

# What's the point of research?

An Anderson Baillie Bluepaper

**Anderson Baillie, the UK's 6<sup>th</sup> most successful business-to-business marketing and growth consultancy, argues that the route to improved lead development is through the exploitation of research. Applied correctly, research and refined proposition development reduces sales cycles, improves lead quality and draws together the entire marketing communications mix to deliver consistent levels of enquiry.**

## **A matter of why, who and when...**

As marketers, we have all become somewhat complacent towards research. It is an exercise often handled internally, without any framework or structure, liberally sprinkled with bias towards the proposed (or subliminal) objective and managed or delivered by an individual who would rather have teeth drawn than execute the project with any gusto.

Yet it is just such an exercise that often identifies the opportunity for new markets or promotion, which ultimately makes the marketer the superstar.

The problem for many it seems is why, who and when?

Why? This often surrounds the issue of why should we spend the money on this project – surely someone internally can pick up the phone...? Then we have who? Yes, whom should we target or who should conduct the project – after all this is highly specialised!

Finally, we have when? Should we do it before the product launch/creation or after, during the campaign or perhaps when creating the proposition? Questions, questions, questions...

Or more to the point absolute confusion as to when best to employ research and more importantly, how to justify its expense.

In this short blue-paper, we have considered just three areas and how research led lead generation solutions or what is more commonly described as 'Analytical lead development', produces results, within finite costs and more importantly delivers valuable selling information to further fine tune your business communications and product development.

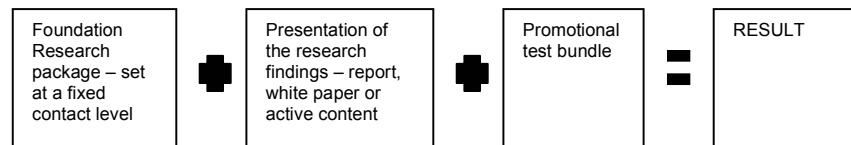
## **Research isn't Analytical lead development – it's completely different**

The problem for many is that research doesn't deliver anything to the bottom line unless it is interpreted. Few research companies want to extend their service into generating business growth, so there is a void between the research gathered and the lead development process.

Analytical lead development bridges the gap for marketing research and promotion. It is about taking small samples of data and research projects, then

driving these through events or pilot launch programmes. Its goal? Simply to use the research to create demand - ultimately proving the success of the proposition by physical demand.

To explore the application of analytical lead development it is best to apply the riggers of day-to-day marketing function. In all cases analytical lead development is based on three key areas:



### **Marketing communications – a new slant on research use to generate leads**

Ask any marcoms manager how they would use research and the first response is almost always 'brand collateral valuation' or perhaps a response exercise to a recently developed promotion headline.

If you then ask them would they consider research as a method to generate leads few would jump at the option. It's too complicated, has a stale image or takes valuable cash from the more exciting advertising budget!

Wrong, research especially when applied through analytical lead generation programmes can be used specifically for sales enquiries and business development.

It all stems from the ability to create a compelling proposition, and then use this to drive a targeted research project. The resulting data from these efforts may then be used or 'sold' to the customer base to stimulate a response.

The interest and appeal draws them toward an event or website, generating qualified enquiries – research driven marketing communications.

This is especially useful in event work. We all know the problem of filling the seats, so why not consider the use of a provocative headline, which stems from your carefully collated research recently conducted and supports your new and compelling proposition?

Let's not leave it just for events, why not drive you customers to the webinar you are conducting, they get access to the data you have collated in return for experiencing your on-line presentations. Any subscriptions to the research presented at the event may then be used to qualify the audience and profile the leads accordingly.

Not keeping the power of analytical lead generation to marketing departments, why not consider its use in the sales environment – such as a desktop sell?

Your research has supported your carefully crafted proposition; your sales teams need the supporting information to beat down the customers concerns or negotiating techniques. So why not use the data in the desktop sell to provide intelligence led desktop selling?

Packaged and specific to a proposition or product these are simple supporting presentations, often delivered in a video format by a leading industry figure who

examines or explains further the benefit of your proposition – always underpinned by your research programme.

Research isn't just about proving your market communications are working. It has now become a valuable element in lead generation, providing more tangible interest to the propositions or products your company has created.

### **New product development and management – reduce the risk of product failure**

Probably the most expensive and job threatening task a marketing professional will have, is launching a new product or service. So many products and services fail to launch costing the company millions.

Launch is complicated furthermore these days, especially for those organisations that have now reduced their marketing departments and rendered a single individual for both product or proposition creation as well as launch.

They have the entire issue to deal with. Such an environment breeds defensive strategies rather than objective evaluation of markets or potential revenue forecasts. With someone quite so close to a product or launch they need the opportunity to test their ideas, which may have become clouded through the pressure to deliver.

Research programmes, which are not geared to information gathering but tailored to producing a result, such as leads for sales or measurable brand development, can now be employed to test the product or proposition without the massive expense of the launch campaign.

Under these circumstances, the research programme is geared to developing the founding proposition further - testing responses and uptake by the customer base. The response is then presented in a pilot launch event with a view to drive the now 'refined' proposition further into new markets.

The result? A finely tuned marketing proposition and tailored product or service with reduced risk. Furthermore, you have leads proving that the mix is right and delivering instant momentum to the sales teams to engage their enthusiasm and focus on the new product you have created.

This permits you to launch the new product or service with confidence to a targeted sector and with a proposition you know to have already worked.

Remember, research is more than the collection of data. Its value is paramount in the deployment of research led lead generation programmes, which reduce your risk in product or service launch.

### **When do you drive a cross-sell approach in a product lifecycle?**

It's a difficult decision, when do you drive out a product or brand and introduce another?

Do you exchange it for a simple replacement where no alternative is provided or introduce a cross-sell option, allowing the customer to gradually change from one product to another?

The issue is fraught with risk – customer loyalty needs to be tested, new product designs understood and assessed for impact upon a loyal and emerging new customer base. Then there is the issue of cross selling – what mechanism works best, exemplifies the virtues of the new without slamming the old.

This has to be one of the best applications for analytical lead development, as you can simply produce a series of test campaigns - each linked to a separate research exercise and delivering a test of change for each aspect of an old product demise and the new emergence.

Rather than leave yourself to the fickle buying habits of the customer base do a rapid test of the market, then use this data to launch a pilot product or service – gauge the response and then again fine tune. This may enable you to ride the wave of product demise through gradual change of new product formats, pricing mechanisms or cross selling bundles.

### **Test the move to new markets or international strategy through analytical lead generation development**

Moving to a new market is expensive and high risk, complicated more when it is across an international boundary. Tastes change, names do not translate always the way they should. Support or delivery of the product becomes logistically difficult and sales need to receive a huge boost to start with to get momentum at its peak.

So why not test pilot a launch using ALD? New markets may be simply tested, the propositions refined and overall through the use of ALD the risk of developing a new international aspect of your business is massively reduce, with leads at the ready to kick start revenue more quickly.

### **Changing a brand or proposition position – reduce risk with analytical lead development**

We have already mentioned that launching a product has its risks but what about changing or amending an already successful brand or product? What about improving a flagging or diminishing brand or product line?

So many changes have been made upon 'gut feeling' or with limited focus group test marketing. Research led lead generation allows you to test the changes of a brand and its effectiveness directly through lead development. Much is made of testing a brands favour, however few are so bold as to test its buying capacity. Most focus groups will give an opinion of a name or style – however, the group is rarely tested on the buying behaviour post name change.

Assessing the changes in lead quality reduces the risk of brand evolution or 'globalisation' where an already existing brand in a particular region is then rolled out internationally.

**Finally we have PR. How can you measure the effectiveness of PR? Only through its combination with Analytical Lead Development.**

It's a thorny subject – how do you measure the effectiveness of public relations – column inches or leads generated? In the current economic climate there has been a massive sway towards lead development.

So why not combine the power of public relations with a lead generating process- taking the research data; that has proved and presented a refined business proposition straight to your target market.

Your public relations efforts strive to maintain the visibility of your findings, promoting the significance of the data and the individual's credibility in deriving the result. The move to action is clearly identified in the copy and sponsorship efforts such as evening dinner gatherings or roundtable luncheons where the issues are then further discussed.

Here, your PR effort is driving a) the message and b) the proposition directly to an event or website to derive further supporting information to the headlines you have been so successful in producing.

The result – lead generation from PR. Only through the foundation of research and the analytical lead development approach.

#### **Notes about the Author**

Anderson Baillie provides its IT and high-tech client base with integrated marketing solutions and business growth consultancy. Currently the UK's sixth leading business-to-business marketing agency specialising in the IT sector.

With over 12 years of industry practice, Anderson Baillie has developed its own methodology of strategy development through to communications planning and deployment for companies operating throughout Europe.

Analytical Lead Development is an Anderson Baillie Research Solution. More information may be found from:

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