



## Credibility is Bankable

Companies spend millions – large corporations billions – on marketing products to business customers and consumers each year. All marketers are looking for their brands to stand out and have a competitive advantage. And at the end of the day, we want customers to choose our products and services when they make a purchase.

Some companies leverage testimonials of satisfied customers in advertising as proof of their value propositions, such as Hewlett-Packard's *invent* campaign. While others, like DHL, attract media interest by generating case studies demonstrating how their solutions have helped customers. These testimonials demonstrate value and move brand promises from the realm of imagination to reality.

Public relations is extremely valuable to build your company's reputation. Especially when engaging 3rd party news media to report about your company's competitive advantages. It can be challenging to develop a compelling story to entice reporters to write about your products. So, creativity is needed to develop the newsworthy content that presents our products or their attributes in the context of information about trends, product uses, or marketplace needs.

One such powerful strategy is the survey. A survey gathers information meaningful to strategic customers that demonstrates both your company's expertise in a relevant subject or its competence at satisfying customer needs. Companies like Harris Interactive and J.D. Power and Associates have fielded surveys for years that have captured attitudes and needs of consumers, as well as industry trends. They have leveraged their surveys to demonstrate credibility by conducting them scientifically and strategically, and then dissecting the results and communicating their meaning effectively.

## Surveys Position Leaders

The regular publication of surveys enables a company to establish a unique franchise, with each new survey reinforcing the effectiveness and the impact of the earlier studies. The easiest way to explain how newsmaker surveys work is to describe a few examples.

Drug companies battle fiercely for the attention of doctors. Pfizer commissioned a survey of Americans and Their Doctors, which described in detail how people choose and evaluate their doctors. Additional samples of people with diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and arthritis were surveyed because Pfizer was a major producer of drugs in these three therapeutic categories. The survey was designed to expand their practices. Reports were widely distributed to American doctors.

When Northwestern Mutual Financial Network was looking for a way to demonstrate its interest in the next generation, it published a series of surveys of college students focusing on their hopes and fears. These surveys helped draw attention and enhance the reputation of its recruitment program targeted to

## Newsmaker Surveys: Research as a Public Relations Vehicle

Over the years, the use of Harris Interactive's newsmaker surveys has developed to the point where it is a recognized arrow in the quiver of many public relations executives.

The purpose of this research is to increase the visibility and enhance the reputation of corporations with audiences they want to influence.

Because these surveys are not traditional market research, they are usually paid for out of advertising or public relations budgets. They are an alternative to advertising as a way of reaching key publics with a favorable message about the company.

### What benefits do corporations obtain from these surveys?

Newsmaker surveys are designed to provide some or all of the following benefits:

1. *Widespread coverage in national, regional, and trade media*
2. *The enhancement of the image of the organization as a responsible leader in its field, providing valuable information that is not readily available.*
3. *The strengthening of the image of the organization as uniquely responsive to the needs of the public or their customers. Sponsors can claim that, through such surveys, they are empowering the group surveyed, and making their voices heard to the media and policy makers.*
4. *The opportunity to make uniquely important speeches and presentations of the survey results to public forums.*
5. *The opportunity to place by-lined articles in prestigious publications using the survey findings as a platform.*
6. *As a sales tool which provides their sales force with a unique door-opener.*
7. *The opportunity to present unique information to special presentations before policy makers including the White House and Congress.*