

The Importance of Evaluative Research

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Over the last few months we have discussed the importance of evaluating your work in order to gauge its success. We have also mentioned that research can go a long way in establishing credibility. What we haven't emphasized yet is the ability to combine both practices in order to create an invaluable marketing tool for any organization. This tool is called evaluative research, and here at Insight we use it often.

Your Monthly Check-up

What better way to measure the success, or failure, of a marketing campaign than to constantly and consistently evaluate it? I know it may sound like extra work that you just might not have enough time for, but consider the alternative. If you wait until the end of a campaign to determine if it was successful or not, you are setting yourself up for possible failure. Sure, if everything went as planned, and you didn't hit any bumps in the road along the way, then you're probably ok. However, we live in an ever-changing environment. This is where research can provide an ongoing assessment of your campaign, rather than just being used as a stagnant planning tool.

Conducting research throughout the life of the campaign will enable you spot trends in your industry and allow you to be better positioned for opportunities as they develop. If you only conduct enough research to create an outline of your marketing plan you will surely miss these opportunities. Another way to follow your "campaign trail" is by using Return on Investment (ROI) metrics to regularly measure the success or failure of your campaign. This breaks down what you are actually taking away based on exactly what you have put in. This "heads-up" allows you to act ahead of the competition when opportunity strikes, or when a threat arises.

Evaluate, Evaluate, Evaluate

Evaluation of a campaign should be something of key importance to every marketer and you should not be afraid to evaluate as often as possible. That being said, there are still many organizations that simply do not get it. Money is spent on conducting research before a campaign launches, then after the campaign is launched all research halts. The scariest part is when the smoke clears no standard of evaluation is conducted. That's right. There are still plenty of organizations (both large and small) that simply move on to the next project. Their only gauge of success rests in yearly financial reports. This may seem to be the cheapest method but certainly not the most effective or efficient use of funds.

What's on Their Minds?

Simply put, talk to your market. While ROI metrics can surely provide information on the financial success of your campaign, this will do nothing to tell you about how people felt about the campaign and towards your organization. This is where evaluative research shines. Evaluative research provides you with qualitative data that simply cannot be achieved with traditional ROI metrics. Consider a focus group to help you determine if the campaign actually reached the target or if your success was based on a totally different scenario that played out during the life of the campaign. Tools such as surveys can also help you gain insight to a situation rather than depending solely on number crunching. Remember, if you want to get inside the heads of your target market, you NEED to know what's on their minds.

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Because You Care ...

In the end, whether a marketing campaign succeeds or fails rests on the marketer's ability to properly maintain the campaign. Ultimately your goal should always be to develop a meaningful relationship with the target market. It should never be solely about the bottom-line. By viewing this interaction as a relationship we avoid the risk of confusing our customers for transactions, and thereby strengthening our commitment to them. Here at Insight we understand both the need for these relationships along with strategic thinking to move an organization forward. As we like to say, "we walk the walk."



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