



Conducting effective conference research

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One arena where the benefits of mobile research have combined to especially good effect is conference research.

With the advent of mobile research, it suddenly became possible to achieve a hugely valuable mix of standardised comparative evaluation, multimedia submissions and in-depth qualitative feedback in rarefied conditions where key target customers are really thinking hard about how the future will play out in an area of medicine. Enabling longitudinal research through the pre- and post-conference phases also allowed for some very clear measurement of congress impact and the effect of individual announcements, booths, company presence etc. on delegates' perceptions.

A mobile research approach gives us a winning combination of robustness and flexibility to address a wide range of research issues around a variety of conference objectives. Pharmaceutical companies often use a conference to announce new clinical trial data and want to get the very first signals from the target audience as to whether/how that data might impact clinical practice. Equally, they may be using conference to launch a new disease awareness campaign, or to present a novel booth, or to showcase new tech; conference research can be fully tailored to gather reactions to any or each of these in detail using daily snap surveys.

In addition to primary research objectives, research among leading prescribers is a great opportunity to get feedback on fundamental issues such as emerging treatment approaches, perceptions of new drug classes etc. Despite the short, individual questionnaire interactions, we have become well-versed at getting in-depth feedback across the full range of issues that matter to the Marketing and Brand teams who work tirelessly for several months to make the conference presence happen.

A tool to measure your performance over time

Conference is also the stage on which companies demonstrate leadership and their commitment to a specific field of medicine. Increasingly, senior management wants to keep a closer eye on how the company is perceived by key prescribers and whether the dollar spend on conference presence has been justified in terms of enhancing this perception. With full control over sample and the ability to compose a sufficient basis for simple quantitative comparisons, mobile conference research delivers squarely to this latter requirement. It also opens up the possibility of a year-on-year, conference-on-conference evaluation so that the impact of companies' and competitors' product pipelines and lifecycles can be studied as they play out on the 'leadership' stage.

With such scrutiny on spending, it is important to know what aspect of conference 'worked' and what did not. And so we are now seeing an evolution of conference research: in addition to looking at single-conference 'issues'

piecemeal, there is an increased demand for an ongoing evaluation of company performance and perceptions over time. Major conferences are being used as marker points on the continual pathway to pre-eminence and provide the perfect juncture for both an inward- and outward-looking self-evaluation: What is our position in the minds of our customers? Can we defend our leadership position in the face of new treatment approaches? Of what value is our heritage versus the impact of a new revolutionary product?

These are some of the questions that conference research is now helping to address and it is why pharmaceutical companies are increasingly looking to track KPIs across numerous conferences and throughout the year as well as subsequent years. The comparative evaluation of US versus European meetings/prescribers is of interest, as is the year-on-year measurement of change at a single major meeting. By building conference-specific questions around a core of repeated KPIs, we can simultaneously understand the buzz of an individual meeting, while also contributing insights on the trends in the bigger picture.

Tips for conducting effective conference research:

1. Use the opportunity

Large samples of target specialists don't gather often

2. Plan ahead

Agree the study design & survey content in good time

3. Tailor the research

Select metrics that best support conference evaluation

4. Get the sample right

Include a wide-range for a more balanced perspective

5. Keep it simple

Conferences are busy and so are respondents

6. Make use of multimedia

Include audio, photo & video submissions

7. Compare and contrast

Benchmark your performance vs competitors

8. Frame the future

Use vignettes to gauge the likely impact of new data

9. Track performance across meetings

Apply metrics across multiple events, regions & years

10. Understand performance across franchises

Measure cross-organisation to see what's working

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