilities are the same. We can program grids, semantic differential questions, looping questions, open-ended questions, card sorts etc.

Image Visualization

The Internet is a wonderfully visual medium. Digital design is easy and much less expensive than making physical mock-ups. For whatever reason, most marketing research companies rely solely on their clients for survey-ready graphics. This often leads to an unnecessary burden on clients to get images into perfect shape before proceeding to field. Moreover, most clients may not understand what's actually required to get images into shape for a good survey presentation. We believe that by employing in-house graphics experts, we streamline the research process by taking existing images and cropping, cleaning or manipulating them to maximize their full online impact. Graphical expertise is simply one more tool VeraQuest has established to help make the survey process go smoothly.

Client Service

If flexibility is the hallmark of our business, then client-service is our passion. We believe that client-service is a value no longer embraced by many companies, market research and non-market research alike. Much of the decline in client service is due to the evolution of self-professed "technology" and DIY start-ups. The more that companies position their services as "self-service", the more they can remove humans from the equation. In other words, the fewer bodies needed, the greater the profit.

At VeraQuest, we have moved in the opposite direction. We think the human element is important. Most of our clients want to be able to pick up a phone and say "Hey, I need this" or "Can you do that?" We believe that smart, experienced human beings are what make marketing research easy, not DIY systems that place the burden on already overloaded clients.

Survey and Questionnaire Design

Some, even most omnibus companies require that the client write the questions themselves. While we're happy to take questions written by our clients; we always add our comments and suggestions. We believe our marketing research experience (average of 20 years per person) should count for something and that clients should benefit from that experience. In those cases where our clients prefer that we formulate the questions from scratch, all we ask for is a detailed understanding of their objectives.

Reporting and Analysis

When we started VeraQuest we found that the term omnibus had somewhat of a negative connotation. We surmised that much of that association stemmed from the "field and tab" approach used by virtually all omnibus services. We also found that by including a PowerPoint report complete with summary findings and conclusions/implications, the value clients derived from the engagement increased dramatically. Whether it is having data put into charts or the thought process that goes into writing the analysis, our

experience is that the value we impart by providing charts and analyses makes an enormous difference in the satisfaction of our clients.

Advanced Analytics

By making the omnibus platform the center of our business model, we realized that there is virtually nothing that can be done in a custom survey that we can't also do in an omnibus survey. To us, omnibus is simply a data collection technique and how we leverage the data is not limited by the technique we use to collect it.

At VeraQuest we have analytic experts who design studies and analyze results using a variety of analytical tools such as TURF, van Westendorp or Max-Diff, to name a few. There is no reason these tools should exist solely in the domain of large marketing research firms where highly paid executives and complex organizational structures drive up the cost of doing advanced analytics to the point where it becomes prohibitively expensive.

Summary

We operate in a world that places an increasing value on technology. When technology enables consumers, it can make our lives better and more productive. However, when technology is used as a surrogate for human interaction (think automated phone instructions), if often ends up benefitting just the provider. At VeraQuest, we believe that technology is a good thing, but only when delivered in a way that makes people's lives better and that data quality, flexibility, and customer service should be the cornerstones of our business.