

## When You Need Community Support: Using Low-cost Research Tools to Make Informed Decisions

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## What We'll Cover

- Why Conduct Research?
- Qualitative vs. Quantitative
- Case Studies
  - Addison, Texas
  - Territory of Guam
- Online Surveys
- In-depth Interviews
- Focus Groups
- Questions



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## Why Conduct Research?

- Listen to the community and key stakeholders
- Understand
  - Attitudes
  - Assumptions
  - Misunderstandings/misconceptions
  - Fears
  - Concerns
  - Questions



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## Why Conduct Research?

With research results, you can:

- Better understand your audience
- Better engage the public
- More fully inform them of problems you are trying to solve
- Develop effective messaging and branding
- Achieve “informed consent” – willingness to go along with a course of action even if originally opposed
- Make better decisions!

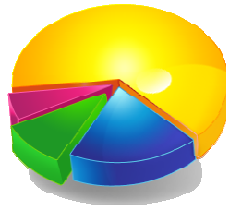


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## Quantitative vs. Qualitative

- **Quantitative**

- Scientific random sampling
- Statistically accurate results with specific confidence level
- Results can be projected to entire population



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## Quantitative vs. Qualitative

- **Qualitative**

- Answers “why” questions
- Offers insight and direction
- Provides a sense of a group’s attitudes, motivations, behaviors, opinions and preferences



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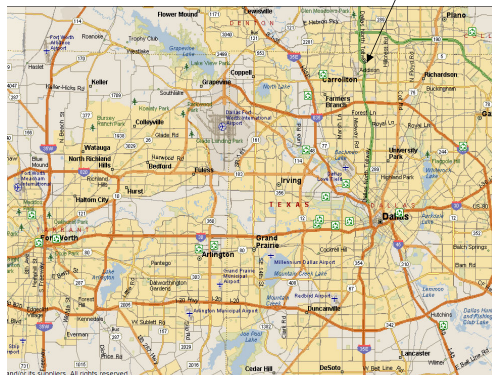
## Do Both?

- Depends on your goals
- For large scale decisions: quantitative offers added measure of security
- One option: use qualitative to test hunches; confirm with quantitative



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## Case Study



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## Situation



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## Proposal

- Goal: Improve recycling, achieve collection efficiencies
- Close market for trash collection to businesses, orgs., multifamily
- Procure single trash collection provider who would offer recycling
- Recycling not mandatory
- Town could issue permits to other recyclers

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## Research Questions

- Would Town's businesses, organizations and multifamily complexes embrace proposal?
- What were questions, concerns?
- What hurdles would Town need to overcome to implement new system?

Research provided answers!



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## What We Did



- Online survey – obtain baseline information from employees in businesses, organizations and multifamily complexes responsible for solid waste decisions



- In-depth interviews – dig deeper



- Focus groups – understand why, hear opinions, questions, concerns



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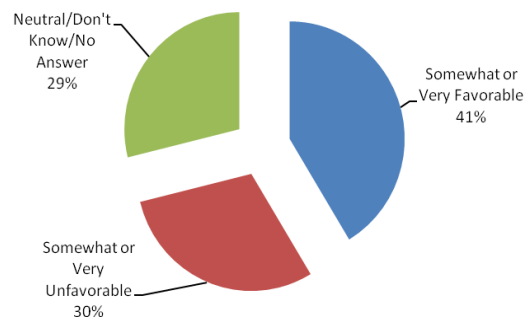
## Online Survey

- Used  **SurveyMonkey**
- Short survey
  - Collection rates and services
  - Recycling rates and services
  - If not recycling, why not
  - Satisfaction with current services
  - Opinions about Town's proposal
- "Volunteer" respondents
- Promoted through direct mail, email, website, Addison Business Assn.
- 102 responses



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## Online Survey Results Opinions about Proposal



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## In-depth Interviews

- 25 interviews with select group of SW decision makers in businesses, organizations and multifamily complexes
- 20% had recycling programs
- Misperceptions about what could be recycled
- Mixed opinions about proposal



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## Focus Groups

- 3 focus groups
  - Multifamily SW managers
  - Office buildings and institutions
  - Retailers, restaurants, hotels
- Held in focus group facility
- Primary focus: Town's proposal
- "Homework": Questions about current trash and recycling services



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## Focus Group Results

- Gave rich, nuanced range of opinions about the proposal
- Provided insights into questions and concerns
- Gave clues as to what would make the proposal palatable (flexibility, choice, involvement)
- **Told us they want recycling to be mandatory, not optional!**



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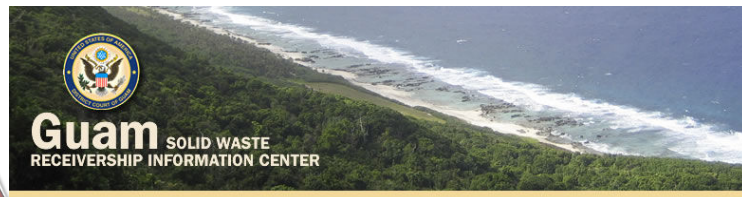
## Value of Addison Research

- Gave new insights, direction
- Obtained unfiltered, candid comments from target audiences
- Gave Town a sense of what to expect in the way of opposition – and why
- Cost less than direct mail or phone surveys



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## Case Study: Guam



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## Situation

- May 2008, U.S. District Court appointed GBB Receiver of Guam's Solid Waste Management Division
- Solid waste system plagued by serious operational, administrative and financial problems
- Dysfunctional trash collection system; one old truck; no recycling
- Out of 12,000 customers, 4,000 weren't paying for service
- Ordot Dump out of compliance with federal regulations

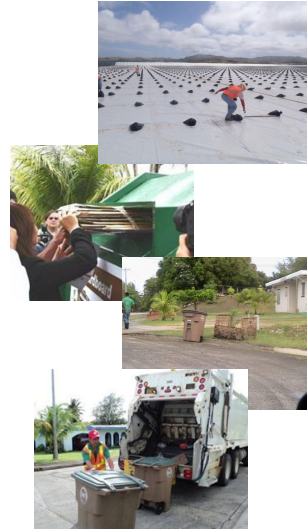


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## What GBB Did

- 180 degree turnaround
- Built and opened a modern, state-of-the-art sanitary landfill
- Closed the Ordot Dump
- Reformed operations, billing, customer service
- Implemented cart-based trash collection with customer registration
- Opened recycling convenience centers; pilot curbside recycling to 1,000 HH
- Implemented bulky waste collection program



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## Research Questions

During preparations for implementing cart-based trash collection:

- What was the level of satisfaction with current trash and recycling services?
- What were residents' opinions about recycling; barriers to recycling?
- What did they think about the 96-gallon trash carts – too large? Too small?
- What types of cart registration procedures would be most convenient?
- What were their opinions about public ed materials and "Guam Cleaner and Greener" slogan? Did we need to translate materials?



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## What We Did

- Organized 3 focus groups with residents (north, central, south island)
- Conducted stakeholder interviews:
  - Guam recycling association leaders
  - School officials
  - Mayors
  - Business managers
  - Media



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## Focus Groups

- Short presentation about new services
- Worksheets to gain input and answer questions
- Moderated discussion



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## Focus Group Findings

- Residents wanted to recycle more
- Concerns about carts being stolen
- Number of excess trash tags not sufficient
- Cart registration at malls and sporting events, in addition to mayors' offices
- Approved of collateral materials; English okay
- Convenience center hours aren't convenient; modify
- Gave us more than 25 questions to incorporate in public education FAQs



## Stakeholder Interviews

Among findings:

- Assisted with ideas for grassroots outreach and partnerships
- Gave feedback on public education materials
- Provided input on messaging that would resonate ("More to come")
- Recommended revising schedule for convenience centers: open Sunday and Monday

## Research Tools You Can Use

### 4 questions to ask before you begin:

1. What do you hope to accomplish?
2. What specific research questions do you want to answer?
3. What will you do with the data?
4. Who can best provide answers?



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## Online Surveys

### Advantages:

- Lots of data collected quickly
- Unlimited questions
- Various types of questions
- Instant analysis
- Flexible, randomization of question order, skip patterns
- Costs less than making phone calls or sending a mail survey



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## Online Surveys

### Disadvantages:

- Results are not typically representative
  - Internet users tend to be younger
  - Some ethnic groups not represented
  - Respondents may be those most passionate about issue
- Can be subject to fraud, skewed results (use ID or track with email or IP address)



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## Online Survey Software

- Survey Monkey  
[www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com)
- Survey Gizmo  
[www.surveygizmo.com](http://www.surveygizmo.com)



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## Tips for Your Online Survey

- Keep it short and simple; clear wording
- Introduction: Tell respondents who you are, why their response is important
- Put least controversial questions at beginning
- Avoid leading, redundant questions
- Minimize open-ended questions
- Offer “don’t know” “not applicable”
- Have a market research expert review your questions
- PRETEST your survey
- Link back to your website

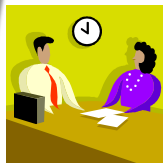


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## In-depth Interviews

### Advantages

- Explore perspectives, behaviors, attitudes in greater depth than with online survey



### Disadvantages

- Can reflect bias on part of interviewer
- Take time
- Results cannot be generalized



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## Tips for In-depth Interviews

- Ask: What information is needed from whom?
- Identify stakeholders
- Develop interview protocol
- Develop interview questions
- Ask factual questions before opinions
- Train interviewers
- Analyze by grouping themes, patterns of comments



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## Focus Groups

What they are:

- Bring together 7-10 people who represent target audience
- Moderated discussion designed to elicit opinions
- Answer “what do you think” and “why” questions
- Opportunity for participants to interact with one another
- Window into attitudes, feelings, behaviors



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## Focus Groups

What they are NOT:

- Not a means to persuade
- Not a means to “correct” misconceptions
- Not designed for group to reach a consensus on an issue
- Results can’t be generalized

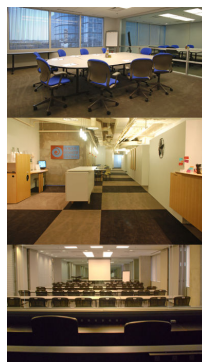


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## Focus Groups

Logistics

- Do you need a focus group facility?



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## Focus Groups

### Logistics

- Taping/audiotaping
- Honorarium
- Food/beverages
- Length of group: 1.5 – 2 hours
- Recruit homogeneous groups with recruiting script
- Essential: discussion guide – worksheets
- Start with general discussion – then focus and become more specific
- Objective, trained facilitator




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## Tips for Focus Groups

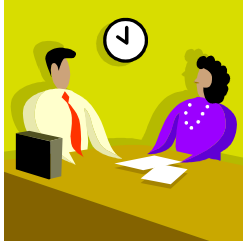

- Develop recruitment screening questionnaire
- Recruit 3 or 4 more than needed
- Send reminders
- Prepare moderators guide
- Arrange for venue, moderator
- Plan for way that moderator can communicate with observers (if any)
- Prepare report that organizes data by themes, concerns, questions



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## Questions?



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