Crowdsourcing Survey Questions: The 2012 Research Challenge

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1. Crowdsourcing

What Is Crowdsourcing

- A way of tapping into the collective intelligence of the public to obtain content (e.g., ideas, solutions, services), typically using the power of the Internet to reach large numbers of people quickly and efficiently.
- Jeff Howe coined the term in a 2006 article "The Rise of Crowdsourcing":
  - "Simply defined, crowdsourcing represents the act of a company or institution taking a function once performed by employees and outsourcing it to an undefined (and generally large) network of people in the form of an open call. "

Crowdsourcing and Open Innovation

- Idea competitions are one form of crowdsourcing based on a paradigm of **open innovation.**
- Idea competitions are generally open calls for ideas or solutions to particular problems that offer rewards for successful ideas.
- These competitions have several advantages:
  - Lower or eliminate barriers to entry in research.
  - Diversify an organization's perspectives on research.
  - Experts are smart, but they do not always have all the answers.
  - You may discover an idea you never would have thought of.

2. RTI 2012 Research Challenge

The Rules

- RTI put out an open call to researchers from a variety of subject areas to contribute items to a survey. Researchers had to provide:
  - Two-page synopsis of their idea
  - Up to 10 survey questions
- Researchers had 23 days to submit proposals.

The Reward

- Winning submissions would have their survey items included as part of an omnibus survey fielded in Chicago with a random sample, and receive all data from their survey items.

The Results

- Received 76 entries on a broad range of topics, including:
  - Emerging tobacco products
  - Testing astrological theories
  - Perceptions of law enforcement

Judging

- **Expert panel:** Judging done by an expert panel of researchers from inside and outside RTI.
- **Blind judging:** Judges had no idea who wrote the research proposals. Judges only discussed the quality of the research ideas and survey questions.
- **Scoring criteria:** All entries were scored by at least two judges. Scores were based upon the evaluation criteria in the rules:
  - Quality of research idea
  - Quality of survey questions
  - Relevance to Chicago
- **Selecting the winners:** After the initial scoring, the top 32 entries were reviewed by all judges and discussed in a judges meeting. Eventually the judges selected nine winners.

3. Implementing the 2012 Research Challenge

Methods for Reaching the Crowd

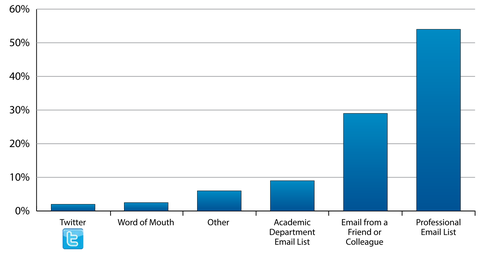
- **Email lists** across a variety of social science fields. We attempted to cast a very wide net, announcing the contest to national organizations as well as individual academic departments. Consulting experts in the field can help identify high-impact email lists.
- **Social Media**
  - Facebook
  - Twitter
  - LinkedIn groups
- **Professional contacts:** We encouraged staff across RTI to share the announcement with anyone they thought might be interested.
- **SurveyPost blog:** RTI's blog on innovative methods in survey research hosted the contest. http://blogs.rti.org/surveypost

Going Viral the Old Fashioned Way

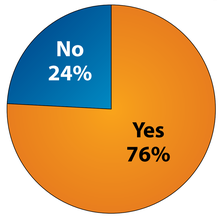
We attempted to use a diversity of methods to get the word out quickly and broadly. The goal was to reach as much of our target audience (social science researchers) as possible.

- Nearly a third of participants heard about the Research Challenge from a friend or colleague.
- Over three-quarters of participants shared information about the Research Challenge with others.
- Social media was not as important as email and word of mouth in spreading the word of the Research Challenge.

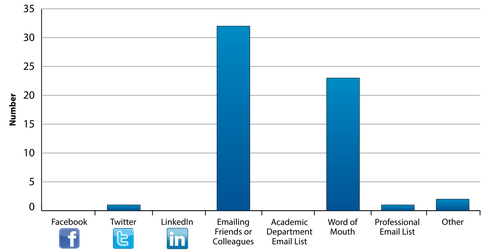
Where did you first hear about the 2012 Research Challenge?



Did you share information about the 2012 Research Challenge with others?

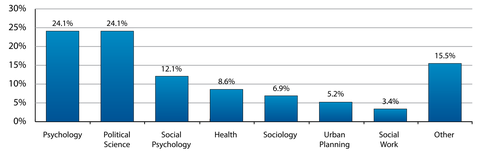


How did you share information about the Research Challenge?

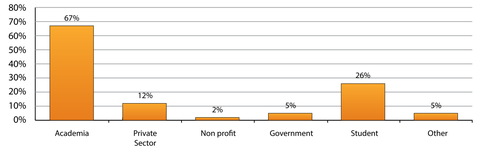


Who Entered the Research Challenge?

Entrants: Field of research



Entrants: Area of employment



Research Challenge Entry Topics

health
attitudes
public
social
toward
political
use
identity
perceptions
engagement
behavior
response
education
chicago
goals
trust
change
physical
medicine
inequality
intergroup
travel
impact
perception
energy
environmental
measuring
chemical
behaviors
pursuit
contact
american
career
alcohol
transportation
residential
decisions
mobility
party
relationship
meaning
pro-social
theories
recession
polarization
success
electric
philanthropic
smoke
discounting
aging
racism
conspiracy
tolerance
model
focus
measurement
consumerism
battery
reducing
awareness
teacher
house
heroes
economic
financial
civic
overnight
improved
categories
alternative
knowledge
advertising
patient-doctor
activity
complementary
neighborhood
insecurity
chronic
crime
parking
personal
help-seeking
bases
successful
emotional
doctor
technical
anxiety
fictional
prestige
independents
expectations
authoritarianism
among
touch
biblical
mobile
parental
desirability
setting
egalitarian
neurofeedback
competition
produced
consumption
religosity
meaning
support
goal
mobility
inequality
intergroup
discounting
aging
racism
conspiracy
perception
chicago
goals
physical
trust
change
political