

LETTERS



Market Research

Recognizing the many challenges pharmaceutical marketing professionals face, I read with interest and appreciated the insights offered by the experts consulted for “Behind the Mirror: The Science and Art of Market Research” in the March 2003 issue. Toward its closing, the article touched on some of the benefits of conducting market research via the Internet.

Given the capabilities and efficiency enabled by this technology, *PharmaVOICE* readers may appreciate further coverage on the topic.

In general, online surveys and asynchronous — not real time — threaded discussions address a number of issues raised in the article, including:

- How to gather both quantitative and qual-

Asynchronous Discussions

Online asynchronous discussions provide savings on travel, and very importantly, they make it possible to get input and disseminate information globally in a way not previously available.

— Diane Hayes, Ph.D.
MEDPANEL INC.

itative information in a timely and cost-effective way;

- How to maximize the quality and amount of physician input that is elicited;
- How an individual or multiple clients within an organization can share control and shape the direction of a study once it is under way.

While online communications will never fully replace live meetings, the following benefits of Internet studies make possible significant advances in the pharmaceutical industry.

Physician Interaction

Masked online studies create a best-of-both worlds environment, providing physicians with the opportunity to openly discuss, question, and disagree with each other, without the pressure that face-to-face conversations can impose. The anonymity enables all members to participate freely in the dialogue thereby increasing both the breadth and depth of panelist involvement.

Research Methodology

Because online surveys and threaded discussions require little lead time and are cost-effective, clients can more easily optimize their use of methodologies. As a result of the cost savings in conducting studies online, it is less tempting to

forego quantitative research and rely strictly on qualitative information.

Their flexibility allows real-time adjustment to the course of a study, including interspersing quantitative surveys while online asynchronous discussions are under way. For example, community physicians can be consulted via online surveys while key opinion leaders (KOL) take part in an online discussion. Should the community physician’s perspective differ from the KOLs, it can then be addressed head-on in the online discussion. Not only can research easily follow a traditional sequence of qualitative studies preceding quantitative, but quantitative surveys now also can be used for both pre- and post-qualitative studies.

The lack of pressure to react immediately enhances the quality of participant responses as they have time to consider their answers, ensuring further accuracy and reliability. Physicians providing input from their offices will have access to their own research and reference materials while they are reflecting on their responses.

Client Involvement

Asynchronous online threaded discussions make it possible for multiple players who are either in the same department or work cross-functionally within a company to observe, react, and respond in a nonintrusive way. They have the ability to influence the direction a discussion is taking, confer with each other offline, and, like the panelists, have no pressure to respond or ask follow-up questions on the spot.

Global Business Needs

Online asynchronous discussions provide savings on travel, and, very importantly, they make it possible to get input and disseminate information globally in a way not previously possible. Clients and medical experts can participate anywhere that they have access to the Internet, at any time of day or day of the week, with no consideration to scheduling or time zones.

Diane Hayes, Ph.D.
SVP OF CONTENT AND EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
MEDPANEL INC.

What’s Your Opinion?

INDUSTRY ORGANIZATIONS

There are hundreds of life-science industry associations and thousands if the definition is extrapolated to include patient organizations, advocacy groups, regional concerns, etc. The challenge is not in finding an industry association that relates to your specialty, but finding a group that fulfills your needs.

PharmaVOICE wants to know: do industry associations do a good job of meeting your criteria for professional growth, education, and networking? If not, how can these organizations better fulfill their mission?

WHAT’S YOUR OPINION?

Please e-mail your comments to
feedback@pharmavoiced.com.

