

Connecting with Professional and Patient Targets:

GOING BACK TO THE FUTURE WITH LIVE TELEPHONE INTERVIEWING

Contributed by

More than a decade ago, the Internet took the market research world by storm. Online studies offer a fast, simple, cost-effective way to reach target audiences. A wide range of factors, however, often makes healthcare projects difficult to complete using online alone:

- » Gatekeepers — such as office managers — filter out surveys before physicians see them or complete questionnaires themselves to claim the reward.
- » Many physicians and other health professionals are unlikely to join online panels. If they do, they may rush through surveys without providing the in-depth responses researchers want.
- » Busy schedules hamper response. Online doesn't offer tools — such as scheduling specific interview times or calling back respondents — to help fit into hectic days.
- » Target groups may not be Internet savvy. Some patient populations — such as older or poorer demographics — may not have easy access to the Internet or may not be comfortable on the Web. In addition, some emerging countries, which represent high potential, still have low Internet penetration.

To overcome these challenges, healthcare researchers should consider “going back to the future” with Live Telephone Interviewing, or CATI. With online's popularity as a survey tool, CATI sometimes gets pushed to the bottom of the research toolbox. But, whether used alone or with online, it continues to be a powerful technique for delivering insights, even from hard-to-reach audiences.

The CATI Advantage

Researchers can use CATI in conjunction with online to validate respondents, broaden access, direct targets to Web studies, and reach audiences or geographies with low Internet penetration. It also is a powerful tool on its own, delivering critical advantages for the same CPI as online:

- » Every respondent is fully screened and qualified. CATI verifies every respondent. Researchers can be certain all physician and allied health participants are whom they claim to be and every patient is a sufferer of the target condition.

- » Verbatims are more meaningful and extensive than online. Professional interviewers listen, probe, and engage respondents to clarify key points and uncover added insights.
- » Speeding, satisficing, and other quality concerns are eliminated. Because experienced interviewers know how to keep respondents interested and engaged, they prevent fatigue-driven behaviors, such as rushing through answers, that compromise data quality.

Although CATI projects have longer fielding times, when researchers consider how often they need to re-field online surveys or spend extra days and weeks trying to fill studies with hard-to-reach targets, they may find it is quicker to choose CATI. Plus, CATI reduces non-response bias. Longer fielding times allow for multiple callback attempts, including scheduling specific appointments, to optimize participation.

Key Questions to Ask CATI Providers

The success of any CATI project depends on the quality of the provider. Researchers should ask the following question before choosing a CATI partner:

- » What are the sample sources? Physician samples should be drawn from the AMA or equivalent registries in other countries. Allied health professionals, such as nurses, pharmacists, or dentists, should come from accrediting agencies that confirm memberships and issue board certifications or licenses.
- » What other modes are offered? The right partner should offer a variety of modes, including CATI, online, and mixed access. Providing multiple modes ensures researchers always get the best solution for every project.
- » How are interviewers trained? Interviewers should be fully educated in all telephone interviewing techniques before being assigned to projects. In addition, they should be actively monitored and coached to ensure quality results.
- » How are interviewers matched to projects? Make sure only experienced healthcare specialists are assigned to interview physicians



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and other healthcare professionals, ensuring they use medical terminology accurately, pronounce brand names correctly, and can understand even technical topics.

- » What languages can interviewers speak? Check that CATI vendors can support multi-country projects with accent-neutral interviewers fluent in the local languages of target countries.

Conclusions

With so many healthcare audiences hard to reach and harder to engage, adding CATI to the research mix can be the solution to capturing target respondents without increasing costs. With the right partner, CATI can be an effective way to access even hard-to-reach patients and professionals. **PV**

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