

The Market Research Process

When conducting a research study, the process includes a progression of related steps leading to the final results. While not always linear, the process includes the following steps in this general order. The questions listed below need to be considered when initiating the research process.

1. Identifying the Need/Problem

Identifying the need or essentially the reason for conducting research is the key driver for the rest of the process. The reason or problem initially identified for the research may end up to be different once this question is reviewed and discussed.

- What do you want to know?
- What problem will the research address, or what need is to be satisfied?
- How will the research relate to or support specific organizational, operational or marketing goals?

2. Selecting a Research Professional

Once it is decided to proceed with a research project, who will do it is the next question.

- Who will conduct the research?
- Is the selection process sole source or competitive?
- Do you need to develop and distribute a Request for Proposal (RFP)?
- Do you want a proposal for a specific research project or rather only gather qualifications from a number of suppliers (for future reference or RFP)?

3. Choosing the Appropriate Methodology

This is typically determined by the research professional after discussions to identify the specific needs the research is to address. It may entail one or a combination of approaches

- e-mail/Internet survey
- telephone
- on-site intercept
- one-on-one in-depth interviews
- focus groups
- secondary research (from existing resources)

4. Developing the survey instrument

- What and how many questions are to be asked?
- Who is to be asked?
- Survey format; e.g. paper and pencil, hand-held computer, etc.

5. Conducting the research

This is the research professional's responsibility. An understanding of the interviewing process and timing should be clearly delineated within the Proposal.

6. Tabulating and analyzing the results

After the survey response data are collected they are input into a computer and tabulated into an organized detailed table format. The research professional should discuss various ways to segment, i.e., "cross-tabulate" the data tables. The written analysis, performed by the research professional, should be rather detailed and address the initial purpose and goals for the research study. The format should be specified in the project Proposal.

- Summary of key findings
- recap of the methodology
- detailed narrative and tabular analysis
- conclusions and (optional) observations

7. Presenting the results...the facts (and a few other points)

An in-person presentation may be part of the project proposal. The client and researcher should work together to determine the content, format, timing etc.

8. Implementation

- how can the findings and results be applied to help meet your goals?