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Angry Birds

By Jack Miller

I can't beat my grandson at Angry Birds. Heck, when I play Angry Birds I can't even figure out what I'm trying to do. I think that's because he won't let me use his iPad long enough for me to get good at it. Or, maybe it's just because he's 5 and has an unfair advantage.

What's this got to do with Market Intelligence? I could use this as a lead-in to a piece about the importance of asking "Why?" Why can't I win? But I'll save that for another day. Today, I want to talk about killing two birds with one stone. Talk about angry birds!

As a Director of Market Intelligence, whenever I would do market research I would always have a primary objective. There would be some decision I needed to make or some business problem I needed to solve. This was the Need to Know™ market intelligence. I would always share the business problem with the market researcher, because a good researcher can add value here. Sometime the researcher would say, "Why do you need to know that?" And then, I might find that I was asking the wrong questions.

Sometimes this leads to a much more creative solution than traditional focus groups or surveys. I remember one case where we wanted to know how customers made decisions. We wanted to know this because we wanted to know what role the various elements in our marketing mix played in the decision making process. This would help us fine tune our message as well as our mix. In this case, we wanted to know how graphic designers and ad agencies made the decision on what paper to use. We had specification reps who called on designers to promote our paper. We had sampling programs, swatch books, and

printed samples. We had paper merchants who sold our papers. We had trade shows and ads in trade magazines.

But we had no idea how each of these elements played into the decision making process. There were a lot of different opinions about this, but it was clear that we really didn't know.

We went to five cities, and in each city met with five designers or ad agencies, and asked each one to go through two recent projects, one that was "typical," and one that was unusual in some way. We asked: what paper did they use, why did they select that paper, and by what process did they make that decision. The focus was on the why and the process. We did 50 case studies in all, and the results were surprising and enlightening. Perhaps the greatest value came from learning which elements did not play into the decision process at all.

And, this was a great opportunity to get input from designers and ad agencies. We learned a lot that was beyond the original scope of the research.

Now, as a consultant, I find that clients often do not want to share the business problem. I think this is a missed opportunity to get added value from the research.

And, whenever I did market research, in addition to the Need to Know™ questions, there were always some nice to know questions as well. If we were going to interview a hundred companies, what else could we ask without detracting from the primary objective? How many of those angry birds could we kill with one market research stone?

A good market researcher will know how far you can push this, how long you can make an interview or a survey before the respondent starts to lose focus and you start to lose value, or even get unreliable information.

Do be sure to take aim at the angry bird you really need, but don't miss the opportunity to get a few more birds, too.

For Need to Know™ market intelligence, call Jack Miller at 203 925 0326 or email jack.miller@market-intell.com. For advice on how to play Angry Birds, you'll have to talk to my grandson.

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