

10 Secrets to Stretch Your Research Dollar

By [Jim Nelems](#)

President/CEO

Consumers and businesses are cutting what they feel is unnecessary spending. Consumers are traveling less, going out to eat less, and making other changes in long-standing behavior. Businesses are not immune to this either, and many times cut, or consider cutting, marketing expenses including advertising, public relations, and marketing research.



What are some ways the savvy client can spend marketing research dollars more efficiently and not be left out, or fall behind, in new product development, effective advertising, and gauging customer satisfaction? Here are some thoughts on the topic.

- 1. First, realize the importance of good research.** Businesses should recognize the importance of a well-crafted research program to, among other objectives, measure success in the marketplace, monitor customer satisfaction, determine interest in new products, and assess product performance. These research needs don't go away just because revenue may be down temporarily.
- 2. Consider more economical methodologies.** Consider the Internet over phone or mail intercept research, using social networks for surveys, or even using internal employee surveys as pilot tests for new products, etc.
- 3. Ask for free research.** Say that, as a client, you have a new formulation for a food product. Before committing to a large scale taste test, ask your ad agency or your research vendor to do a small pilot test with their employees (for free). Of course, we know that employees may not always parallel real world, but if you find, for example, that a new product loses 80% - 20% to a competitor, maybe the product needs more development work before testing among 300 consumers.
- 4. Be realistic about survey specs.** Sometimes without knowing it, tight specs can reduce the incidence and run up more screening costs. Maybe you don't need to screen for category users within the last month. Maybe last 3 months is just as good. Maybe you can screen on 'use regularly' instead of 'usual brand.'
- 5. Consider shorter questionnaires.** Do you really need a 20-minute questionnaire, which will double the mid-term rate and increase costs? Do you really need full demographics? How often will you look at data by married versus not married; high education versus low education? You don't always need all these standard demographics.
- 6. Consider research firms that do analytical functions in-house.** (coding, tabulation, multivariate analysis, and report writing, for example) as opposed to outsourcing. If the research firm outsources these functions they have to pay out of pocket, as opposed to using their own staff time, so they may limit services to you. For example, a tab house that is asked to run four cross-tab banners is going to charge the research firm more than if they run two banners. On the other hand, if the research firm does tabulation in-house, they incur no more expense running four banners than if they ran two. They should offer you the benefit of these savings.
- 7. Consider smaller sample sizes.** Although the statistical error is smaller for larger samples, it may be that a sample of, say, 300 is 'just as good' as a sample of 400 and, of course, smaller sample sizes cost less.
- 8. Don't overdesign the RFP for the research firm.** After discussing the issues the research is to address, allow the research firm the flexibility to recommend alternative sample sizes, methodology, and questionnaire length.
- 9. Consider a shorter report, especially for focus groups, rather than a full report.** A topline report will cost less than a full report and the odds are you have already made the decision as to the next step anyway.
- 10. The best way to save money, all things considered, is to buy on value, not on price.** We all know that a low price does not necessarily mean a good value, nor a high price, high value. Don't buy research based on numbers, statistics, or price, but rather by the trust and confidence you have in the research provider, their strategic insight, and their creative ability to craft a research solution to the issue at hand.

Contact one of our senior consultants today to discuss how the art and science of research can take the guesswork out of your marketing.

[Jim Nelems](#), President/CEO

jnelems@mwshop.com

[Lorri Sidoti](#), Senior Vice President

lsidoti@mwshop.com

[Carolyn Garfein](#), Senior Vice President

cgarfein@mwshop.com

"Research Tips From The Marketing Workshop" is a monthly publication of The Marketing Workshop, Inc.

770-449-6767

3725 Da Vinci Court, Norcross, GA 30092

www.mwshop.com



The
Marketing
Workshop, Inc.
Marketing Intelligence Through Research