

Our Survey Says: Not Much Really

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About me

Scottish Office

Cleveland County and City of York Councils

National council of the Local Authorities

Research & Intelligence Association (2002-04)

Many research, public consultation and engagement projects

Consultancy, enabling clients to hear what their customers are saying and then do something positive about it

Today

- **Methods** (*How?*)
- **Purpose** (*Why?*)
- **Sampling** (*Who?*)
- **Questions** (*What?*)
- **Alternatives** (*What if?*)

Methods

(How?)

Survey Methods

- Face-to-face
- Telephone
- Postal
- Self-completion
- On-line

We often avoid the question of whether something is worth doing by going straight to the question "how do we do it?"

Peter Block

If you have your why? for life, then you can get along with almost any how?

Friedrich Nietzsche

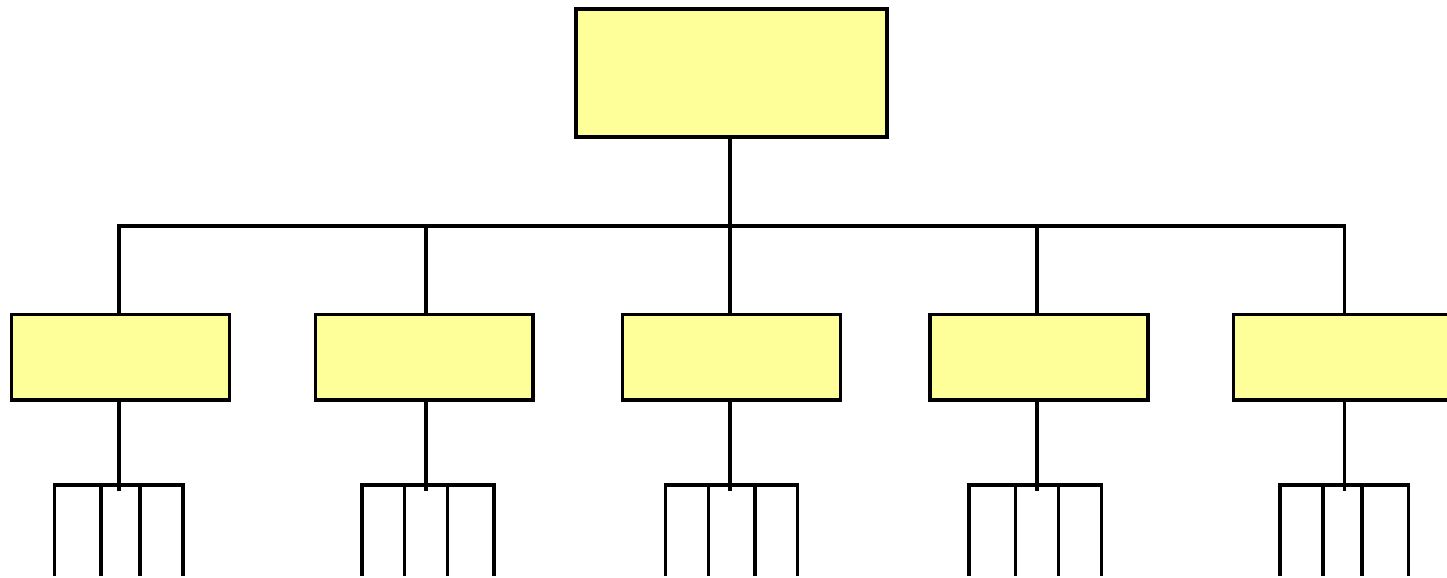
Purpose

(Why?)

Research results used for...

- **Monitoring** 50%
- **Prioritisation** 20%
- **Horizon scanning** 10%
- **Options decisions** 10%
- **Service improvement** 10%

The Thinking: Hierarchical



Hierarchy is an organisation with its face to the CEO and its ass toward the customer.

Jack Welch

The Favoured Tool: Surveys

- **Surveys are best for...**
 - Enumeration
 - Description
 - Answering specific questions
 - Identifying differences between groups
 - Monitoring trends over time
- **They are not the best analytical tool to help you understand 'why?'**

*If your only tool is a hammer,
all problems look like nails.*

Mark Twain

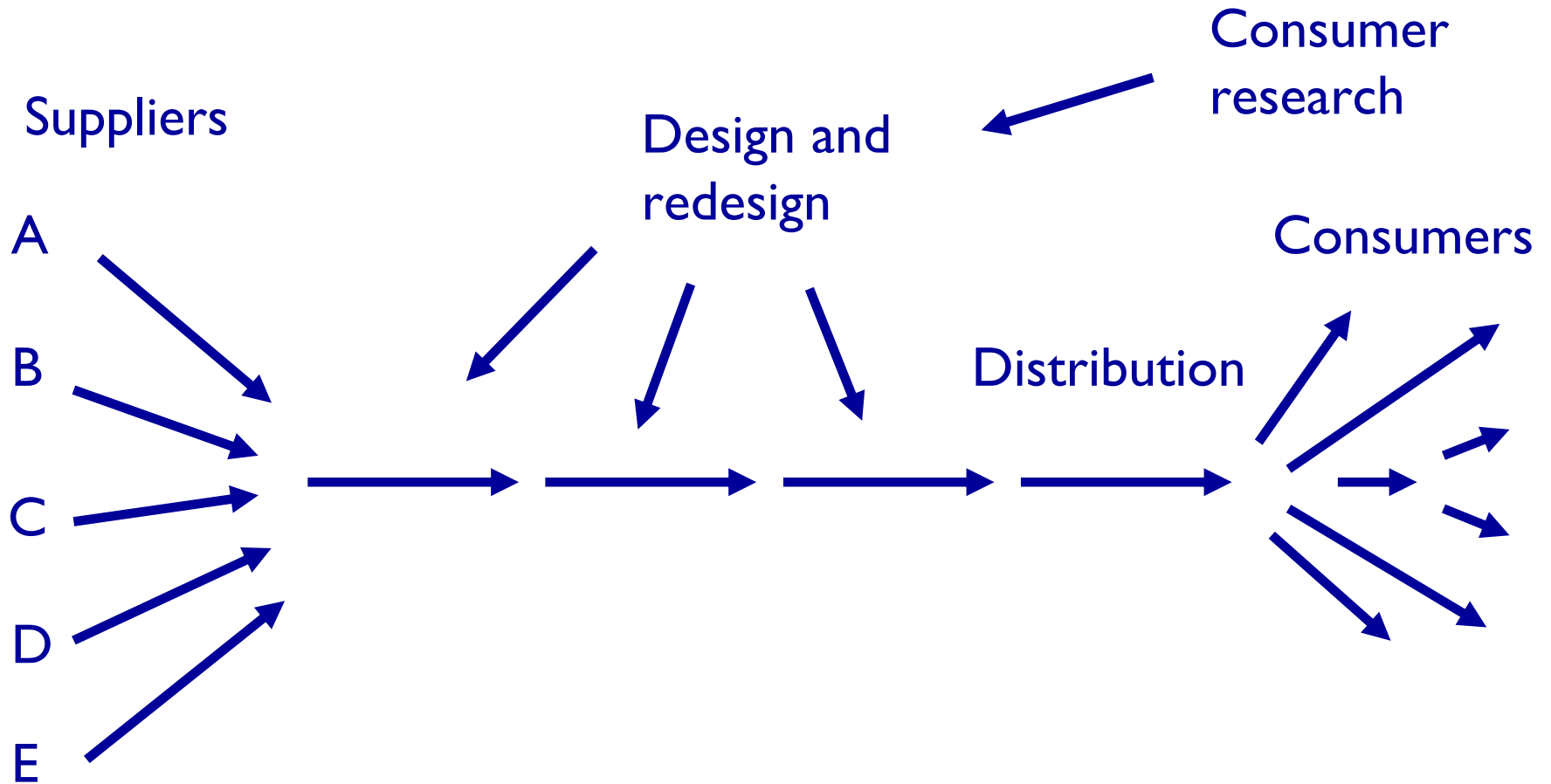
*Every system is perfectly
designed to achieve the
results it gets.*

Donald M. Berwick

*The object of taking data is to
provide a basis for action.*

W. Edwards Deming

'Customer-in' thinking



Source: W. Edwards Deming

Ask yourself...

- What business are we in?
- Who is the survey for? Where will it be used? And how do things work now?
- It is not enough to ask questions well, you must ask the right questions

Sampling

(Who?)

Terms

- **Universe**

- The body of people you wish to study (e.g. customers, non customers)
- Needs a clear 'operational definition'

- **Frame**

- List from which a sample of potential respondents can be drawn
- Unlikely to ever perfectly fit the universe
- The people who will use the data we generate need to decide on the frame

How many people to sample?

- **Base decision on**
 - What you know about variation in the frame
 - Degree of accuracy required, level of error you can tolerate
- **No survey questions everyone, therefore no survey is 100% accurate**
- **Maximise response rate**
- **This means more accuracy and greater statistical confidence that the data represents the sample frame**

Questions

(What?)

*The test of a good measure:
Does this help in
understanding and improving
performance?*

John Seddon

Types of questions

- **Open ended**
- **Closed or pre-coded**
 - Simple
 - Multiple options
 - Frameworks
- **Numerical and semantic scales**

Ground rules (1)

- **Be clear and concise**
 - Avoid complex issues
 - Use plain language
 - Make no assumptions, leave no room for doubt
 - Use simple directions
 - Don't expect too much of respondents

Ground rules (2)

- One question at a time, starting with an easy one
- Avoid 'testing'
- Avoid leading, allow people to hold different views
- Ensure that the order makes sense and that it flows

Ground rules (3)

- Allow people to communicate what matters to them
- Don't ask what you can't or won't use – no 'nice to know' questions
- Ask about 'facts' before 'opinions' and 'processes' before 'results'

Ground rules (4)

- Don't ask what you should already know
- Avoid getting people needlessly thinking about negative things
- Remember that the customer does not always know
- No personal, intrusive questions

Ground rules (5)

- If it isn't obvious, explain why information is required
- Consider how you will analyse each question
- Pilot the questionnaire – 'measure twice, cut once'
- Thank people, you want them to respond next time

Ground rules (6)

- **Know the limits of satisfaction questions**
 - A satisfied customer may be just as satisfied somewhere else
 - Measures of satisfaction do not help you make improvements
 - Customers can rarely tell you accurately enough why they feel the way they do

Musashi: The Book of Five Rings

- Think of what is right and true
- Practice and cultivate the science
- Become acquainted with the arts
- Know the principles of the crafts
- Understand the harm and benefit in everything
- Learn to see everything accurately
- Become aware of what is not obvious
- Be careful even in small matters
- Do not do anything useless

Alternatives

(What if?)

*There is nothing so useless as
doing efficiently that which
should not be done at all.*

Peter Drucker

Consider alternatives (1)

- A survey usually isn't the best course of action
- Asking questions of purpose with others, agree what is worth doing
- Being able to do something, doesn't make it worth doing

Consider alternatives (2)

- Ask, how else can we hear the voice of the customer?
- Do we already hold the information we need? Does a system need to be set up to collect it?
- Do front line employees already know the answers?

Thanks



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