

You Can't Manage What You Don't Measure

At SCI Research, we're fond of saying, "you can't manage what you don't measure," because we feel it embodies the reason for conducting market research. Although we all loved Pryor and Wilder in the movie *See No Evil, Hear No Evil*; closing our eyes and ears to what the market is showing and telling us is no way to run an organization.

Market research is about answering questions – and professional market research is about asking those questions properly. Professional market researchers spend their time studying humans, because we know that our clients don't have the time to do so. Entrepreneurs have more important things to do than puzzle over which two forms of the same question will yield more truthful results. In fact, they probably don't have the time to realize that two different forms of the same question can yield *different* results.

The three basic business questions are: 1) who needs or wants what my company has to provide; 2) how much will they pay for it; and 3) how does it need to be presented to get people to spend money on it. But professional market researchers recognize that, in fact, there are more than three questions in that list.

The most important part of selling a product or service is knowing your target audience, inside and out. And like you, your target audience is not just made up of their age, gender, and race. We are all a sum of our parts: where we live; how much disposable income we have; whether we work full-time, part-time, or not at all; for whom we vote; whether we're married; have children or grandchildren, what kind of activities we enjoy; what we read; what television shows we watch; and more. Professional market researchers recognize individuals for all of their many and varied characteristics, and then categorize them into examinable groups.

SCI Research has expertise in recognizing individuals and examining groups. We do this through quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis. Over 23 years of phone surveys, in-depth interviews, secret shopping, web surveys, focus groups, and mock juries has taught us a thing or two about market research. We know that people can be biased by the order of questions in a survey. We know that negative adjectives can cause unconscious negative reactions. We know that people often answer questions the way they *think* the

questioner wants them to. And we know how to prevent all these harmful actions.

Another phrase we're fond of around here is, "If any monkey *can* make a survey, then any monkey *will*." The growth of the internet has brought market research capabilities into the hands of consumers and business owners alike. Unfortunately, it hasn't brought with it the knowledge, skills, and abilities of a professional market researcher. Sure, the owner of Jack's Grocery Store can compose a questionnaire and disseminate it among his customers. But can he compose a questionnaire that will truly yield actionable data? Will he narrow down his questions to the nitty-gritty details that really make up his customers' needs, wants, and motivators? Does he know the importance of rotating his question and answer sets? Has he ever heard of non-response bias?

Market research is an industry for a reason; when done properly, it can be the greatest predictor available of success and failure. Whether your company chooses to work with SCI Research or another provider, we hope you will consider not only the tremendous benefits market research can offer, but also the vital importance of utilizing the skills of an experienced professional.