

By Katie White

■ Senior Project Manager
■ 20/20 Research, Inc.
■ Nashville, TN
■ katiaw@2020research.com

■ TOOLBOX ■



The Power of the Target Perspective

Market research today is a more sophisticated discipline than ever before. Thanks to technology that is improving daily and research professionals who aggressively embrace more advanced techniques, researchers are providing clients new levels of intelligence and insight.

To improve the success-potential for their studies when dealing with recruiting participants, many researchers now employ a method called “Target Perspective.” The concept involves identifying and utilizing key behaviors found in the study’s target market—schedules, communications habits, routines, passions, fears, values—to influence project design, recruitment strategy and discussion guide development. The Target Perspective approach yields a more highly engaged respondent who will be easier to enlist, participate much more energetically, and enhance the study’s ultimate findings.

A better project design

The overall research project design is the foundation for a successful market research study. Upon deciding which methodology, timeframe, and form of communication to implement, start with some Target Perspective questions to customize the design to the respondent’s preferences:

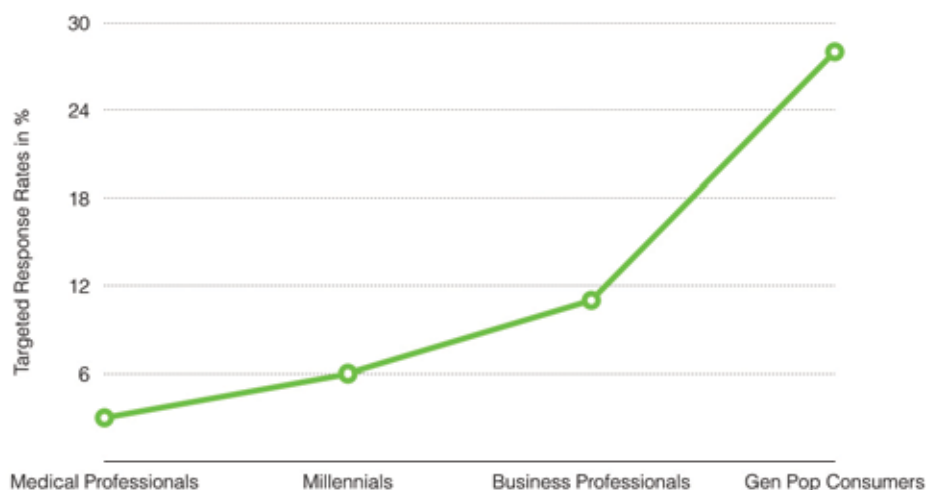
- Which venue of communication feels the most organic and comfortable to them?
- What is their daily schedule like, and which methodology would be seamless and provide minimal disruption to their daily flow?
- What gets the respondent excited and might make them stop what they’re doing?
- What annoys them and turns them off?
- How much time should be allotted for their participation in order to receive the most complete research data without exhausting them?

For example, business and medical professionals, as well as those in certain seasonal or off-hour industries (e.g. farmers, restaurant managers), prefer participating in a single, brief session of their choosing versus multiple sessions. Therefore, posing all necessary questions that can be answered in one sitting via a flexible, asynchronous methodology such as an online bulletin board is optimal.

Millennials tend to favor quick, text-based communication throughout the day, so structuring simple text response or picture upload questions that can be answered quickly via smartphone or tablet is ideal. Respondents ages 60 and above, or those whose employment does not involve the regular use of a computer, may become frustrated when asked to manipulate technology such as screen sharing and uploading of media activities. Think about providing documents that can be printed for review, or choosing online and phone conferencing methods for vocal feedback to ease this frustration.

“Your discussion guide should also mimic the target audience’s communication style.”

Target Average Response Rates



By sampling thousands of respondents within each target across multiple studies over the past year, there is compelling evidence to suggest a strong correlation between survey/email response rates and the targets' daily schedules, the time they have to spend scanning and reading personal emails, and how often they are targeted for research.

A more effective recruit

Implementing the Target Perspective during screener development will help determine the length, types of questions, language, and invitation verbiage to the recruit screener, as well as the efficiency of the recruit.

For instance, business and medical professionals will most likely not be reached via phone recruit, but rather will require a succinct, formal invitation only, or with a few key screening questions, which can be emailed directly. Millennials' commitment rates tend to be lower than other targets, so minimal screener length is crucial in attaining interest and engagement. Chief executives may not consider a monetary incentive alone, but the addition of the opportunity to brainstorm with key opinion leaders in the industry, or be given access to a transcript or report with valuable learnings, can heighten interest and participation quality.

Important questions to work through to optimize recruiting in this process include:

- Is this screener question a core qualifier to the target market or can it be asked in the discussion guide?
- What type of incentive is most valuable?
- How does their daily schedule affect their communication preferences?

Sometimes we find that recruits do not always go as planned, and incidence rates, once in the field, turn out to be much lower than expected. Lower than expected incidence rates can be a good thing. Assessing the responses from the recruit screener are research findings themselves! When recruiting from a large sample, this data can offer monumental insights into the true target market. Researchers who pay attention to these screener response findings will acquire better knowledge of the target market and, thus, implement a more powerful execution of the Target Perspective.

“Pinpointing how your target audience communicates helps advance comfort level of the participants, leading them to share more in their responses.”

A stronger discussion guide

So if the project design is now aligned with your target respondent's attributes and the recruit takes into account their schedule with central qualifying questions, then the next step is to arm yourself with a discussion guide that accounts for respondents' likes and dislikes. This will allow for continuity throughout your research project.

Once upon a time, the typical consumer household included a head of household with an open and flexible schedule. Today, however, dual incomes, longer work hours, and more rigid schedules are the norm. In looking at the guide through this Target Perspective lens, ask these questions to avoid participation exhaustion:

- Are these tasks something that participants not only have time to do but want to do?
- If a consumer guide, are there any creative, abstract exercises, or just direct question and answer (consumers tend to engage more when having fun with their creative side)?
- Do questions and tasks appear repetitive?

Your discussion guide should also mimic the target audience's communication style. While business and medical professionals require more formal verbiage with concise, direct questioning, millennials tend to be more comfortable with uploading online images or selfies to express themselves. Pinpointing how your target audience communicates helps advance comfort level of the participants, leading them to share more in their responses.

Studies won't be perfect, but they can be better

Even with the incorporation of the Target Perspective mindset, unforeseen road bumps will invariably arise along the way. However, using this “method acting” technique to tap into your target will undoubtedly give rise to a more successful project design, a higher quality recruit, and a more customized discussion guide. The result? Greater participation and more critical research insights. 🇺🇸