

## QUALITAS

### Do I Really Need to Attend This Conference?

Sean Dunnigan

*Ipsos Reid UU*

It's something of an understatement to say that how we learn and how we gather information have changed in the past few years. Early Internet prognosticators were optimistic that the web and digital media would open up new avenues of learning. They were wrong only in not being optimistic enough. This hasn't been change: it's been a revolution.

One has only to take a stroll through Wikipedia, sample the ever-expanding treasure house that is the Khan Academy, or throw a simple problem at YouTube (where I'm ashamed to say I once watched a video called "How to Tie a Necktie") in order to feel the immediate impact of the "new learning." Old ways of learning have to work overtime just to keep up. Which brings us to the question at hand: Now that we're in the age of digital learning, do I really need to attend this conference? I would argue: Absolutely.

As qualitative researchers, we are fully aware of the importance of in-person, real-time sharing. We're pretty much hard-wired to engage with people directly and listen for the nuggets. So, for us, conferences are a natural fit. Sure, running real-time in-store interviews remotely from your PlayBook is cool, but there's no replacement for in-person interaction. You might even say that qualitative research is the science (the art?) of interaction.

And in terms of learning about the profession, is there a better forum for interacting than a conference? Think about all those great learning experiences in your life – the revelations, the aha moments. How many of them happened in front of a screen? Embrace your inner qualitative researcher and go to that conference, ask those questions, listen for those nuggets of insight. Chances are you'll learn a few things that can't be piped in through an Ethernet cable.

## INNOVATION AND CREATIVITY

### Triggering Creativity and Energy

Margaret Imai-Compton, CMRP

*RD Centre for Learning*

*"Distraction and continuous stimulus are excellent at triggering creativity and energy."* – Kevin Hogan, body language expert and motivational speaker

Over numerous columns, you will have surmised that I believe we all have creative ability.

But even if we believe we have the capacity to embrace creativity, very few of us have the ability to summon it at will. Typically, the response goes something like this: "Sure, I'm creative, except when I need it!"

Creativity cannot be forced. And when we're stressed, our thinking will turn on itself, usually on to what's stressing us rather than expanding into realms of imaginative solutions.

In previous columns, I've written about the need for a creative mood, creative spaces, and creative freethinking.

According to Kevin Hogan, the author of the quotation at the top of this month's column, one way to encourage our creative energies on a regular basis is to design our workspace to be full of distractions, including visual and auditory stimuli.

In a recent article, Hogan published photos of the offices of several really creative thinkers. And guess what? There's not a clean desktop to be found! Piles of papers, pages of notes, pictures of celebrities, stacks of books, and plain old clutter, everywhere.

Hogan's belief is that creativity flourishes in chaos and clutter, because the constant stimulation and distraction lead the mind to unexpected and spontaneous places. The ping-pong effect created by these distractions helps the brain make surprising and often unorthodox connections.

So instead of feeling bad about your messy surroundings, put on some tunes, create another pile of papers, and enjoy the distractions, knowing that your mind is making all these new connections.

## THE COURT OF PUBLIC OPINION

### Have You Heard the Latest About Sound Trade-marks?

Ruth M. Corbin, CMRP

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The Canadian Intellectual Property Office has opened the door to registrations of trade-marks for sounds. Marketers across the country are banging their drums in approval.

The value of music and sounds in stirring brand associations has long been known among social scientists. And consumers, since their first childhood encounter with an ice cream truck, have been relying on sound cues (second only to visual cues) for interpreting their marketplace: brand specialists call it "sonic branding." Sound associations have been found to focus attention, elicit feelings, induce responses, and establish memory pathways.

The roar of the MGM lion, the NBC chimes, the Tarzan chest-beating yell – all have attained the status of distinctive, memorable sounds that are, in other countries, protectable through registration. Now, Canada will allow registrations.

According to the proposed regulations posted on its website in March and April of this year, the Canadian Intellectual Property Office requires that applications for a sound trade-mark include a drawing that graphically represents the sound, a description of the sound, and an electronic recording of the sound.

Along with the opportunity to strengthen brands with sound associations, comes the need to expand the protection of brand identity when disputes arise. That need, in turn, anticipates the inevitable need for evidence. Surveys of brand

associations with sounds require their own set of quality control standards, depending on the transmission medium – telephone, Internet, or in-person research.

MRIA's Litigation and Regulatory Resource committee invites your recommendations for quality control standards in this area of market evidence, on the cusp of expansion in Canada. Other questions or comments are also invited. Please email the author at [rcorbin@corbinpartners.com](mailto:rcorbin@corbinpartners.com)

## **BRAVE NEW WORLD**

### **Making Sense of the Online Consumer**

Corrine Sandler

*Fresh Intelligence Research Corp.*

Delivering on a concept, from idea to execution and all things in between, can be a cumbersome process that, typically, consumes every waking (and sleeping) hour of a marketer's day. The list of detailed to-do's – running into the millions of dollars in product development – can often seem endless.

So, if all this investment behind the scenes is done just to get a product on the shelf, doesn't it make sense to ensure the merchandise is optimized so that it shines when it gets there?

This is where the next generation of shopper marketing researcher comes into play. In an era when use of the smartphone is on a trajectory like no other, researchers must

capitalize on the technology by utilizing this device as the platform for collecting valuable in-store insights.

As an example, let's take a recent mobile study conducted by Fresh Intelligence. In order to gain an understanding of the in-store merchandising tactics used by Canadian retailers during the 2012 Easter season, Fresh Intelligence commissioned a mobile study to uncover best-in-class retailer examples, themes, and trends found in-store.

The methodology employed 64 mobile respondents visiting fifteen retail stores across Canada, snapping photos via a downloadable mobile app, and answering a few simple rating questions. Once a data set with hundreds of pictures (including promotional and Easter shelf displays, product images, and decorations) were captured and attitudinal responses were analysed, researchers were able to accurately gauge national in-store brand performance across different banners, and provide opportunities and recommendations for Canadian retailers.

Marketers' ability to monitor their in-store initiatives and immediately improve their merchandising efforts are vital to the success of their brands. With the number of smartphone subscribers at 101.3 million and growing (according to ComScore's January 2012 report, available online), the future of mobile research will continue to prevail, as researchers reveal the technology's powerful potential to provide the insights that lead to brand success.