

Customer Case Study
GfK

Mixed-Mode Research: Increasing Response Rates by 50% through a Mixed IVR, CAWI, and Paper Survey

Mixed-mode research represents a great opportunity for Market Research agencies and their clients. As well as increasing sample coverage, it can significantly improve response rates in comparison to traditional, single-mode surveys.

Industry figures for 2007 show that although mixed-mode research is conducted by 43% of Market Research agencies, it represents only 6% of their revenues. So, while many agencies are able to conduct such studies, these figures show that little work is currently being done in this area.

The work that is being done is primarily a combination of CAWI (Computer Assisted Web Interviewing) and CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing). To date, there are very few studies in which three modes of interviewing are combined.

In 2007, GfK NOP was commissioned to carry out a satisfaction study for a major healthcare client. Working with technology partner Confirmit and IVR partner Interplay Media, GfK NOP successfully conducted the study for one of the largest care home operations in the UK, covering 160 care facilities and over 9,000 residents. The study combined three modes of interviewing: IVR (Interactive Voice Response), CAWI, and paper questionnaires.

The Research Challenge

Such a study presented a variety of challenges for GfK NOP in terms of the methodologies required to reach respondents. The client provides a full range of care, some of which is residential (where residents live independently but with support close by), but most of which is nursing care for the frail and elderly. One third of residents suffer from dementia or are physically or mentally disabled. The client's typical resident is female, aged between 80 and 90 years old, and in care for two to three years. This provides a unique and challenging market to research.

As part of its commitment to excellence, the client had set up its own satisfaction study in 2006, which was designed, administered, and processed in-house. While this study provided a good general overview, it had a number of limitations. Response was moderate, with around 3,000 replies from approximately 9,000 residents. Confidentiality was not transparent, with the potential for homes to cheat—the survey was distributed to residents and collected by the homes themselves and then processed centrally.

There were also limitations with the more technical aspects of the study. For example, questionnaires were not serialized, so results were not attributable to individual homes. And data was manually analyzed, limiting the amount of analysis that could be performed and making the overall process slower.

In 2007, the industry regulator, the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI), made anonymous surveys of care homes mandatory. The rules required that results be published to current and prospective residents and their relatives. Realizing the limitations of their previous study, the client approached GfK NOP to develop a study that would produce insights and actionable results, as well as maximize response rates and, of course, minimize costs.

Interactive Voice Response and Online Surveying – A Low-Cost Research Solution

GfK NOP's initial solution was to harness the benefits and low cost of the latest technology by replacing paper with IVR (a computer-driven, self-completion telephone survey) and online survey completion where feasible. This would provide the best opportunity to generate a greater response at lower cost.

Apart from addressing the questionnaire design issues that the client had with its own study, the key to this study's success was GfK NOP's ability to use unique ID serialization that would produce results attributable to individual homes. This function would also link responses to the client's existing resident and home databases, enabling insight into how the type of care provided and the style and type of home impact resident satisfaction.

The survey also needed to provide confidentiality for respondents, while providing a fuller questionnaire with more sensitive answer scales, and underpinning each scale with actionable, diagnostic questions.

In addition to this, it was vital that the study could empower management to get reports out quickly at the home level, and to explore data interactively, live online, so that actions could be taken from survey feedback.





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Determining the Research Design

To determine what a paper element could add to the IVR and online project, a pilot study was conducted. This would tell GfK NOP whether paper could be dropped altogether, and whether the other two modes alone would give greater, or at least sufficient reach, at a lower cost.

GfK NOP selected two matched samples of eight homes each, in which residents and relatives were offered either 'IVR, online, and paper' or 'IVR and online only'. However, with limited online access for care home residents, it was quickly identified that paper was still an essential element of the study. Furthermore, the physical or mental disabilities of a large proportion of residents prevented them from completing the survey in any form.

Among relatives of the residents, 26% were willing and able to respond via IVR and online, but were not as keen to do so if they were offered a paper alternative (3%). Together, IVR and online provided almost the same reach as paper (26% compared to 31%), but with variable costs reduced by one third.

Assessing these results, GfK NOP designed the main study so that residents could be offered paper only, delivered in bulk to homes and then returned by post individually and directly to GfK NOP. Relatives were offered IVR and online completion.

Delivery Through Technology

The Interactive Voice Response component of the study was set up in conjunction with GfK NOP's partner, Interplay Media Limited. A valid User ID was assigned to each respondent to allow them access to the system, and this was linked to home and respondent databases.

GfK NOP then approached Confirmit to provide the technology to drive the remainder of the solution. By using Confirmit, the time and costs associated with developing the necessary architecture and infrastructure for the study could be closely managed and reduced.

Confirmit provided a number of its technology solutions to support GfK NOP. For the online data collection element, Bellview Web was used, again through a valid User ID system. The results from online completion were then exported to Confirmit Pulsar Web for real-time, Web-based analysis and reporting. For the IVR element, results were again exported to Confirmit Pulsar Web.

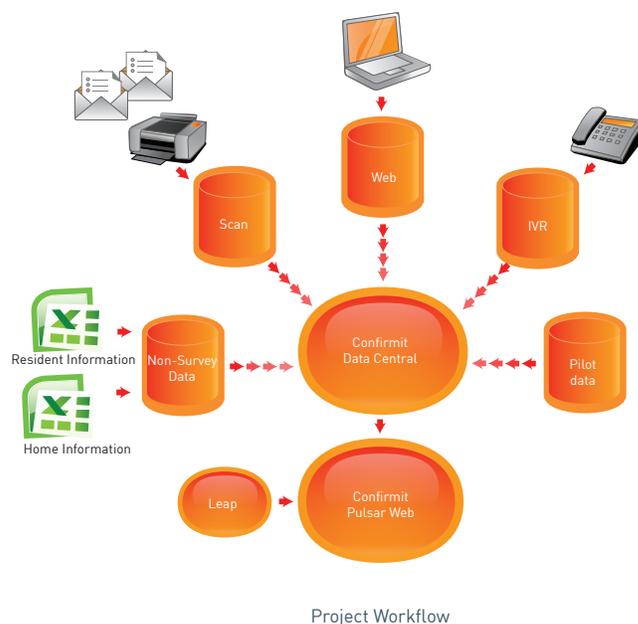
Paper questionnaires were batch processed using Confirmit's Bellview Scan solution. To ensure a correct count of completed paper surveys, a unique User ID system was incorporated into the paper processing. GfK NOP could then see, on a weekly basis, the number of surveys completed and processed.

Combining three data collection modes provided a challenge in terms of merging different data sets together. However, it was essential that GfK NOP could have a merged view of IVR, online and paper responses, both from the pilot study and the main survey. This merged dataset needed to be cleaned, integrated with the home and respondent databases, and then prepared for tabulation.

To achieve this, GfK NOP used Confirmit's data processing solution, Confirmit Data Central. This solution proved to be a key element of the study, bringing the various and separate aspects of the project together into a single format. Once Confirmit Data Central had merged all data from the IVR, online, and paper surveys; it then cleaned it, recoded it, and reformatted it, ready for analysis. Examples of the reformatting include the generation of 'Top Box' variables and summarized variables, which allowed researchers to easily compare individual home scores against regional and national averages.

To analyze the combined data, tabulations were defined in another Confirmit tool, Leap. All survey results were then accessed online via Confirmit Pulsar Web, and from here, tables could be exported into Excel reports for individual homes.

The various technologies used for the GfK NOP study were combined into a project workflow to enable every stage of the survey process to work smoothly. This streamlined process meant that data collection, data processing, and analysis, could be handled in a carefully managed way, and data from each interviewing mode combined to provide measurable, actionable results in a single format. The process was also highly efficient, with data processing taking just one day using the Confirmit Data Central solution.



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**The Benefits of Mixed-Mode:
Response Rates Increased by 50%**

The combination of a re-designed survey, superior technology platforms, and professional administration proved very valuable for GfK NOP's client, providing a 50% increase over the previous year's response rate. This meant there was one response for every two beds, with 28% of able residents and 28% of relatives responding.

The client also benefited from an integrated technology approach which provided a wide range of functions that could not have been delivered via paper alone. This included integration of data, drill-down of data to the respondent or home level, and analysis of survey results in real time, online.

The client summarized these benefits by commenting: "The project has been a great success, integrating survey data with resident and home information from our databases. It has delivered actionable strategic insight to the business both centrally and at the operating level, and is supporting our drive to achieve the highest quality of life within each and every home."

About Confirmit

Confirmit is the world's leading provider of software for Market Research (MR) and Enterprise Feedback Management (EFM). The company has more than 200 employees and offices in Oslo (headquarters), Guildford, London, Moscow, New York, San Francisco, and Yaroslavl. Confirmit's software is also distributed through partner resellers in Barcelona, Milan, Santiago, Sydney, Tokyo and Valencia. Confirmit became a public company in December 2005, and is listed on Oslo Stock Exchange under the ticker "CONF".

Confirmit targets Global 5000 companies and Market Research agencies worldwide with a wide range of software products for feedback / data collection, panel management, data processing, analysis, and reporting. Customers include British Airways, Countrywide Financial, Dow Chemical, Experian, GlaxoSmithKline, Halifax Bank of Scotland, Hewlett Packard, IntraWest, Ipsos, Nielsen, The NPD Group, Safeco Insurance, Statoil, Symantec and Virgin Media.

