

Callan Consulting

AT&T: Consumer Online Panel Development



"I appreciated Ed's can-do attitude, his combination of strategic thinking and tactical execution, and his ability to work effectively with the team. He never missed a beat."

Amy J. Hebard, AT&T Consumer Market Research Vice President

Background

Every year AT&T Consumer Services conducts a wide range of market research projects, from new product concept testing to offer refinement and advertising effectiveness tracking. In recent years AT&T has steadily increased its use of online research methodologies, benefiting from speediness of results and decreased costs. With increased competition in the telecommunications marketplace, online methodologies give it the ability to locate low-incidence customers in specific geographies.

Business Problem

To meet a plethora of research needs in specific geographies, AT&T often made use of syndicated online panels to reach research respondents. While this proved to be an effective means of performing research, purchasing the use of publicly available panels on a one-off basis was becoming prohibitively expensive. Further, these panels were not always able to provide customers with the exact characteristics AT&T was seeking. Looking to achieve greater control over the panel makeup and reduce per-research-project costs by amortizing the up-front development costs over a large number of projects, AT&T decided to develop a proprietary consumer panel and in early 2003 turned to Ed for help.

Solution

Ed spearheaded the process of gathering business requirements and translated them into panel design requirements, defining for example how many customers were needed in each of dozens of different quota groups based on factors such as:

- Geography
- Usage of AT&T products
- Lifestyle and demographic characteristics

Ed developed and distributed an RFP based on these requirements and managed the vendor selection process. He then project managed the process of panel development and recruitment, leading a team consisting of the selected vendor, a separate sample source vendor, and internal AT&T research personnel. During this process Ed was careful to ensure the appropriate methodology was used to meet AT&T's business requirements. For example, steps were taken to ensure that the panel development process would yield a representative sample while minimizing potential sources of bias, and that results from panel research could be projected to a nationally representative audience.

Results

Ed successfully brought the project in on time and on budget. Within two months, by the date originally agreed upon with the panel vendor, the panel was fully populated, with each of the originally defined quota groups filled. Within two weeks AT&T began putting the panel to use, using it to successfully recruit participants for a strategic new product study.