

Looking forward to warmer times in 2010

The start to the new decade was certainly eventful and I for one am glad that January is over and that the days are lengthening. A belated Happy New Year to everyone.

We have some delights in store in the coming months for B2B researchers. We are pleased to welcome two excellent keynote speakers to the BIG conference in May (see opposite).

Furthermore the conference fees are being held at 2008 prices and, compared with other conferences, this represents very good value for money since all meals and accommodation are included in the full delegate fee. The 'early bird' discount runs until 12th March 2010 and there is an additional discount for members of BIG if they have renewed their membership this year. So don't delay (re)join BIG today. Further details of the programme are on page 3.

This issue focuses on the rise of social media and applicability to B2B markets, and whether online focus groups could replace traditional face-to-face focus groups. Fascinating and provocative reading.

There is a new quiz on the back page and the chance to win a £30.00 gift card, courtesy of the sponsor *Strictly Financial*, specialists in financial services research.

Pene Healey, Editor

Keynote speakers at conference

Rohit Talwar will be opening the conference on Thursday 20th May with a keynote speech exploring future trends and the shape of work. He is the founder of Fast Future Research and is regarded by many as one of the top 10 global futurists.



Rohit Talwar

To close the conference on Friday Phyllis Macfarlane will be interviewing Fiona Wood, the director of research at the COI.

The session will focus on the agency world and research issues.



Fiona Wood

Research Awards 2009 - December

The annual market research awards heralded the run-up to Christmas and, after a tough year for the industry, it was encouraging (indeed even surprising) to see upwards of 50 tables in the enormous room at the Lancaster London Hotel. And I must say, with everyone making such an effort on the DJ & posh frock front, we all scrubbed up extremely well as an industry!

The drinks beforehand provided a good opportunity to catch up with some 'old' faces – such affairs always feel like a school reunion to me with more than a touch of an 'end of term' feeling! I don't suppose many will be sorry to see 2009 go and it was with a distinctly more optimistic mood for 2010 that we took our seats for dinner.

The members of the BIG Committee – myself, Trevor Wilkinson (our esteemed chair), Vikki James (BPRI) and Damon Thomas (Sue Hill Recruitment) – were joined by our BIG Award nominees for 2009 – Neil Swan (formerly of RS Consulting), Catherine Shovlin (Synthetron BV) and Nick Bassett (Vodafone), Matt Burn and Carrie Lawrence (ICM) with Pene Healey (BIG Conference Chair) making up our 10. Over dinner

the wine flowed and we all got to know each other a little better.

The awards were hosted again by Daisy McAndrew (ITV News Economics Editor) who ensured we got through the 25 or so awards on schedule and with good grace and humour. Old and new faces in the industry graced the platform with fellowships for our esteemed long-standing colleagues in the industry on one end of the 'experience' spectrum and the MRS Advanced Certificate in Market & Social Research Practice Award at the other.

Razor Research was named best new agency with Flamingo taking the coveted best agency award. Millward Brown was recognised for its 'exceptional willingness to share and publish knowledge which has set an example to the industry of the benefits of openness' and Hall & Partners won best agency to work for.

But to the award we were all waiting for – the MRS/BIG Business-to-Business Research Award for 2009. As Trevor made his way to the presentation table to hand out the award, Daisy announced that the winners were Nick, Carrie and Matt for their excellent paper – 'Small Business Lion's Lair: A collaborative and challenging way to drive business improvement and turn insight into

action'. It was, in the words of the judges "a simple yet entertaining and effective idea providing new and deeper insights for the client – approaches being used in the B2B domain rather than in their usual consumer market research habitat".

It was a very close run thing this year with extremely strong papers from Neil and Catherine, so hearty congratulations awaited their return to the table. Especially as this made it a 'double double' – Nick, Matt and Carrie had already won the best conference paper at the BIG Conference this year and Vodafone and ICM scooped the same award last year.

The awards over, it was time to hit the bar and mingle, mingle, mingle. I had to slope off early as a night of groups awaited me the next day (our industry certainly doesn't stop for Christmas!) but, with the party in full-flow as I left, I can imagine the 1pm curfew came all too soon.

So it just remains for me to congratulate all our nominees and thank them for being such good company at our (rather rowdy by the end!) table and to wish everyone a very happy and prosperous New Year.

Ali Pugh
(BIG Award Chair)

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Diary Dates

MRS Annual Conference
London, 23-24 March

BIG Forum meeting
London, 20 April

BIG Conference 2010
Chepstow 19-21 May

BIG Times

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News from the Chair



Trevor Wilkinson

Happy New Year to all **BIG members. Hope you all had a good break and that 2010 has started well for you.**

(By the way, do I hear the sound of readers snorting and chuckling at the expression 'BIG members'? Reminds me of **Ed Balls'** visit to my kids' school last year. Amazing that it's still amusing after all these years, and I wonder if we should take a leaf out of John Lewis's book and talk about 'BIG partners'.)

Anyway, in between moments of jollity over the festive season you probably had the odd moment of reflecting on 2009 and thinking forward to 2010 and what it might bring. As a director of a small agency I know I did.

What about 2009?

Just before Christmas the great and the good (and members of the BIG committee) gathered at a packed Lancaster Gate Hotel for the annual MRS Awards Dinner, at which it was my honour to give the Business to Business Award to Nick Bassett (*Vodafone UK Enterprise Business Unit*) and **Matt Burn** and **Carrie Lawrence** (*ICM Research*), against stiff competition from short-listed **Neil Swan** and **Catherine Shovlin**.

As the wine flowed and the winners cheered, much of the talk at the Awards Dinner was of how 'challenging' a year 2009 had been, particularly from Easter onwards, as budgets were slashed and spending on research (and many other things) dwindled.

It is certainly the case that research buyers were looking for more cost-effective ways of

obtaining market intelligence, including mining research already conducted for further insights, desk research to identify information already in the public domain and online qualitative and quantitative research, sometimes run internally through tools like Survey Monkey or Confront. A number of speakers at the BIG conference in May alluded to these means of keeping costs down.

Anecdotally business-to-business research has been less affected than consumer research, perhaps because B2B research has traditionally made greater use of secondary research anyway and B2B research budgets tend to be smaller, so that the savings by cutting back are not so great.

Nevertheless 2009 was a difficult year for the whole research industry and research can no longer be thought of as a recession-proof sector.

And 2010?

Sir Martin Sorrell has become well-known for finding memorable metaphors for economic and business trends (saucers, baths, Ws, etc.). The latest I've heard is that the current recession is going to be like a W but the second bit of the W is smaller than the first bit. Not sure how to type that, but maybe it's something like Vv.

It would not surprise me if we experience a dip after the first quarter of the year (although I have already heard a number of researchers talking about being busy in the current quarter). In quarters two and three we have the start of new (reduced) budgets, an election (spending on research, particularly public

spending, always slows before and after an election), a world cup and summer. It would be amazing if spending didn't dip in that time.

I would therefore expect the current year to be a 'u' shape, with tough times in the middle of the year but recovery by the end of the year. You heard it here first.

It will be interesting to see if **Dave Skelsey** of *Strictly Financial* agrees in his presentation at the first BIG Forum of the year (2nd February) on 'The State of the Economy and how did it impact on B2B Markets and Research.'

Other things on BIG's 'to do' list for 2010 include further development of the new BIG website to include additional tools for BIG partners, such as an e-group facility so that partners can contact each other online, look for suppliers or advice, and generally network. We also have the Conference in May, further BIG Forum events and the BIG committee has a taskforce to raise the profile of BIG and increase the membership.

We look forward to seeing you at a BIG event this year. As ever I would welcome any feedback on this article and/or any of our activities.

As usual check out the website (www.b2bresearch.org) for more information on us and on BIG activities.

Trevor Wilkinson, Chair of the *Business Intelligence Group*
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Insight or Illusion? Seminar – 11th February

There are still places available at the one-day seminar, sponsored by *Sample Answers* in association with *Healthcare Landscape*, being held at the Crown Plaza hotel in Kensington. Keynote speakers include **Rachel Elnaugh** (ex Dragon's Den), **Phyllis Macfarlane** (GfK NOP), **Greg Ward** (Fly Research) and **Pete Cape** (SSI). The cost is £188.00 inclusive of VAT and registration is either on the website www.sampleanswers.com/surveys/saseminar/ or by contacting **Tony Dent** on +44 (0) 20 8274 5029 or email: tony.dent@sampleanswers.com



Back to Black? Looking forward to BIG Conference 2010

It's 19th May 2010 and it's the only place any self-respecting B2B researcher should be found. It's BIG conference time.

BIG members will know that conference is one of the year's highlights. The magical combination of picturesque surroundings, inspiring sessions and the chance to mix with friends old and new makes for a special experience year in, year out. With everything from golf to Mark Earls, a former keynote speaker who went so far as to say:

"I loved speaking and just generally being at BIG. Nice people, nice size, nice venue. Wish all conferences were this good!"

The good news too is that for the third year running the BIG Conference is HOLDING ITS PRICES. This represents great value for money. In addition, if you book and pay before 12th March there is an 'early bird' discount and BIG partners (members) qualify for an additional discount.

This year we've put together what we think is one of the strongest ever programmes. The full programme can now be downloaded from the conference website if you have not yet received a copy, but what should you be looking forward to? Firstly, a totally relevant programme for the worst trading conditions in memory. As we all start to emerge from the icy wasteland that was 2009, it's time to consider: will it be back to business as normal, or have things changed for good? What are clients thinking and demanding? How can and should agencies respond? What are the new priorities? Can we do more with less? To help us tackle these questions, we have established conference favourites, but also a rich line-up of clients on hand, including BT, Royal Sun Alliance, Nationwide, BSkyB, Accenture and the COI, to let us know what's really going on in the client world.

But it's not all going to be about belt-tightening. We'll be covering a whole host of topics, turning over some old stones and exploring some less familiar themes. Some

of the topics we'll be showcasing include: new ways of collaborating, conducting research in hostile territory (any not just any old hostile territory, but Iraq), what we can learn from other disciplines (and how soap-powder might have more in common with B2B than you'd imagine), the dark side of fieldwork (all the things you never dared ask from a source very close to the coal-face), what research in 2020 will look like.

Long gone are the days of paper fatigue. The new conference paradigm is variety, variety, variety. This year we're building on our drive to create new formats: we welcome three young researchers to the inaugural 'Newcomers Session' to present their views on the world of B2B, we'll be repeating our successful client question time covering all your burning issues, and embracing the spirit of co-creation and collaboration we will be feeding workshop content on day one into a collective vision of the future of B2B research: the BIG Time Machine.

And we've also got two great keynote speakers. **Rohit Talwar**, founder of *Fast Future Research* and named by the Independent as one of the top 10 global thinkers on the future, will set the tone with a keynote speech exploring future trends and building on the recent *Shape of Jobs to Come* report. To close, we welcome **Fiona Wood**, the COI's Director of Research, for an interview with **Phyllis Macfarlane** on all things research and on the agency world. Having been through one of the biggest ever roster selection programmes, she's in a perfect position to let us know the lie of the land.

On the social side a training session for golf beginners was introduced in 2009 and it was so successful that it is being repeated this year. This was in addition to the well-established golf tournament which starts on Wednesday morning. Thus, there is an opportunity for beginners or those who do not play but are interested in the chance to participate in a one hour training session with a professional coach. (The St Pierre has two championship golf courses and a driving range). So we hope lots of

people will want to try swinging a club on Wednesday afternoon and have some fun before the serious side of the conference kicks in.

Similarly, whilst those who are happy wielding a tennis racket can have their fun on Thursday afternoon at the tennis tournament, those of a less actively sporty nature (or if it's raining) may elect to play board games and tiddlywinks at the bar.

As always there are sponsorship opportunities, i.e. the sporting events, the formal dinner, teas and coffees, the delegate bag, pocket programme and goodies inserted etc., all those small extra things that make the conference so special. We have already had a number of generous offers of sponsorship from some previous and some new sponsors, but of course more are welcome, so do contact either **Sinead Jefferies** (sinead.jefferies@royalmail.com) or **Rebecca Candy** (rebeccacandy@sky.com)

if you would like to contribute in any way. The very special mix of serious information exchange and debate, alongside the more informal discussions generated by the parallel social events, is what people love about this conference.

Put the date in your diary now. This is the very time to get out and about, meet new suppliers and new clients, learn what is new and different and enjoy the conference – after all it is the only one in the UK totally focussed on B2B marketing and research.

If you want to make sure you're making your mark in 2010, you won't want to miss this year's event. With a programme this good, you should be telling everyone about it.

For more information or to reserve a place now, please look on the conference website www.bigconference.org or contact Pene Healey on info@bigconference.org or telephone 020 8864 1834

We look forward to seeing you there.
Nick Coates
BIG Conference Committee

Conference Papers

Conference Papers 2008

A CD Rom of the papers from last year's conference with its theme of



"B2B

Marketing:

the issues and the practice" is available in Acrobat format for £31.00 (incl of VAT & P&P).

Conference Papers 2009

A CD Rom of the papers from this year's conference with its theme of



"Challenging the Status Quo"

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Jeffrey Peel, managing director of Quadriga Consulting Ltd, explains how social media opens up a whole new world of possibilities to researchers.

Social Media and Business Intelligence

I hardly need to define social media – most readers will use one or more of the social media platforms in their business or personal life. And social media does tend to bifurcate into the worlds of business or personal life – although there is considerable overlap. The key point to bear in mind about these technologies is that they afford an opportunity to identify people who have mutual or common interests – and that's of interest to market researchers. However, social media also provides us with a new toolkit too. Social media, after all, is easily available to be viewed and to be used. It's both active and passive.

The extent to which social media is of interest to us in the B2B research space very much depends on what we want to do. For qualitative research the social media sites present us with people who are essentially pre-screened before the recruitment process takes place. For quantitative research we have readily available quotas. Or so you might be led to believe. The actuality is somewhat more complicated. But more strategically – the consequences of social media, or Web 2.0, is more fundamental than how we use social media sites as sample frames. Web 2.0 is utterly transforming, to the core, how we conduct research. But I'll come back to that later.



The social media owners are becoming increasingly aware that they have rich assets – and they have no intention of making it too easy for marketers and researchers to exploit the assets without paying. To an extent it has to be that way. If social media users suddenly find themselves bombarded with survey participation requests they will leave in droves.

Facebook – the gorilla of the social media industry – demonstrated their upcoming research capabilities at the World Economic Forum in Davos last year. Although since then there has been precious little from the company on the topic. The company is more likely to make hay in the MR space by opening up its platform to paying MR guests.

Because, when one thinks about it, these huge social media sites are the ultimate sample frame. Many argue that given Facebook's size and its volume of users – literally hundreds of millions of people across the globe – it is beginning to define a new marketing taxonomy.

However, this is all very well for consumer markets, but what about B2B?

Well the good thing is that as B2B researchers most of the quantitative work we undertake is purposive – quota controlled sampling focused on a particular business interest group. Facebook and the other consumer social media sites are of somewhat limited use because they are built from the ground up on the shoulders of individuals rather than companies. Often we are required by clients to build a perspective of corporate decision making based on interviewing "decision maker contacts". Facebook doesn't make that especially easy. Although business social media sites like LinkedIn can be more useful in this respect.

As researchers we need to pay due regard to protocol. Social media owners do not permit unsolicited contact. Therefore in order to make overtures to potential respondents requires us to work within the system. I find that the most useful way to engage the social media sites and the rich data they hold, and their fabulous membership bases, is to build a separate social media asset with clear links into social media sites. But this represents a whole new paradigm for many research organisations.

Increasingly the blog is the key. Think of the blog as a relationship conduit between the client organisation and people with whom the client organisation wishes to

engage. If the eCommerce site is the transactional front end of the B2B brand, the blog is the means by which the brand can establish other types of relationship – with customers, prospects, channels and even competitor customers. And the blog can be fully integrated with social media sites that can feed new potential relationships.

Now the reason that this is a whole new paradigm is that building a blog is a long term investment. There is little point building a blog for a tactical research assignment and then closing it. Increasingly, blogs – for organisations that do them well – are the means by which they tap into the market consciousness. As researchers, we need to be right in the middle of building these assets, conducting continuous qualitative research based on them, and using the registration database arising from them as the ultimate 'engaged' respondent sample frame for ad hoc research.

That's not to suggest that there is no role for social media in ad hoc B2B research. Far from it. Social media sites can act as wonderful recruitment sites for research. I have made extensive use of advertising on Facebook to engage respondents in "on-blog" quantitative surveys. However, I have also used more 'traditional' search engine advertising to achieve the same result. In that respect social media sites are like any other with large visitor populations – they can be a useful means of identifying people that might be of interest to us – without having to undertake extensive and expensive telephone screening.

But let's turn the discussion 180 degrees and ask how social media can help us as researchers i.e. in using some of the social media tools to help with the research process. Social media is not merely Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter. Social media illustrates the new web phenomenon – the web as a platform rather than a 'tell sell'. Web 2.0 – that awful term that tries to convey the idea of interactive, social technologies – gives us a chance to engage with people in ways that were not that easy in the past.

Every research project I conduct these days has Web 2.0 elements. And I'm not just talking Survey Monkey here.



Google docs is a free collaborative document environment created by Google that allows us to create documents instantly that can be shared. Forms can easily be embedded into web pages. Video can be created simply – using products like Jing or Slideshare. Blogs can be put up in minutes.

Therefore a whole new world of possibilities opens up to us as researchers.

Product concepts can be explained very easily via multimedia. Interviewers – who might be distributed over the world – can complete survey responses simply and easily and responses returned to a central database that can be shared by members of the project team. Qualitative research interest groups can be created in minutes using sites such as Wordpress.com. Focus groups can be shared instantly via web streaming utilities like Qik and audiences can participate in real time using Twitter.

In short social media is not merely Facebook or Twitter. Rather it's a whole new way of thinking about the web that allows people to talk. The challenge is to use our imaginations to allow it create whole new ways participation. We're researchers – social media is what we've been waiting for!

Jeffrey Peel,
Quadriga Consulting Ltd
www.quadco.co.uk

With worldwide expenditure on online research predicted to almost treble over the next three years, Matthew Harrison, director of B2B International, discusses why online focus groups could replace traditional face-to-face focus groups.



Matthew Harrison

The future looks bright for online focus groups

When gauging consumer opinion, whether B2B or B2C, can anything be better than people sitting round a table giving their views, touching, smelling and looking at products, and reacting to one another? The answer nowadays is “probably yes”, because the technological revolution of the past 15 years has led to the development of superb online data collection methodologies. Of these, the online survey is the most established but, more recently, online focus groups have emerged, making it possible to obtain high calibre qualitative information online.

Following similar principles to internet message boards, the online focus group differs from online surveys in that it allows every participant to see the responses of others and encourages them to respond to these views. In addition, the researcher inserts questions as the discussion develops, in order to probe areas of particular interest, or to gain further information on new topics that participants introduce to the discussion. As such, they enable a real-time, dynamic discussion to develop between the researcher and the respondents, just as with a face-to-face focus group.

Key Benefits of Online Focus Groups

Volume of information: A high proportion of business respondents appear to provide more information in an online discussion than they would face-to-face. Many are happy to log on two, three or more times over the duration of the group (typically a couple of days), providing perhaps two hours worth of comment each.

Depth and quality of information: There appears to be no significant difference in the

depth of information obtained by online focus groups in comparison with face-to-face groups. In both, specific issues can be probed where extra detail is required.

Reflection time: Online groups allow time to consider the questions and topics. Whereas a face-to-face group takes no more than 2 hours, putting pressure on the moderator and respondents to cover issues quickly, online focus groups may take place over two days, with respondents entering and leaving the discussion as they choose.

Accuracy: A simple reason why online groups are extremely accurate is the fact that this is a self-completion technique. The researcher receives, in written format, the views of the respondent as expressed by that respondent.

Inclusiveness and honesty: Online focus groups allow everyone to take whatever time they want to have their say and to do so anonymously if they choose. Respondents who may by nature be intimidated or reticent in a face-to-face group are far more likely to ‘speak up’ and air their views frankly when they are not ‘eyeball to eyeball’ with respondents they perhaps see as more knowledgeable, influential or articulate, or who simply speak loudly!

Incorporating different geographies: A key advantage of a ‘virtual’ group is the ability to assemble into a simultaneous discussion sparsely spread respondents who may be in different geographical locations and time zones.

Researching senior respondents: The online focus group increases access to senior respondents. Ten heads of businesses across the world can all take part in the same online discussion, fitting their contributions around their busy

and fast changing diaries. Furthermore, senior people are usually well-educated and relatively IT-savvy, making them extremely responsive to the online discussion format.

Participation: An online group can be fitted around the respondent’s working day or indeed his/her leisure time. The costs of recruiting respondents are lower than for face-to-face discussions, as they occupy a much less rigid place in the diary and participants are much less likely to pull out at the last minute.

Introducing stimulæ: Online focus groups are increasingly effective at providing on-screen visual stimulæ to respondents. Questions can easily include embedded images, links to websites, uploaded documents, video clips, sound files, and other multimedia files.

Client participation: So that clients can hear the target market’s independent and honest views, most face-to-face focus groups are conducted in viewing facilities with one-way mirrors but ‘viewing’ the proceedings as they happen is rather easier with virtual groups and affords the client more opportunities to liaise with the research agency to steer the conversation towards the areas that interest them most.

Limitations

In spite of all these advantages, internet focus groups are not suited to every research project. Limitations include:

- Certain target audiences – particularly the less web-savvy – are less suited to online groups than others.
- Initial respondent recruitment by telephone can be labour-intensive and expensive, whilst email recruitment has a very low success ratio.
- Limitations can exist with presenting physical stimulæ for respondents to touch, feel

or smell – body language, tone of voice and other visual signals are simply not picked up by online research techniques.

The Future

The increasingly busy schedules of people will continue to make online focus groups a more viable option for market research than face-to-face focus groups and certain factors will increase their prominence and effectiveness:

- increasing familiarity with bulletin boards and similar technologies will make it easier to convince respondents to participate
- mobile phone technology is becoming increasingly sophisticated and user-friendly, allowing participants to take part via their cell-phone handsets
- online focus groups are likely to incorporate high resolution, moving graphics, particularly as stimulæ for respondents, which will be especially viable for product development research
- the immunity of online focus groups to geographical and time-zone restrictions means that this technique is likely to emerge as a useful opinion-tracking technique
- as the capabilities of online translation software increase, we expect respondents speaking different languages to be able to participate in the same discussions via simultaneous translation tools

It would be fair to conclude that the combination of convenience and technological advancements means we can expect to see online focus groups increasingly emerge as one of the research methodologies of choice.

Matthew Harrison is a director at business-to-business market research specialist B2B International.
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Is online taking over B2B research world

It was a packed night of pre-Christmas cheer and lively discussion at the December BIG Forum evening with an excellent paper presented by Mark Walton, senior vice president, global developments for the combined Research Now / e-Rewards company, covering both B2B and B2C online services.



Mark Walton

The theme of the evening was whether online research will take over in B2B research and definite conclusions were reached by the end of the meeting. Read on...!

Market research media and surveys by e-Rewards reveal that online is taking a much greater share of consumer research from traditional techniques. B2B researchers were therefore in attendance at the Forum meeting in force at ORC's offices to learn what might be in store for their industry. Will B2B telephone units for example face diminishing prospects in the future? Or is B2B an 'untouchable' area for online research?

Mark's presentation clearly explained what was happening from his vantage point and experience within a major online research agency and his own past record of success in international online research projects. He is a regular speaker at MRS, ESOMAR and CASRO events and has launched online panels in 14 countries. He outlined the key factors driving more online B2B research in future:

- F2F and phone methods are becoming increasingly difficult and expensive
 - Businessmen are too busy at times to interview using the traditional methods
 - Response rates in B2B research are declining
- Internet penetration is almost 100% among business communities
- Internet research is more convenient and less intrusive than F2F and phone methods
- Target audiences are more

efficiently located via the Internet

- Results are delivered faster through online research compared with traditional methods

On the other hand, the main attribute of face-to-face and telephone research is the real, 'live' interviewer and this one aspect is its jewel in the crown, particularly in qualitative research. A good interviewer builds rapport and engagement within interviews and guides the respondent through long and boring interviews, of which there have been many. Further, the role of the interviewer is helpful in explaining and clarifying questions and for quality work in probing for full responses. But balanced against this, interviewers do not always behave consistently, they can inhibit some research and are expensive to recruit and retain by research agencies.

Consumer online research has faced some major challenges despite its growing popularity and if this is anything to go by then it won't all be peaches and cream for business online research in future. High panel attrition, falling response rates and the need to drive panellist engagement are some examples of the problems encountered in consumer online research. There have been some screw ups as well by online agencies and this has dented online research's reputation. Will B2B online research be able to overcome the hurdles with its own formidable and unique challenges?

Mark cited some examples of poor online research experiences among clients with the more frequently occurring:

- Misleading claims by panel companies
- Evidence of panellist cheating
- Lack of advice on survey design
- Quality controls not implemented

Respondents have also had poor experiences when participating in online research thus leading to high panellist attrition rates. Some popular gripes include:

- Long, dull, repetitive surveys
- Irrelevant, poor value rewards
- Too many invites
- Never won a prize draw...or know anyone who has!

Consumer online research in terms of quantitative revenue varies considerably across global markets based on 2008 data but it is

significant and growing. In Australia, for example, it represents 51% of all quantitative research revenue compared with Japan (40%), the UK (31%) and the USA (25%). However, B2B online research is hardly a blip on the screen in all this and Mark explained that inertia to change is a major reason plus:

- Lack of confidence by clients in online methods
- The existence of few, reliable and effective B2B online services
- The success of the telephone still, particularly with customer lists

Mark's paper intimates that despite the problems, online research in future can be the dominant data collection method in B2B research, particularly against F2F and phone methods if agencies put the right strategies in place. He suggests focusing on business decision makers as a valuable and limited resource and treating them as partners in research. This entails recruitment 'by invitation-only' with effective B2B profiling and targeting. Most importantly, and to ensure effective quality controls, the participants should be managed properly by the agency to guarantee a positive interview experience each time, with fair value incentives. Specialised B2B research may still remain outside of the full online scope but existing B2B omnibuses will need to adapt to the online environment.

Following a lively discussion among the spirited Forum participants a straw poll was taken about the future of B2B online research in the UK. Conclusive answers were arrived at on the following points for a majority of respondents voting:

- Online B2B quantitative surveys will be the dominant methodology in terms of numbers of surveys within 3-5 years
- Online B2B qualitative research will take longer than 5 years to become the dominant methodology with some respondents doubting ever
- The main obstacle stopping more B2B clients to commission online surveys is the absence of a sufficient number of reliable online service providers
- The best way to persuade clients to commission more online surveys is through agencies introducing more effective quality controls.

Copies of Mark Walton's presentation is available to download from the BIG website: www.b2bresearch.org

Charles Jennings,
Avista Consulting Ltd

Talent Development - what's new and what can you do?

The next Forum meeting on Tuesday 20th April will feature **Danny Wain** of *Daniel Wain Consulting*. Danny will be discussing how to keep ahead of the competition by recognising the value of people whilst minimising the cost of talent development. He will cover the most recent developments in the world of HR and learning & development (L&D), blended learning, employer branding and measurement of return on investment.

In the credit crunch we witnessed the drastic devaluing of all our sacred currencies: stocks, shares, land, property. All but one: human capital continued to increase in value throughout the recession. Which ought to be great news for a 'people' business like research. Wise organisations know that now is the very time to invest in talent to ensure short-term survival and longer-term growth. And in a sluggish labour market, when it's difficult to recruit talent and skills, one's only option is to develop them.

Danny was director of L&D at *Research International* until 2007 and is now a successful L&D consultant, trainer and coach. He is a well-established conference speaker and writer on 'people' and 'talent' issues.

BIG Forum represents a chance to 'network' with friends and colleagues while catching up on the latest thinking in business-to-business research. For more information visit www.b2bresearch.org

John Mackay out and about

In March 2009 John left Sample Answers after five happy years working with the team as business development director. He set up Mr Sample Ltd in April 2009 and offer sampling services international fieldwork, telecoms solutions and market research software.

John is currently providing



John Mackay

International telephone and online samples for B2B and consumer research projects from a variety

of different sources. Prior to working at Sample Answers he ran a call centre in the UK involved in all aspects of the data collection process and this experience has been useful when managing multi-country CATI fieldwork projects. In addition, he represents Random International in the UK. The company is based in Hamburg with 80 stations and a 40 language capability. John also represents Voxco in the UK

offering data collection software for CATI, CAPI and online research. The telecoms solution is from Protel to help call centres get the best call quality and value for money.

New AURA Chair

The new chair of AURA is Danny Russell, marketing strategy director at BSKyB. His previous roles at Boots, Kraft and British Airways means he has a wealth of experience in insight and is passionate about making sure that it is acted on and so delivers strategic value to the business.

At the recent AURA AGM, another packed meeting saw



Danny Russell

Danny taking up the mantle of Chair from **John Buckle** of Alliance & Leicester who now

moves to Vice Chair. At the same time **Monique Hellel**, Head of Personal Customers Research at HSBC was unanimously voted to become Deputy Chair.

AURA is the networking and best practice group for research and insight people that work in-house or clientside. It has around 300 members covering over 140 organisations across all industry sectors. Its membership is estimated to directly control or

influence about 30% of all UK research expenditure*. More details, are available on www.aura.org.uk

*Source:- AURA Membership survey 2008 & industry sources

[N.B. Danny will be speaking at the BIG Conference in May]

e-Rewards, Inc acquires Research Now



Research Now Ltd., a global provider of online data collection services, was acquired by e-Rewards, Inc. in January.

According to **Chris Havemann**, CEO of e-Rewards, Inc. and formerly CEO of Research Now:



"This merger creates the most capable and most reliable single-source provider of online sample and online data collection services in the industry. We are now a truly global firm with unrivalled depth and reach."

In the US the combined business will continue to operate using the e-Rewards Market research brand, while outside the US the company will operate under the Research Now brand. With the completion of the merger, the company now offers researchers access to more than 6 million panelists across 36 countries, including the largest global business decision-maker and hard to reach consumer panels available in most top markets. The company's expanded capabilities are supported by an experienced, multilingual staff in

18 cities around the globe, spanning four continents.

Havemann added. *"Better serving the needs of our clients was the strategic driver of the decision to combine Research Now and e-Rewards. We are eager to demonstrate our enhanced capabilities and prove that we now have the ability to serve the needs of our clients better than ever before."*

For more information visit www.e-rewardsresearch.com or www.researchnow.co.uk

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Quiz



Strictly financial

Specialists in financial services research



**Win £30
Gift Card**

Water water everywhere...

Congratulations to **Lois Walton** from Nokia who obviously knows her finances! The answers to the last quiz are:

- 1) Decimalisation came to the UK in 1971
- 2) Black Tuesday was 29th October 1929
- 3) A pony is worth £25
- 4) The Royal Mint issued a number of undated 20p pieces – each one is now worth up to £50!

- 5) A tanner was worth 6 old pence
- 6) Standing on the shoulders of giants is on the £2.00 coin
- 7) £20 note issued in 2007 has economist Adam Smith on it

Given all of the snow, and subsequent rain, we thought that we would go for a watery theme this time – and one which has a bit more of an international flavour that anyone should be able to answer.

All answers to Claire@strictlyfinancial.com by **February 28th 2010**.

1. In which country is the lake that holds more than a fifth of the world's liquid fresh water?
2. Which continent contains 70% of the world's fresh water?
3. What nationality was the first man in charge of the first ship to have sailed completely around the world?

4. Given a camping gas stove, with gas, matches, teabags and fresh water, in which country could you make the hottest cup of tea?
5. After the Amazon, which river system contains the most water?

**Best of luck
to everyone!**

And finally.....

Actual call centre conversations....

Customer: 'I've been ringing 0800 2100 for two days and can't get through to enquiries, can you help?'

Operator: 'Where did you get that number from, sir?'

Customer: 'It was on the door to the Travel Centre'.

Operator: 'Sir, they are our opening hours'.

Samsung Electronics

Caller: 'Can you give me the telephone number for Jack?'

Operator: 'I'm sorry, sir, I don't understand who you are talking about'.

Caller: 'On page 1, section 5, of the user guide it clearly states that I need to unplug the fax machine from the AC wall socket and telephone Jack before cleaning. Now, can you give me the number for Jack?'

Operator: 'I think you mean the telephone point on the wall'.

RAC Motoring Services

Caller: 'Does your European Breakdown Policy cover me when I am travelling in Australia?'

Operator: 'Doesn't the product name give you a clue?'

Caller (enquiring about legal requirements while travelling in France):

'If I register my car in France, do I have to change the steering wheel to the other side of the car?'

Directory Enquiries

Caller: 'I'd like the number of the Argoed Fish Bar in Cardiff please'.

Operator: 'I'm sorry, there's no listing. Is the spelling correct?'

Caller: 'Well, it used to be called the Bargoed Fish Bar but the 'B' fell off'.

Then there was the caller who asked for a knitwear company in Woven.

Operator: 'Woven? Are you sure?'

Caller: 'Yes. That's what it says on the label; Woven in Scotland'

On another occasion, a man making heavy breathing sounds from a phone box told a worried operator:

'I haven't got a pen, so I'm steaming up the window to write the number on'..

Tech Support: 'I need you to right-click on the Open Desktop'.

Customer: 'OK'.

Tech Support: 'Did you get a pop-up menu?'

Customer: 'No'.

Tech Support: 'OK. Right-Click again. Do you see a pop-up menu?'

Customer: 'No'.

Tech Support: 'OK, sir. Can you tell me what you have done up until this point?'

Customer: 'Sure. You told me to write 'click' and I wrote 'click'.

Tech Support: 'OK. In the bottom left hand side of the screen, can you see the 'OK'

button displayed?'

Customer: 'Wow. How can you see my screen from there?'

Caller: 'I deleted a file from my PC last week and I have just realised that I need it. If I turn my system clock back two weeks will I have my file back again?'

New members

A warm welcome is extended to five new members of BIG.

Sarah O'Brien,
Vivid Research
Caroline Noon,
Vivid Research
Chris Brown,
brownsauce Group
Rick Dent,
RSM
Caroline Shovlin,
Customer Interpreter Ltd