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Communications, Marketing and Social Research Consultants

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

The Important Role for Research-Based Consultation Recruitment Methods



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FIRST, A FEW QUESTIONS?

Several questions frequently asked about community consultation are as follows:

“Do your community consultations really give you the information you need – for example are you reaching the whole community, or are you only ‘rounding up the usual suspects’?”

“Are the community consultations run by your organisation as effective as they could be?”

“What are you doing to improve the ways you consult with the public and stakeholders – what other methods of consultation and recruitment of participants can more effectively reach your real target audiences?”

LIMITATIONS OF THE TRADITIONAL APPROACH:

Traditional consultation recruitment methods do not reflect the population at large:

The recruitment of people for most community consultation exercises has traditionally involved placing public notices or advertisements in newspapers announcing and briefly describing the nature of the topic or issue, and then inviting people to register to attend a meeting or series of meetings.

To complement this, stakeholders and members of the public who are known to have an interest in the subject are also invited.

The people who participate on this basis are certainly important target groups to reach and include, but by definition they are not representative of the population at large.

A BETTER APPROACH:

Research-based consultation recruitment methods overcome this challenge:

Effective community consultation involves engaging fully with the community by ensuring that the views of the whole population are represented and taken into account – that is, reaching out to include not only the views of those minorities who actively seek to have their voices heard, but also a good cross-section of the majority of the community who rarely if ever take part in traditional public consultation processes.

Often, this also involves defining those segments of the community who are least likely to attend and/or are most likely to be impacted by decisions made as a result of the consultations, and actively recruiting them.

The techniques for effectively including a good cross-section of the community are well-known and widely used by professional market and social researchers, but so far are significantly under-utilised, if used at all, in the field of community consultation.

Put simply, in complementing the traditional methods, these techniques involve:

- firstly dividing the population into a number of clear and distinct segments (eg, by age, gender, area; and also including any specific minorities of relevance to

the subject), each of which we want to make sure is included, and then, using as much rigour as possible, our professional recruiters seek out and recruit as representative a cross-section of each of these segments as possible;

- secondly, rather than informing participants about the specific topic they are coming to discuss (an approach which can put many people off unless they are already interested), we suggest that they are coming along to discuss 'current issues' or 'things in the news' about which the government (or specific organisation) is interested in hearing their views;
- thirdly, confidentiality is offered to these people, with their views being reported in aggregate, and their names not being made known at all (unless they request otherwise). Lack of confidentiality in public consultation processes is of considerable concern to many people in the community and a significant reason for their lack of involvement in the process, as they are concerned about intimidation and pressure from interest groups.

THE ARTCRAFT PRACTITIONERS:

Les Winton *BA DipEd, MA (MktgComs), FAICD, FAIM, FAMI (CPM), MAMSRS (QPMR)*

Les is Managing Director and owner of Artcraft Research, and has been a market researcher for 34 years. He holds a Bachelor of Arts degree in the Social Sciences, a Diploma of Education, and a Master of Arts in Marketing Communications.

After working in marketing positions with a Swedish steel company in Australia (1962-66), Les was called up for National Service, serving in Australia and South Vietnam (1966-68). He then completed his initial university studies (1969-73) and embarked upon a career in market research and marketing with ANOP (1971-83), before starting his own consultancy Artcraft Studios (Artcraft Research, Artcraft Marketing and Artcraft Training) in 1983.

Les is a Member of the Australian Market and Social Research Society (AMSRS), through which he has Qualified Practising Market Researcher status (QPMR), the Australasian Evaluation Society (AES) and the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2). He is also a Fellow of the Australian Institute of Company Directors (AICD), the Australian Institute of Management (AIM), and the Australian Marketing Institute (AMI) through which he has Certified Practising Marketer status (CPM).

Laurie West

Laurie is Operations Manager of Artcraft Research, and Manager of our Queensland Operations. He worked for thirteen years with the Australian Bureau of Statistics (1969-81), on a range of economical, social and population surveys. His principal interest and experience was in the Population Surveys area, ultimately managing the field operations of the NSW office.

Laurie set up his own consultancy in 1981, providing expertise in survey development, field services and field management expertise on a wide range of large surveys for government and industry. Over the years, Laurie has worked with Artcraft Research on many projects where his skills in project management, specialised field services, and attention to detail can be fully utilised.

Marie Pears

Marie is a Research Officer at Artcraft Research. Before joining Artcraft Research, Marie spent many years in the health and education sectors, and has developed

artcraft research – Communications, Marketing and Social Research, Community Consultation and Engagement, Program and Policy Evaluation, Social Marketing and Strategic Counsel for Governments and NGOs since 1981.

expertise in the sourcing and assembling of secondary data and the building and accessing of databases. Marie's role also includes analysis of qualitative data from focus group discussions, in-depth interviews and community consultations.

Robyn Kunko

Robyn works with Artcraft Research as our National Field Consultant Manager, and has 25 years of experience in market and social research. She assembled and manages an IQCA-accredited team of highly professional interviewers and recruitment personnel trained to her exacting standards, who have worked on many Artcraft Research assignments for more than two decades. Robyn is a member of the Australian Market and Social Research Society (AMRSRS, formerly the Market Research Society of Australia, MRSA) and is a past chairperson and treasurer of its Field Management Group in SA.