

When You Need Community Support: Using Low-cost Research Tools to Make Informed Decisions

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What We'll Cover

- Why Conduct Research?
- Qualitative vs. Quantitative
- Case Study: Addison, Texas
- Using Online Surveys
- Using In-depth Interviews
- Using Focus Group Research
- Questions

Why Conduct Research?

- Listen to the community and key stakeholders
- Understand
 - Attitudes
 - Assumptions
 - Misunderstandings/misconceptions
 - Fears
 - Concerns
 - Questions



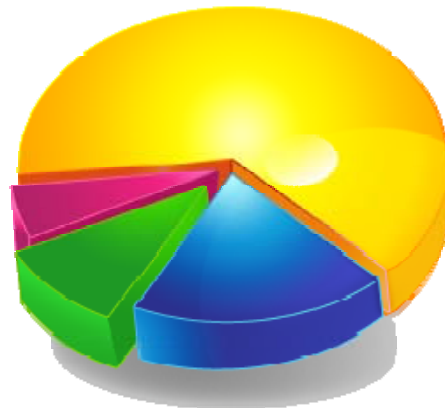
Why Conduct Research?

With research results, you can:

- Better understand your audience
- Better engage the public
- More fully inform them of problems you are trying to solve
- Achieve “informed consent” – willingness to go along with a course of action even if originally opposed
- Make better decisions!

Quantitative vs. Qualitative

- **Quantitative**
 - Scientific random sampling
 - Statistically accurate results with specific confidence level
 - Results can be projected to entire population



Quantitative vs. Qualitative

- **Qualitative**

- Answers “why” questions
- Offers insight and direction
- Provides a sense of a group’s attitudes, motivations, behaviors, opinions and preferences

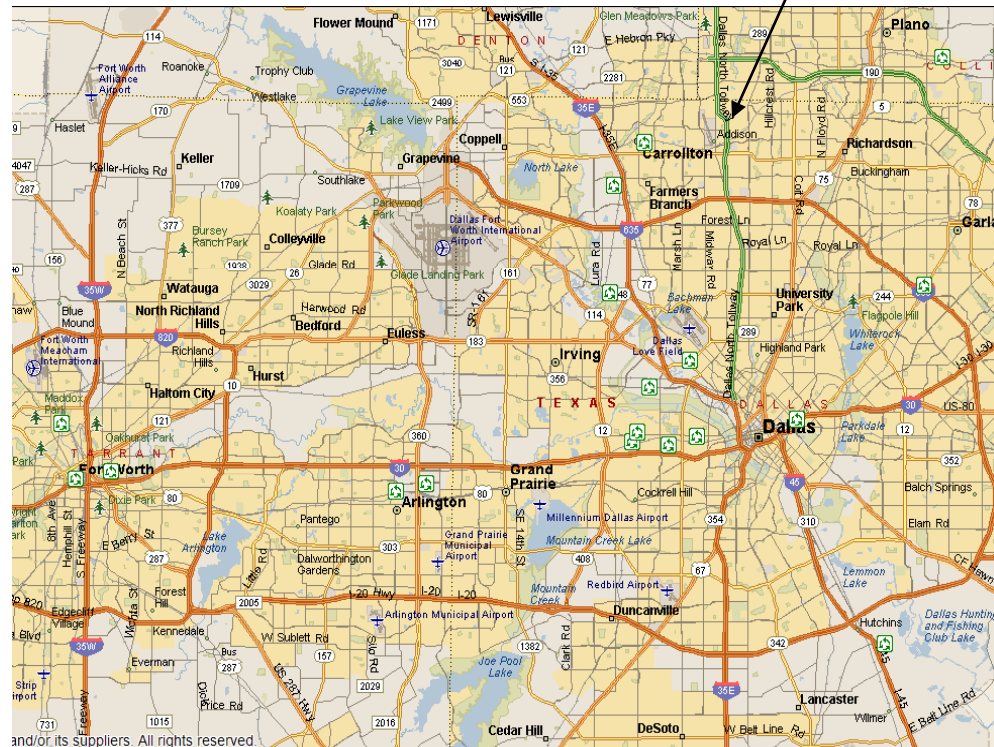


Do Both?

- Depends on your goals
- For large-scale decisions: quantitative offers added measure of security
- One option: use qualitative to test hunches; confirm with quantitative



Case Study



Current Situation



Proposal

- Goal: Improve recycling, achieve collection efficiencies
- Close market for trash collection to businesses, orgs., multifamily
- Procure single trash collection provider who would offer recycling
- Recycling not mandatory
- Town could issue permits to other recyclers

Research Questions

- Would Town's businesses, organizations and multifamily complexes embrace proposal?
- What were questions, concerns?
- What hurdles would Town need to overcome to implement new system?

Research provided answers!

What We Did



- Online survey – obtain baseline information from staff responsible for solid waste decisions




- In-depth interviews – dig deeper

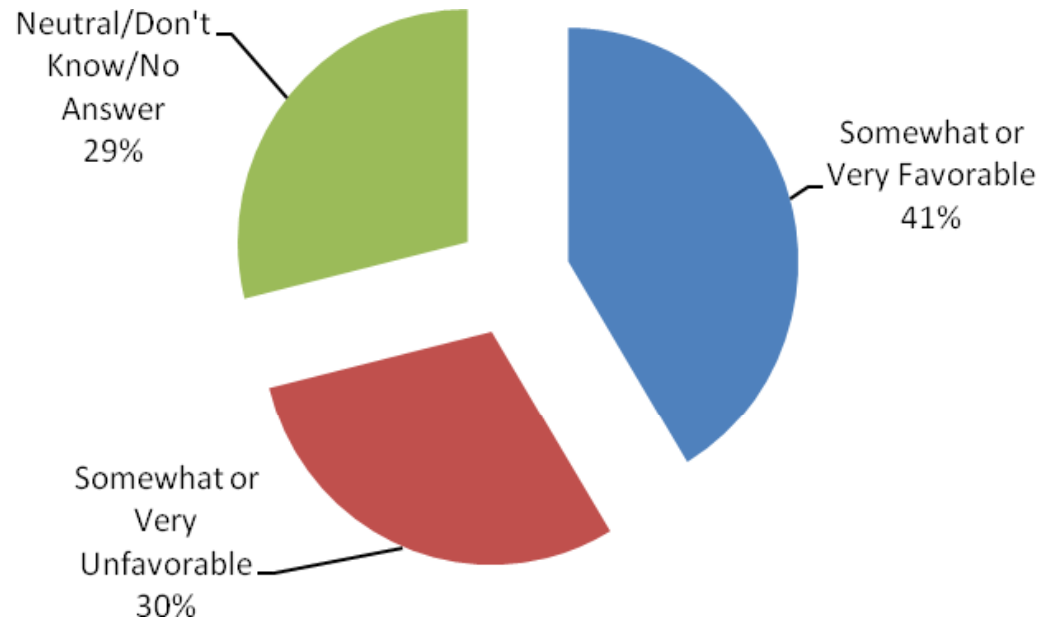


- Focus groups – understand why, hear opinions, questions, concerns

Online Survey

- Used  **SurveyMonkey**
- Short survey
 - Collection rates and services
 - Recycling rates and services
 - If not recycling, why not
 - Satisfaction with current services
 - Opinions about Town's proposal
- “Volunteer” respondents
- Promoted through direct mail, email, website, Addison Business Assn.
- 102 responses

Online Survey Results Opinions about Proposal



In-depth Interviews

- 25 interviews with select group of SW decision makers in businesses, organizations and multifamily complexes
- 20% had recycling programs
- Misperceptions about what could be recycled
- Mixed opinions about proposal

Focus Groups

- 3 focus groups
 - Multifamily SW managers
 - Office buildings and institutions
 - Retailers, restaurants, hotels
- Held in focus group facility
- Primary focus: Town's proposal
- “Homework”: Questions about current trash and recycling services

Focus Group Results

- Gave rich, nuanced range of opinions about the proposal
- Provided insights into questions and concerns
- Gave clues as to what would make the proposal palatable (flexibility, choice, involvement)
- Told us they want recycling to be mandatory, not optional!

Value of Addison Research

- Gave new insights, direction
- Obtained unfiltered, candid comments from target audiences
- Gave Town a sense of what to expect in the way of opposition – and why
- Cost less than direct mail or phone surveys

Research Tools You Can Use

4 questions to ask before you begin:

1. What do you hope to accomplish?
2. What specific research questions do you want to answer?
3. What will you do with the data?
4. Who can best provide answers?

Online Surveys



Advantages:

- Lots of data collected quickly
- Unlimited questions
- Various types of questions
- Instant analysis
- Flexible, randomization of question order, skip patterns
- Costs less than making phone calls or sending a mail survey
- Results can be generalized to entire population, if random sampling used

Online Surveys

Disadvantages (if sample is not randomly selected):

- Results may not be representative
 - Internet users tend to be younger
 - Some ethnic groups not represented
 - Respondents may be those most passionate about issue
- Can be subject to fraud, skewed results (use ID or track with email or IP address)

Online Survey Software

- Survey Monkey
www.surveymonkey.com
- Zoomerang
www.zoomerang.com
- Survey Gizmo
www.surveygizmo.com

(Offers discounted pricing for nonprofits)

Tips for Your Online Survey

- Keep it short and simple; clear wording
- Introduction: Tell respondents who you are, why their response is important
- Put least controversial questions at beginning
- Avoid leading, redundant questions
- Minimize open-ended questions
- Offer “don’t know” “not applicable”
- Have a market research expert review your questions
- PRETEST your survey
- Link back to your website

What's wrong with this question?

Do you participate in the City's
recycling program?

Yes No

If you answered no, why not?
(sorting is confusing, don't like
sorting, messy, no lids)

What's wrong with this question?

- “Pay as you throw” garbage collection is limited to one cart per household. Additional containers/bags set out for collection require an extra fee. Would you be in favor of a “pay as you throw” form of garbage collection?

Yes

No

In-depth Interviews

Advantages

- Explore perspectives, behaviors, attitudes in greater depth than with online survey



Disadvantages

- Can reflect bias on part of interviewer
- Take time
- Results cannot be generalized

Tips for In-depth Interviews

- Ask: What information is needed from whom?
- Identify stakeholders
- Develop interview protocol
- Develop interview questions
- Ask factual questions before opinions
- Train interviewers
- Analyze by grouping themes, patterns of comments

Focus Groups

What they are:

- Bring together 7-10 people who represent target audience
- Moderated discussion designed to elicit opinions
- Answer “what do you think” and “why” questions
- Opportunity for participants to interact with one another
- Window into attitudes, feelings, behaviors



Focus Groups

What they are NOT:

- Not a means to persuade
- Not a means to “correct” misconceptions
- Not designed for group to reach a consensus on an issue
- Results can’t be generalized

Focus Groups

Logistics

- Do you need a focus group facility?



Focus Groups

Logistics

- Taping/audiotaping
- Honorarium
- Food/beverages
- Length of group: 1.5 – 2 hours
- Recruit homogeneous groups with recruiting script
- Essential: discussion guide – worksheets
- Start with general discussion – then focus and become more specific
- Objective, trained facilitator

Tips for Focus Groups

- Develop recruitment screening questionnaire
- Recruit 3 or 4 more than needed
- Send reminders
- Prepare moderators guide
- Arrange for venue, moderator
- Plan for way that moderator can communicate with observers (if any)
- Prepare report that organizes data by themes, concerns, questions



Questions?



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