



CACTUS CALL

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Presidents Message

I've been involved with market research for almost 20 years now. I must say, in all those years I do not recall a year like this past one. With the world economy spinning out of control and doom and gloom predicted for our industry, it certainly has appeared to be "the worst of times". And yet we go on. The work continues. Clients return and projects go to field.

Like the famous line from Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities*, we truly are experiencing "the best of times" and the "worst of times". Dickens was describing the difference between London and Paris during the French Revolution. He very well could have been describing the current state of our industry.

It has never been easier for a person to express their opinion. Almost daily we see the creation of new ways to connect with people using social networks. Our clients now establish direct lines of communication with their customers. The world is awash in a sea of customer generated data. Clients no longer have to make difficult decisions with limited data. With all of this data so readily available, it truly must be "the best of times".

And yet, with all this data and all these new tools are we making better decisions? Does a large volume of data mean better data? A look back in history would give at least one example where mistakes were made. In 1936 when *Literary Digest* conducted its presidential election poll the sample included over 1 million households. At the time this was considered to be more than enough to predict a victory for Alf Landon. We all remember President Landon, don't we? It turns out to be a classic example of sample error. A large volume of data did not result in the correct prediction.

Could the ability to easily collect a large volume of data really be a bad thing? Can one really have too much data? The answer is most definitely yes. Bad data is bad no matter what the volume. More of it just makes matters worse. Some tend to overlook the flaws in the data if they have large volumes of it. It can't possibly be wrong since there is so much of it. In this new age of readily available data, I fear mistakes like the 1936 election poll will likely happen. Predictions based on improperly collected data will fail and this will cast a shadow over our industry and cause clients to question our reliability. It truly may be "the worst of times".

As professional researchers we must work to educate our clients on the importance of doing quality research. Having all these new sources of data can be a good thing if we teach clients how to use them to get meaningful data. In order to do this, we must understand them ourselves. I am a big fan of continuing education. I believe it is the responsibility of organizations like the MRA to educate their members. I encourage everyone reading this to look for opportunities to learn about the changes taking place in our industry.

I believe educating ourselves about the challenges we face is the key to restoring balance in our industry. This view is shared by the current Southwest Chapter Board. I assure you we are working hard to add strong educational content to our Vegas conference, Educational Forum, and our free webinar. Watch for details on these events in future issues of the Cactus Call.

Steve Larson
Information Alliance
SWMRA President

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CACTUS CALL is a quarterly publication issued by the Southwest Chapter of the Marketing Research Association.

Comments, suggestions and submissions should be sent to: Tara Miller 972-647-4277 or tara@accurateresearch.com.

Upcoming Events

Organization	Research Event	Date of Event	City	Website
AMA	Symposium for the Marketing of Higher Education	November 15-18, 2009	Boston, MA	www.marketingpower.com
AMA	Advanced School of Marketing Research	November 16-20, 2009	Atlanta, GA	www.marketingpower.com
CASRO	Data Collection Conference	November 18-19, 2009	Las Vegas, NV	www.casro.org
MRA	CEO Summit	February 10-12, 2010	Boca Raton, FL	www.mra-net.org
CASRO	Panel Conference	February 24-25, 2010	New Orleans, LA	www.casro.org
MRA	24th Annual Las Vegas Joint Chapter Event	March 3-5, 2010	Las Vegas, NV	www.swmra.org
AAPOR	65th Annual Conference	May 13-16, 2010	Chicago, IL	www.apor.org

Meet 'n Greet—Sponsored by: Research Now

The SWMRA held a local Meet 'n Greet in Dallas on October 13th, 2009 at the beautiful Cadillac Ranch restaurant. This was the first such event within our chapter, and was a great start to what we hope will become a lasting part of our chapter events.

Roughly 30 people attended the event in Las Colinas, with both local MRA members as well as Dallas-area AMA members attending. The Meet 'n Greet was sponsored by Research Now, whose funding allowed the SWMRA to provide food and drinks at no cost to attendees. Door prizes were also awarded.

**Thank you to everyone who attended and assisted in making this a great success.
We hope this is the first of many to come, and will be in a city near you soon!**

Congratulations to the Winners!

- Educational Forum Registration**—Steve Perkins with Burke, Inc.
- \$50 American Express Gift Card**—Andy Davis with eRewards
- \$50 American Express Gift Card**—Paul Rothbien with HR Industries
- \$50 American Express Gift Card**—Aleandro Garcia de Leon with SPSS
- \$50 American Express Gift Card**—Colleen Doyle with Javelin

Recap Submitted by: Melanie Courtright of DMS Insights and SWMRA Director at Large

Welcome New Members

Jennifer Schranz	Pacific Consulting Group
Beth Klingele	i.think inc.
Colleen Doyle	Javelin
Karie Starrett	Clearworks

24th Annual Las Vegas Conference

Lights, Camera, Research!

Producing Actionable Insights

Take: March 3 - 5, 2010
**Scene: MGM Grand
Las Vegas**

**Producers: Southwest, Northwest
and Southern California Chapters
of the Market Research Association**

MGM Room Rate \$109

Early Bird Registration \$329

Visit www.swmra.org to register today!

Inbound Marketing: 3 Reasons Why It's the Right Thing, Right Now

About the Author; Seomul Evans, Senior Search Engine Optimization Services Expert specializing in Meta Search Engines and a Search Engine Optimization Articles contributor

It's no secret that we're in a severe economic crisis in this country. What does this mean for you as a small business owner? It means that you'll do well to follow the lead of internet business owners who experienced a similar downturn in 2001. At that time they chose to focus on search engine advertising rather than display advertising because search engine advertising allowed them to keep a close eye on who they were marketing to and whether or not their strategies were successful. Businesses now are facing a similar dilemma. They need to spend less on advertising than in the past, and one of the ways to do this is to focus on inbound marketing.

1. **What is It?** Inbound marketing consists of all the steps you take as a business owner to help customers find you. Traditional marketing consists of going out and finding customers through obnoxious television ads, cold calls, mass emails, and junk mail. Not only is traditional marketing generally ineffective relative to the amount of money business owners spend on it, it's also being quickly replaced by inbound marketing. Some inbound marketing strategies include business blogging, social networking sites, and compelling videos. The three keys to successful inbound marketing are good content, organic search engine optimization, and social media. Good content on your website or business blog attracts customers because they want to hear what you have to say. Organic search engine optimization ensures that customers will have no problem finding your website through search engines, and is managed by getting inbound links to your site and thus increasing your search engine ranking. Social media sites allow you to spread your content to people who will be interested in it.
2. **Why Use It In a Recession?** Inbound marketing is essentially free, which is why it makes sense to focus on it during a financial crisis. Traditional marketing is all about spending money-on print ads, on television ads, on email lists, etc. Inbound marketing doesn't cost anything except some brain power and some time. Traditional marketing casts a wide net to find customers and typically traps only a few interested parties relative to the number of people it touches through call and advertisements. Inbound marketing allows you to focus your message only on those who self-select themselves to receive it. The third reason that inbound marketing makes sense in a recession is that it's not an expense. Pay-per-click advertising on search engines loses value as soon as you stop paying for it. And when money is tight, pay-per-click advertising may be one of the first things you need to cut from your budget. Inbound marketing, on the other hand, is a true investment. If you invest time and energy on the front end, creating good content and optimizing your website for search engines, your website will continue to generate traffic and leads, all for free.
3. **Unlimited Growth.** The beauty of inbound marketing is that it levels the playing field between small businesses and multi-million dollar corporations. While huge companies have the ability to spend lots of money on large marketing campaigns, small business owners have the opportunity to create relationships on the internet that engender loyalty among customers and interest in the products and services offered. All you need to be successful is the ability to build relationships and stand by your products and services. While now may not seem like the right time to invest a lot in marketing your business, remember that inbound marketing costs virtually nothing and is far more effective than traditional marketing approaches. If you need more information about how to make inbound marketing work for you, contact an internet marketing or SEO professional and learn how to make inbound marketing an integral part of your overall marketing strategy.

Submitted by: Vaughn Mordecai , President of Discovery Research Group and SWMRA Treasurer

Recap: First Outlook Conference in San Diego

Submitted by: Nancy Cearley of Q3 Translate and SWMRA Secretary

For me, the fall MRA's "First Outlook Conference" started with a trip to sunny San Diego on Tuesday, November 3rd. Did I say sunny? I meant foggy. I, like many of my peers, had my flight re-routed due to heavy fog at the San Diego airport. However, that didn't deter me from reaching my goal to get to the conference. After a long journey from New York to LA and a bus ride to San Diego, I landed safely and just in time to really see things start to heat up.

Located in the heart of downtown San Diego, with some lovely views of the water and skyline, the first conference day hastily began with speed networking, various seminars and the Expo Exhibit hall opening its doors at 3 pm, followed by an excellent presentation by the keynote speaker, Reed Cundiff from Microsoft.

While there were many old friends in attendance, a variety of new faces paved the way for a successful First-Time Members reception where I was lucky enough to man the Southwest Chapter table with Vaughn Mordecai, Brad Larson, and Steve Larson. We greeted the new members as they braved the cool ocean breeze at the outdoor reception (it was actually pretty cold) and came by to introduce themselves, say hi, and learn more about our chapter.

Following the "newbie" reception, we came in from the chilly outdoors to the warmth of the President's Reception, located in a key position just behind the Exhibit hall. As members entered, we were each heartily greeted by the current National Board. Kim Larson, our current National President, and Elisa Galloway, our National President-Elect, stood at the forefront with warm greetings to all.

After an evening of great food and great company, the next morning was all about business. Following breakfast, everyone flocked to the first general session. The conference was divided into 5 different educational tracks to meet everyone's needs including, Emerging Technology, Innovative Tools & Techniques, Business 2010 & Beyond, U.S. Hispanic Research Forecast and Behind the Scenes and Into the Future.

Thursday events wrapped up with the SoCal Chapter's event, a Gas Lamp District Pub Crawl with close to 90 members in attendance. According to Alice Butler, a great time was had by all...not to mention a late night and a lot of networking.

Friday morning opened quietly with another general session on Accelerating Insight and Innovation through Social Networks by Ned Winsborough from General Mills, Inc. There was also plenty of networking left to be done as the MRA's Spinning Wheel was on fire with Vaughn Mordecai bringing good luck to anyone spinning the Wheel while standing near him (you didn't even have to rub his shaved head).

The afternoon brought the awards luncheon where many were recognized for their excellent service to the MRA over the course of the past year. This year's chapter event winner was the Northwest Chapter, whom we heartily congratulate. However, they had better watch out. This year's Southwest Educational Forum in Dallas will certainly give them a run for their money!

The close of the conference was brought about with one final general session by Kristin Luck from Decipher and Dana Stanley from the Operandi Group. All those in attendance were given an excellent opportunity to learn new marketing and business development tips.

Overall, I tend to agree with Gordon Bishop from Western Wats statement who, "...felt the conference was well planned, had a beautiful location on the ocean, the bingo game that the MRA arranged was a strong way to urge traffic and participation in the exhibit hall, and the speakers were well prepared."

Visit the website often at

www.SWMRA.org

Tune in and
Stay Connected

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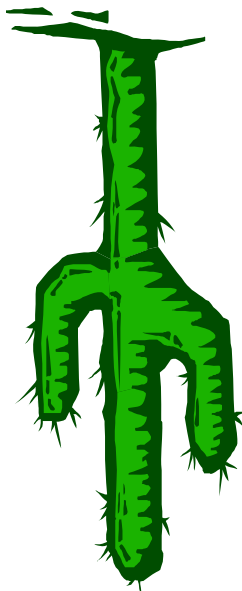
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