



# How to Conduct Membership Surveys

Kevin Whorton

*Whorton Marketing & Research*

[info@kwhorton.com](mailto:info@kwhorton.com)

[www.kwhorton.com](http://www.kwhorton.com)

**301-312-8938**

# Outline:

*What will we cover today?*

- **Quick Introduction**
- **Methodologies—Qualitative, Quantitative, Secondary**
- **Steps:**
  - **Planning and Selecting Methods**
  - **Framing Questions**
  - **Fielding Your Survey**
  - **Analyzing**
  - **Reporting**



# Introduction:

## *Who is Doing This Session?*



- **My background (if it's helpful)**
  - **Association Executive**
    - Director of Market Research: Natl. Assn of Home Builders
    - Division Director (Research, Strategy, Marketing): American Society of Hospital Pharmacists
    - VP Marketing & Retailer Relations, Natl Association of Chain Drug Stores
    - Head of Direct Response, Catholic Relief Services
  - **Service Provider**
    - Former Account Director, Marketing General
    - Head of WM&R for past four years: 100 studies for 80 clients
  - **Thought leader (maybe!)**
    - Past adjunct faculty, Loyola College
    - Current vice chair of DMA Nonprofit Federation
    - Current chair of ASAE Member Action Team
    - Member of AAPOR, ASAE Research Committee

# Methodologies:

## *How do We Do What Needs to be Done?*



- **Secondary research**
  - Understanding the association & membership through their promotions, sales, history, old studies
- **Qualitative research**
  - Focus groups, personal interviews, face-to-face
- **Quantitative surveys**
  - Samples vs. census
  - Formats: online, print, telephone
  - Sequence of mailings/reminders
  - Testing for bias: unrepresentative results
  - Premiums/incentives for response
  - Length/format of instrument

# The Bigger Picture:

## *What is Your Overall 'Research Agenda'?*



- Number/types of methods you integrate
  - Surveys, focus groups, user groups, planning sessions
- How often do you survey
  - Often seems to be a custom, not always related to responsiveness to member needs
  - Perhaps even a proxy for action: study things instead of act
  - To what degree are surveys also relationship tools
    - Guiding new program launches
    - Helping guide new market penetration: segments, students
    - Integrated with marketing strategy: feasible universe studies linking secondary data analysis to attitudes to identify obstacles

# Peer Comparisons:

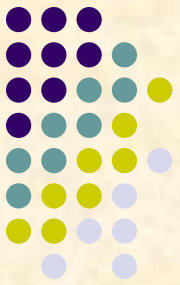
## *What are Common Practices of Other Associations?*



- **Administration**—Print only or online only (30% each); print/online mix or phone (20% each).  
Other methods: personal interviews & focus groups (15% each)
- **Response rates**—Average (all methods combined): 42%
  - Online: 21% response
  - Print: 28% response
  - Print with lapsed segment: 31% response
  - Phone: 24% response
- **Audience**—65%/35% split: random sample vs. census
- **Incentives**—28% offered a premium to respondents
- 11% see lower, 32% higher response (remainder split between about the same and unsure)

*Source: July 2005 ASAE Listserver survey (29 associations)*

# Practices of Other Associations (cont'd)



- **Frequency**—Members are most likely to conduct needs assessments about every 2-3 years: 27% do so annually, 15% never and 20% less often than four years
- **Performance**—Associations pleased with their most recent needs assessment (4.2 satisfaction score).  
Less so with more targeted research (3.7), membership database (3.4), or environmental scans/competitive assessments (3.0)
- **Analysis**—25% looked only at overall membership.  
60% looked at demographic segments.  
35% at membership type, 30% at lapsed, and 20% at prospective members

# Step I: Planning & Selecting Methods

## *Defining Your Research Goals*



- Focus on what you need to know:
  - Opinions
  - Perceptions
  - Changes of mind/trends
  - Differences across segments
  - Externalities: other memberships/value
  - Decision support
  - Feasibility
  - Verification/validity
  - Link to probable retention
  - Evaluation/growth potential
  - Incidence/prevalence
- Compile this into a survey, and you're done!! :O]



# Determining A Theme:

## *What Kind of Research Study are You Conducting?*



Studies most commonly conducted:

- Member satisfaction
- Member needs assessment
- Non-member/customer needs
- Educational assessment/evaluation
- Readership surveys
- Compensation surveys
- Consumer surveys
- Diversity studies
- Meeting evaluations
- Industry specific studies
- Pricing
- Product development
- Operating/financial operations
- Employee/staff satisfaction
- Web usage

*Source: 2005 ASAE Policies & Procedures survey*

# Project Management:

## *Avoiding the Most Common Survey Mistakes*



- 1) **Poor fielding**: populist Census rather than a sample: little or no consideration of bias
- 2) **Low response**: unclear thought on incentive: “what’s in it for the respondent” and unwillingness to exert effort for high response
- 3) **Poor shelf life**: Insufficient use of the study after first presentation: not retaining data for re-use or building on learnings for subsequent studies
- 4) **Surface level analysis**: Weak conclusions the err on the side of being “objective” or looking at the trees not the forest
- 5) **Over-focus**: Too much emphasis on the global needs assessment and not for specific applications

# Using Qualitative Research

## *When Quantification isn't Necessary ... or Helpful*



- **Focus groups**

- Strengths: Good brainstorming/idea formation, concept tests, good member networking
- Weaknesses: bias, often done as a convenience sample (i.e. conference attendees), weak facilitation, insufficient probes, weak group dynamics
- Essential logistics: Recruitment, guide, facilitation

- **Depth interviews**

- Often more promising: more candid feedback
- More content per member: 30-45 minutes per person, not 90 minutes divided by 10!

- **Pretesting your instrument**

- Using members/insiders who understand the profession but aren't insiders from your process

# Step II: Framing Questions:

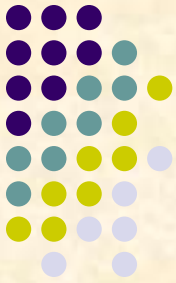
## *How to Ask the Right Way*



- **Get the right response options**
  - Closed-ended, allowing for some open-ended feedback
  - Make it easy to complete, especially at the beginning
- **Design considerations**
  - Balance: communications device vs. data collection form
  - Good questions measure what people think; avoid testing people's knowledge
  - Choose an appropriate length: sufficient to cover your organizational information needs
- **Being comprehensive:** ensure key points are covered
  - Myth: "if you can't do something about it don't ask"
  - Reality: "I don't trust you if you only ask about happy things"
- **Order/sequence matters**
  - Make it easy to complete the first questions
  - Avoid taking more than 15 minutes: but avoid being too short
  - Use sections to divide content, helps for long needs assessments

# Examples:

## Rating vs. Ranking Questions



### RATING:

1. How do you rate the value of OSAP overall, and for each of the following resources? (*circle your response*)

	Very Valuable	Somewhat	Not at all Valuable	
Overall	1	2	3	NA
Guidelines	1	2	3	NA

### RANKING:

2. What method do you prefer to receive information regarding products, services, and programs? (*indicate “#1” for your first choice and so on*)

Rank

#1 #2 #3

E-mails

Fax

Mail

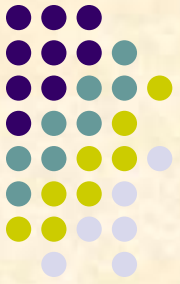
Web site

Other (*specify*) \_\_\_\_\_

*Yields unambiguous priorities. Often average scores or 'top box' won't tell the entire story.*

# Examples:

## Forced Choice & Open-ended Questions



3. How do you rate our services relative to other providers.

In your opinion, who is the primary provider?

- a. Best Source of Research:  NOPA or  Other provider (specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- b. Best Web site resources:  NOPA or  Other provider (specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- c. Best Networking oppty:  NOPA or  Other provider (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

### OPEN-ENDED

4. What is your experience:

working for an ABC member company? \_\_\_\_\_ years

working in the industry? \_\_\_\_\_ years

what is your approximate age? \_\_\_\_\_ years

*Avoiding ranges gives you  
much more flexibility.  
Easy to group later for  
analysis.*

5. What do you believe to be the top two issues our profession will face over the next 3-5 years?

#1: \_\_\_\_\_

#2: \_\_\_\_\_

# Examples:

## *Simpler Versions: Rating vs. Ranking*



### Rating

6. What is your interest in using each of the following potential new services that we are currently in the stages of evaluating?
- A. Certified Advanced Practice Nurse (CAPN)—A certification program featuring an examination for your field of specialty nursing practice, developed by a committee of practicing nurses. Recertification would be required to ensure expertise and familiarity with current practice.
- Extremely interested       Somewhat interested       Not interested

### Ranking

7. Of the three services concepts above:

Which one offers you the greatest value?

#1 \_\_\_\_\_ (enter A,B or C)

Which one offers you the second greatest value?

#2 \_\_\_\_\_

# Step III: Fielding Your Survey

## *Launching Your Survey Online*



- **Choosing an online software tool**
  - Some low-cost tools can be very effective: SurveyMonkey \$200/yr
  - Some low end tools have very few capabilities: Zoomerang, Constant Contact generally very limited
  - Higher end tools (i.e. Inquisite, KeySurvey) much more flexible for design, branching, skip patterns but costly: \$4,000+ / yr
- **Using the online tool ...**
  - Generally use Word/track changes: create, edit, review instrument
  - Once complete, cut and paste from document into software
    - One question/response option set at a time
  - Select response options, enable “other” (open-ended) responses
  - Import graphics, set exit options (landing page, web redirects)
- **Pretest the survey tool**
  - Run survey with a subsample, test for response rate, interpretation



## C. Relative Value of IPC

1. How would you rate the value that you receive from IPC membership compared to the dues that you currently pay to IPC?

- The value we receive is more than the dues that we pay IPC
- The value we receive is roughly equal to the dues that we pay IPC
- The value is less than the dues that we pay IPC

2. To help us understand what matters most about IPC to you, tell us **how much of the value** you receive from membership can be attributed to each of the following general categories of service.

Answer so that your total responses add to 100%. Enter 0 if an area of service has no value to your company.	% of value
<u>Industry/Trend Information</u> : research & statistics, Executive Forum	<input type="text"/>
<u>Education</u> : professional development and training for you, your staff, and peers	<input type="text"/>
<u>Industry Relations</u> : outreach, governmental advocacy/representation	<input type="text"/>
<u>Trade Shows</u>	<input type="text"/>
<u>Standards Development</u>	<input type="text"/>
<u>Networking</u> : opportunities to meet, discuss issues and business with other firms	<input type="text"/>
<u>Other Services</u> :	<input type="text"/>

Total: 100%

3. If IPC had a one-time dues increase for primary members to reflect increasing costs of delivering services and to pay for additional member services such as universal free access to additional market trend and technical information, what probable effect would this have on future renewal decisions?

Probable effect on future renewal decisions:	\$100	\$200	\$500
No effect	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



## The IPC Value Survey

We are conducting a survey among IPC member firms to learn more about the value you place on membership. Thank you for your support of this critical customer and member service initiative. Please note that all responses are confidential.

### A. Your Experiences with IPC

1. In what ways have you been active and in contact with IPC over the past several years? (check all that apply)

- Served in a leadership role on the IPC Board, Councils or Committees
- Served as an active participant in Councils or Committees
- Used an IPC service or program
- No recent activity
- Other activity (specify):

\*there is for more space to write than the blank makes it appear

2. How would you rate IPC's performance in each of the following areas?	Excellent (5)	4	3	2	Poor (1)	No opinion
Service and performance of staff	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Relevance of communications	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Quality of educational programs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Timeliness of information	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Uniqueness of services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Fair pricing of IPC services for the value they deliver	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

3. How well does IPC membership help you do the following?	Very Well (5)	4	3	2	Very Poorly (1)	No Opinion
Provide industry standards to assist my company	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Keep current on legislative/regulatory matters	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

5. One of the reasons we are investigating your acceptance of a dues increase is so we can make two specific services of IPC more accessible to all members. Let us know what you think of each of the following options:

#### A. Developing a library for technical papers with free access to all members.

- I strongly support this change to IPC's membership benefits (to provide a new free library of technical papers)
- I support this change somewhat to provide a new free library of technical papers
- I support the development of a library of technical papers but this should be a fee-based subscription service
- I do not support the development of a library of technical papers for free or as a fee-based service
- I have no opinion/insufficient familiarity with the issues

B. Making the Executive Market and Technology Forum major studies and conference proceedings free to all members and allowing all members (not only subscribers) to attend the three worldwide forums at a member discount. Executive Forum currently costs \$1,200 or \$1,500 per year for subscribers.

- I strongly support this change to IPC's membership benefits (to include free for all members)
- I support this change somewhat
- I do not support this change
- I have no opinion/insufficient familiarity with the issues



SAVE



## CEA Survey of Volunteer Leaders

We are conducting a survey among CEA members who are or have served in volunteer/leadership roles. Your confidential responses to the following questions will help us understand how well your experiences serving on committees, councils, divisions and boards have helped you, your company, CEA, and the industry. Thank you in advance for your assistance in this study.

-- John Tunnell, Vice President of Member Relations

### 1. Which category best describes the general products and/or services of your company?

*(please check all that apply that represent significant shares of your revenue--at least 10%)*

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Audio                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Retailer                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Video                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Installer                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wireless communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Manufacturer              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> In-vehicle technology   | <input type="checkbox"/> Home networking           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Digital imaging         | <input type="checkbox"/> Other consumer technology |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Accessories             |  |

### 2. What general products and/or services are you personally responsible for in your company?

*(check all that apply)*

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Audio                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Retailer                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Video                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Installer                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Wireless communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Manufacturer              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> In-vehicle technology   | <input type="checkbox"/> Home networking           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Digital imaging         | <input type="checkbox"/> Other consumer technology |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Accessories             |  |

### 3. What is your job title/primary professional position?

# Messaging/Introductions

## *How to Introduce Your Survey to Your Audience*



- **Determine your invitation and reminder language**
  - Keep it reasonably short but let them know what to expect
  - Communicate approximate length of time required
  - Convey response, opt-out links, sender address (comply with CAN-SPAM)!
- **Tips for language:**
  - Personalization: use a full address block if possible
  - Use your *unique selling proposition* in marketing
  - Focus on them—"What's In It For Me"
  - Mix bandwagon effect/specialness—"everyone counts, especially you"
  - Impart sense of urgent action—tight deadlines, short gaps between communications
  - If you offer an incentive, consider intangibles or mission-related
  - Earn trust: confidentiality, cite past success using information
  - Conversational & friendly tone

# Contact Sequence

## *How Persistence Pays in the End*



- **Use an invitation and multiple reminders**
  - Use software's campaign management tools to contact only non-respondents
  - Most tools allow you to exempt those who have responded or opted out: maximize response while minimizing annoyance
  - Mix communication tone—go to more urgent and briefer messages
  - I like the “Invitation:” “Reminder:” “Deadline Extension” subject lines
  - Generally I find the '40/40/20' rule—40% of the total response comes from first invitation, 40% from second, 20% stragglers
- **When using multiple methods of administration**
  - Conduct mailing, fax, or phone to supplement online
  - Prefer to use online first, other followups to cut administration cost
  - Your database may not have a high level of email coverage
  - Accept that many are “e-people.” Others print/phone-responsive
  - Component: letters, instrument, business reply envelope

# Step IV:

## *Terms/Steps for Processing Your Data*



### ➤ **Data capture**

- May require data entry (mail/phone) and/or download (online)
- Online survey report writers have serious weaknesses
- Better to use download/export features to move data into Excel
- Ideally, import into SPSS, SAS, similar software for cross-tabs

### ➤ **Data cleaning/coding**

- Create categorical variables (ranges) out of clean continuous/numeric data
- Consistency checks
- Code missing values as “none” when it’s a meaningful non-response

### ➤ **Verbatims:**

- Open-ended questions and “other” questions yield full text
- Run spell check/editing, categorize text by theme: impart order from the amorphous mass

# Step V:

## Analyzing and Reporting Your Findings

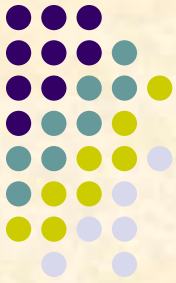


- Common scenarios for reporting and analyzing data
  - **Reports/Analysis**
    - **One way tabulations**: most common, offers a top-down perspective
    - **Cross-tabulations**: creating a table of column percents and summary statistics
      - Use demographics, business characteristics as banner variables
      - Relate specific response questions to one another
  - **Narrative report**
    - Try not to use only the PowerPoint “let the data do the talking”
    - The objective “sports story” narrative is most common, at least an Executive Summary
    - Always build in a vehicle for more subjective, applied interpretation: sometimes in Recommendations, or separate topics memo(s)
  - **Presentation graphics**:
    - bar/pie charts for all questions—help visual learners, embed into reports

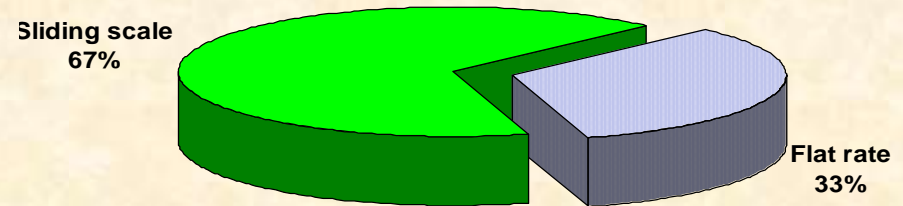
# Basic Analysis/Communications Tools

## Pie Charts

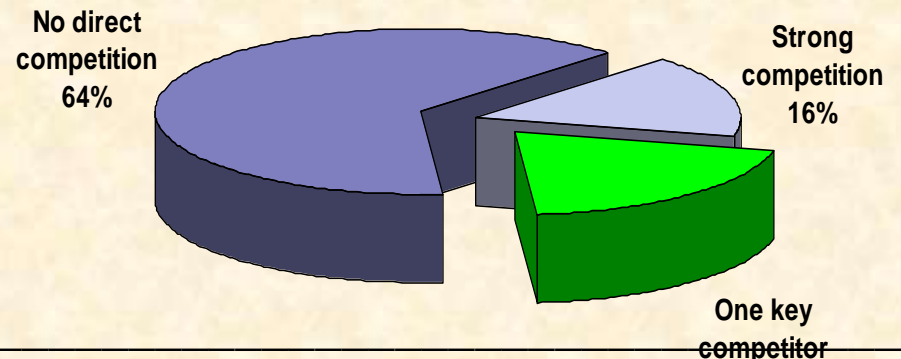
- Common, overused method of presentation
- Only works when totals add to 100%
- Note that differences don't jump out: stacked/horizontal bar formats are much more effective
- Often good for conveying demographics/descriptive data



### Dues Structure



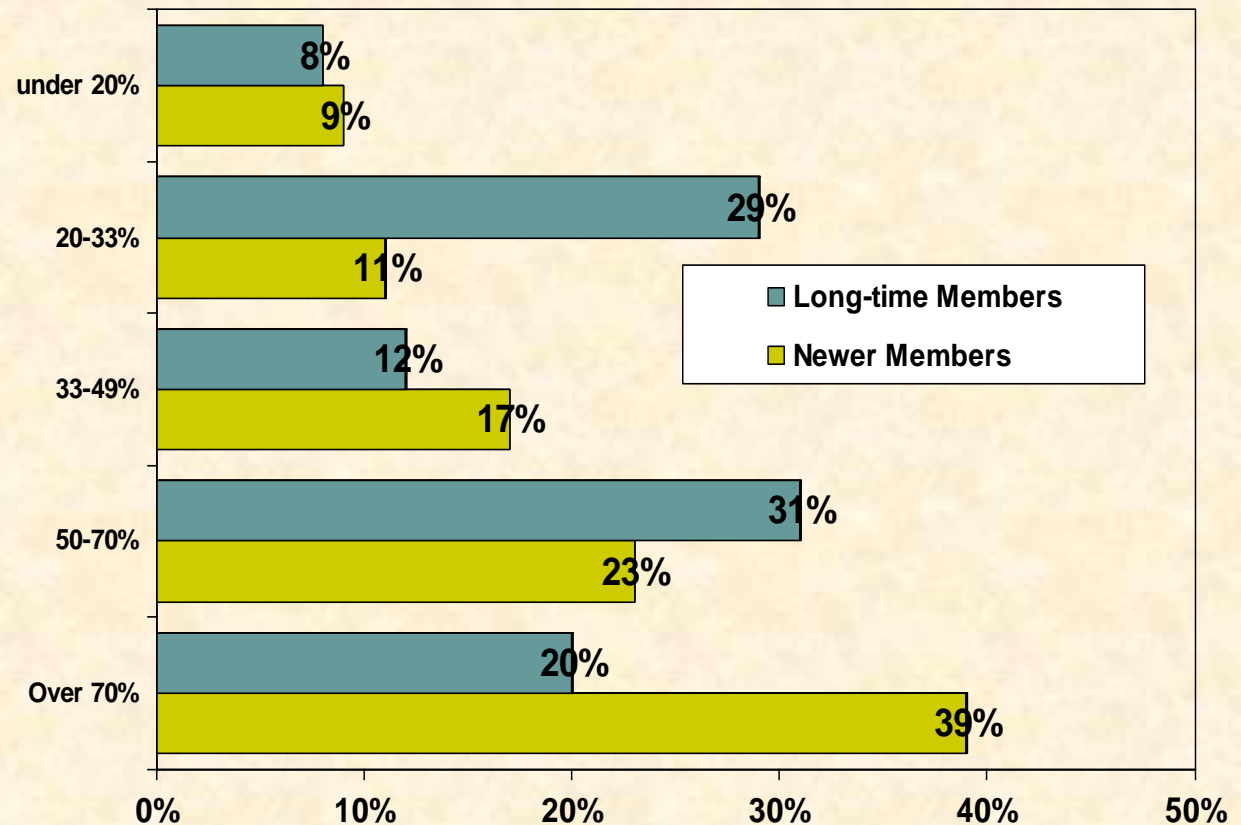
### Competitive Position in the Industry



# Horizontal Bar Charts: Comparative Series



- This format shows contrasts between segments of members/respondents
- Good: visually demonstrates fluctuations in responses due to filter variables
- If detailed, can be confusing





# Non Graphical Comparisons



- Summarize diverse, numeric data in considerable detail from Excel or statistical software.

- This is the statistical equivalent of a narrative Executive Summary.

- **Profile of responding associations:**

<b>Average size association</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Median</b>
<b>Total general members</b>	<b>1,967</b>	<b>540</b>
<b>Total associate members</b>	<b>309</b>	<b>108</b>
<b>Budget size</b>	<b>\$4.91M</b>	<b>\$2.20M</b>

<b>Mean percent of total income:</b>	<b>Today</b>	<b>5 yrs ago</b>
<b>General/primary member dues</b>	<b>42.0%</b>	<b>45.4%</b>
<b>Associate/affiliate member dues</b>	<b>8.2%</b>	<b>8.7%</b>
<b>Exhibit/sponsorship income</b>	<b>20.3%</b>	<b>19.9%</b>
<b>All other sources of income</b>	<b>29.5%</b>	<b>26.0%</b>

<b>Average changes over five years:</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Median</b>
<b>Total general members</b>	<b>9.6%</b>	<b>0.0%</b>
<b>Total associate members</b>	<b>22.0%</b>	<b>2.8%</b>
<b>Total budget</b>	<b>53.1%</b>	<b>18.8%</b>

# Cross-Tabulations



This basic tool is irreplaceable. This chart shows column percentages and demonstrates how one variable (price sensitivity) relates to another (membership tenure) influences it.

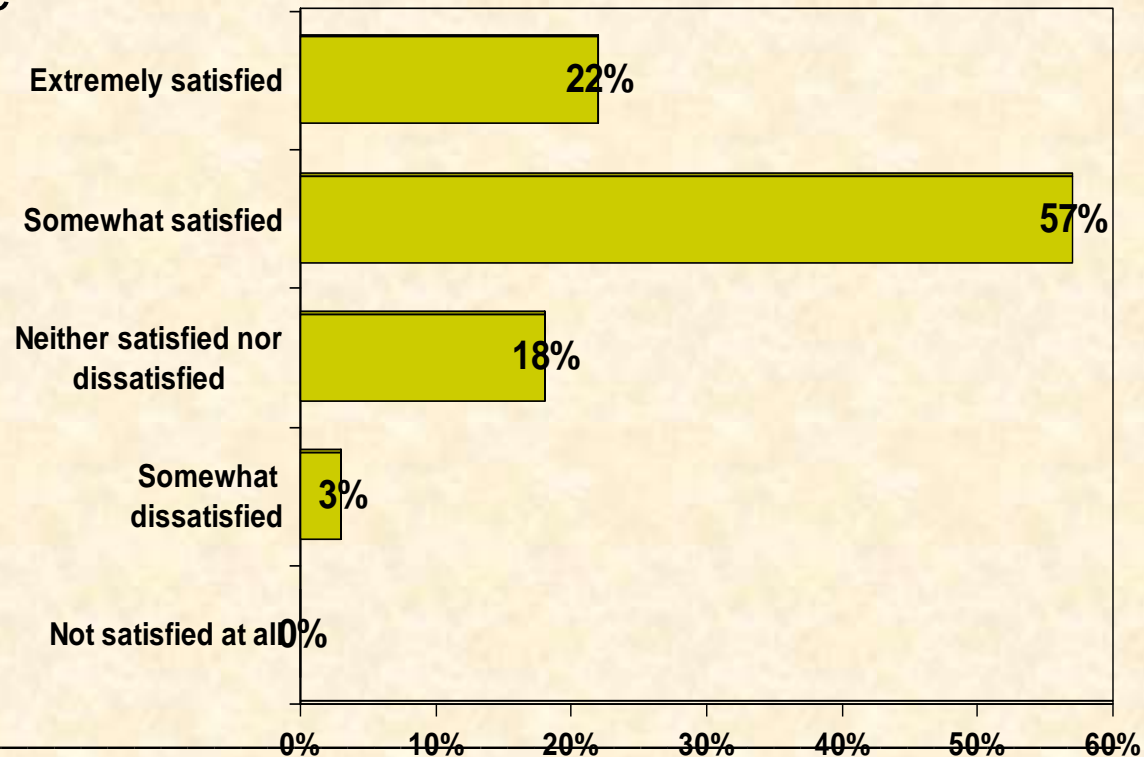
Probable Effect of a Dues Increase	2004: YEARS OF EXPERIENCE				
	Overall	0-5	6-10	11-20	>20
<b><u>A.\$170 - \$10 increase</u></b>					
Considerable negative	3%	6%	3%		3%
Some effect	19%	24%	15%	17%	18%
No effect	79%	70%	82%	83%	78%
<b><u>B.\$185 - \$25 increase</u></b>					
Considerable negative	19%	29%	21%	16%	12%
Some effect	51%	52%	52%	50%	52%
No effect	29%	19%	26%	34%	36%
<b><u>C.\$210 - \$50 increase</u></b>					
Considerable negative	68%	76%	72%	62%	65%
Some effect	25%	20%	23%	27%	27%
No effect	7%	4%	5%	10%	8%

# Bonus Round: *How We Talk About Data*

## Illustration: Overall Satisfaction



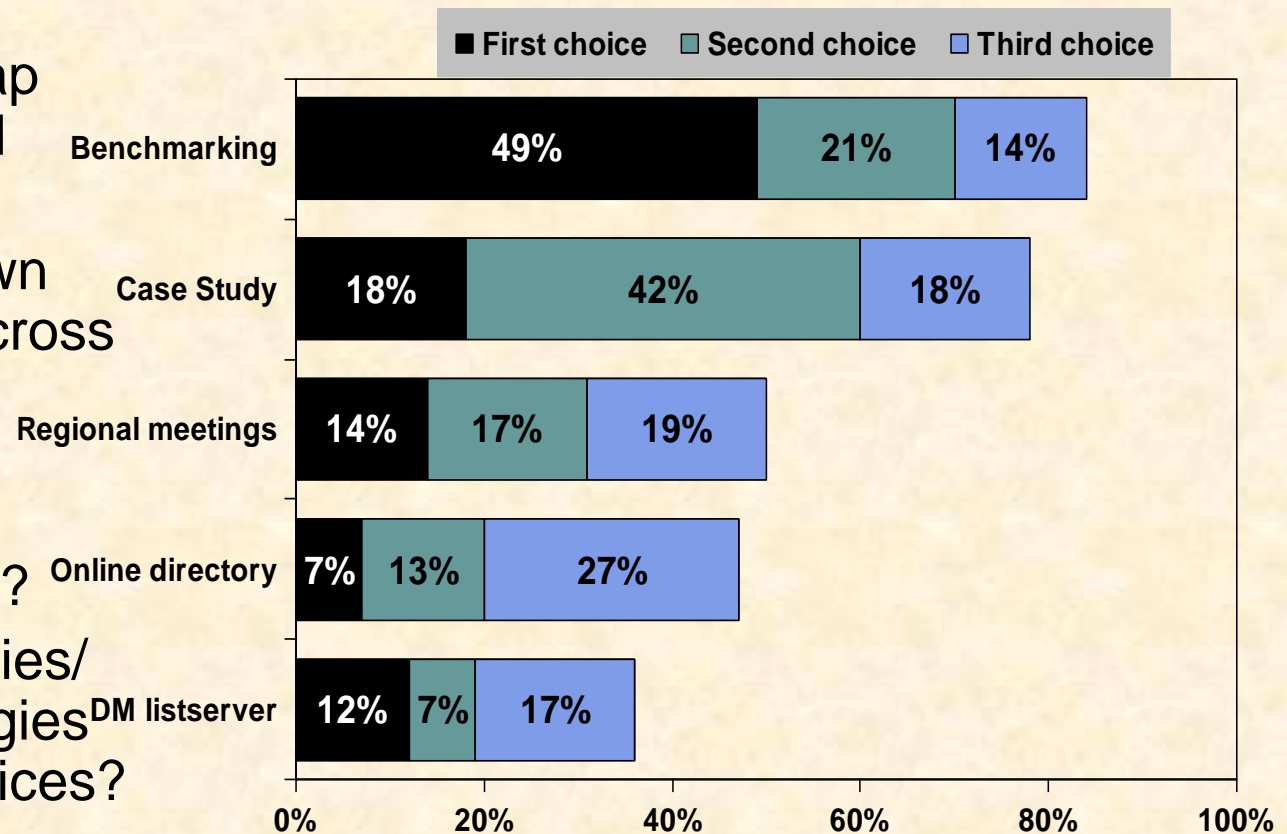
- Basic indicator for overall performance:  
*"How satisfied are you with the association overall and with the following services"*
- Average compared to averages per service helps to identify what makes a positive contribution or detracts from overall satisfaction
- Very typical to see 3.7 to 4.0 score: often higher among long-term members
- Performance by segment often varies and says a lot about how well you represent/serve diverse constituencies.





## Illustration: Priority Of New Services: *Percent ranking top, second, third*

- We can easily tell what is a winner in an environment where we can develop one new service
- We can handicap pet projects and board favorites
- We can drill down and compare across services
- Do the same people rate each one highly?
- Any compatibilities/ audience synergies for specific services?

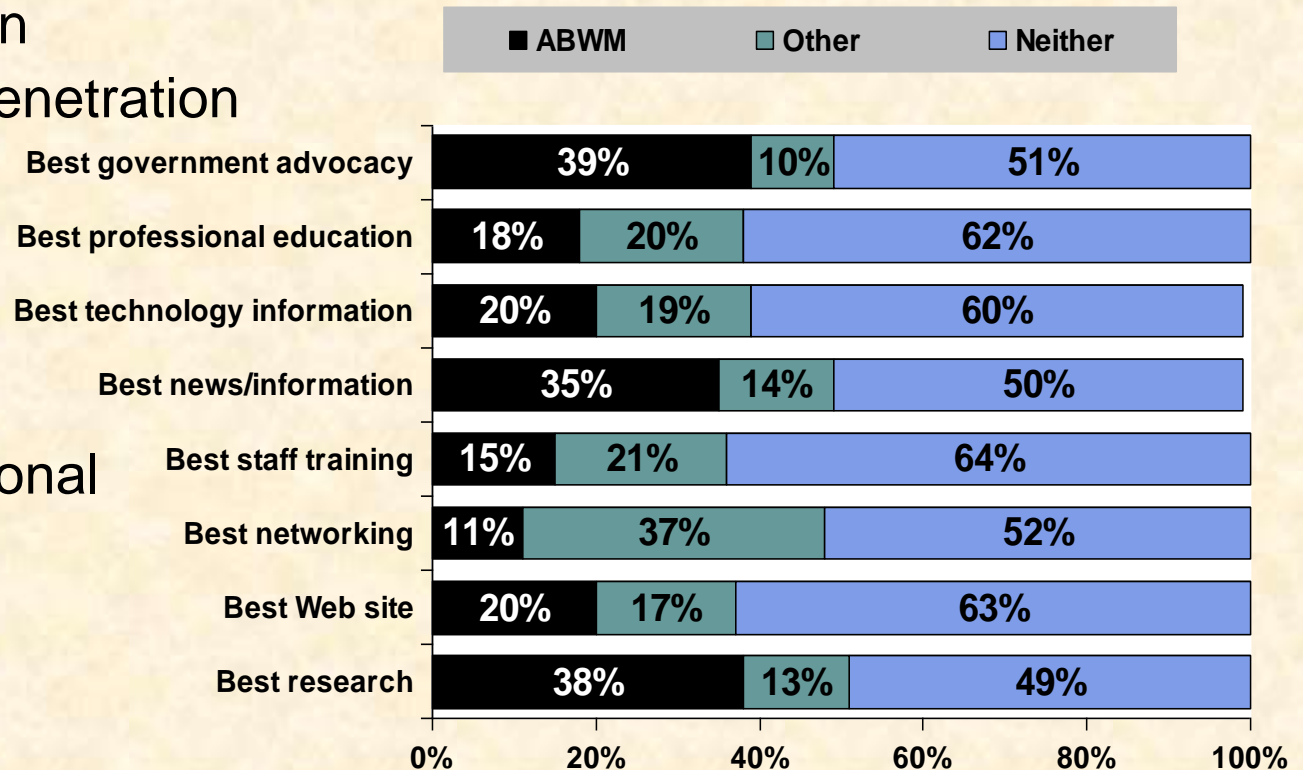




# Illustration: Relative Performance

## *Rating of Association Relative to Others*

- Good “bubble burster”: often we’re not strong in the areas we think we are
- This takes into account where we begin
- Membership penetration affects this
- Rather than serve as true competitive intelligence: it’s just operational and serves as environmental scan



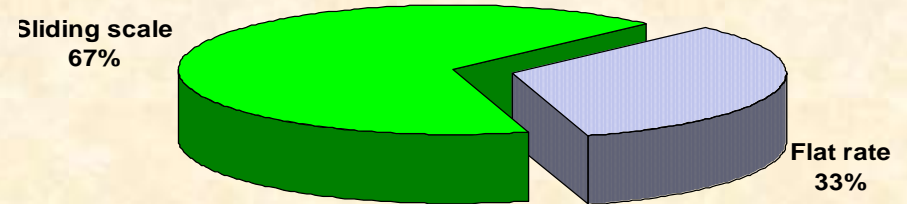
# Basic Analysis/Communications Tools

## Pie Charts

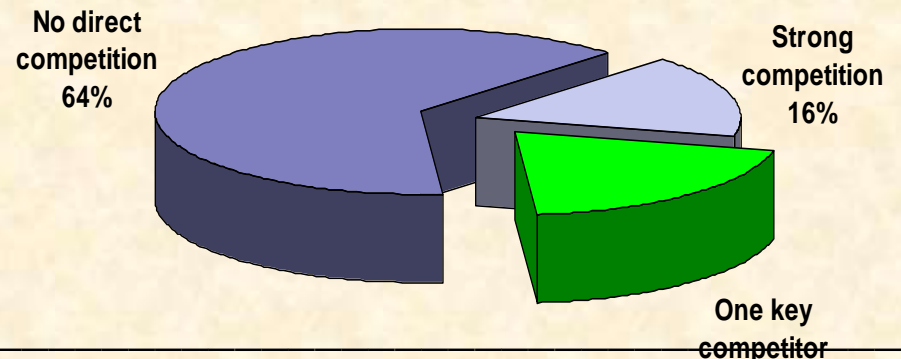
- Common, overused method of presentation
- Only works when totals add to 100%
- Note that differences don't jump out: stacked/horizontal bar formats are much more effective
- Often good for conveying demographics/descriptive data



### Dues Structure



### Competitive Position in the Industry





- **The End**

Thanks for your time today!