

Using Monetary Interviewer Incentives: Is it all about timing?

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Presentation Overview

- **Why are interviewer bonuses used?**
- **Case Study Examples**
- **Timing of Bonuses for Field Staff**
- **Planning for Bonuses for your Field Staff**
- **Positive Results**
- **Negative Results**
- **Recommendations**

Why are interviewer bonuses used?

- Boosts response rates
- Increases number of hours worked by field staff
- Encourages retention
- Improves data quality
- Increases the attractiveness of the work

Case Study Examples

- National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health Wave IV (Add Health)
- UNC Study of Renters and Homeowners (Community Advantage Panel Study-CAPS)

Add Health- Background

- **Longitudinal study of over 20,000 sample members nationally**
- **Funding: conducted under the direction of the Carolina Population Center (CPC) at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC), under a grant from the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development (NICHD) with co-funding from 17 other federal agencies and foundations.**
- **Began with in-school questionnaires, followed by four waves of in-home interviews**

Add Health – Interviewer Bonus

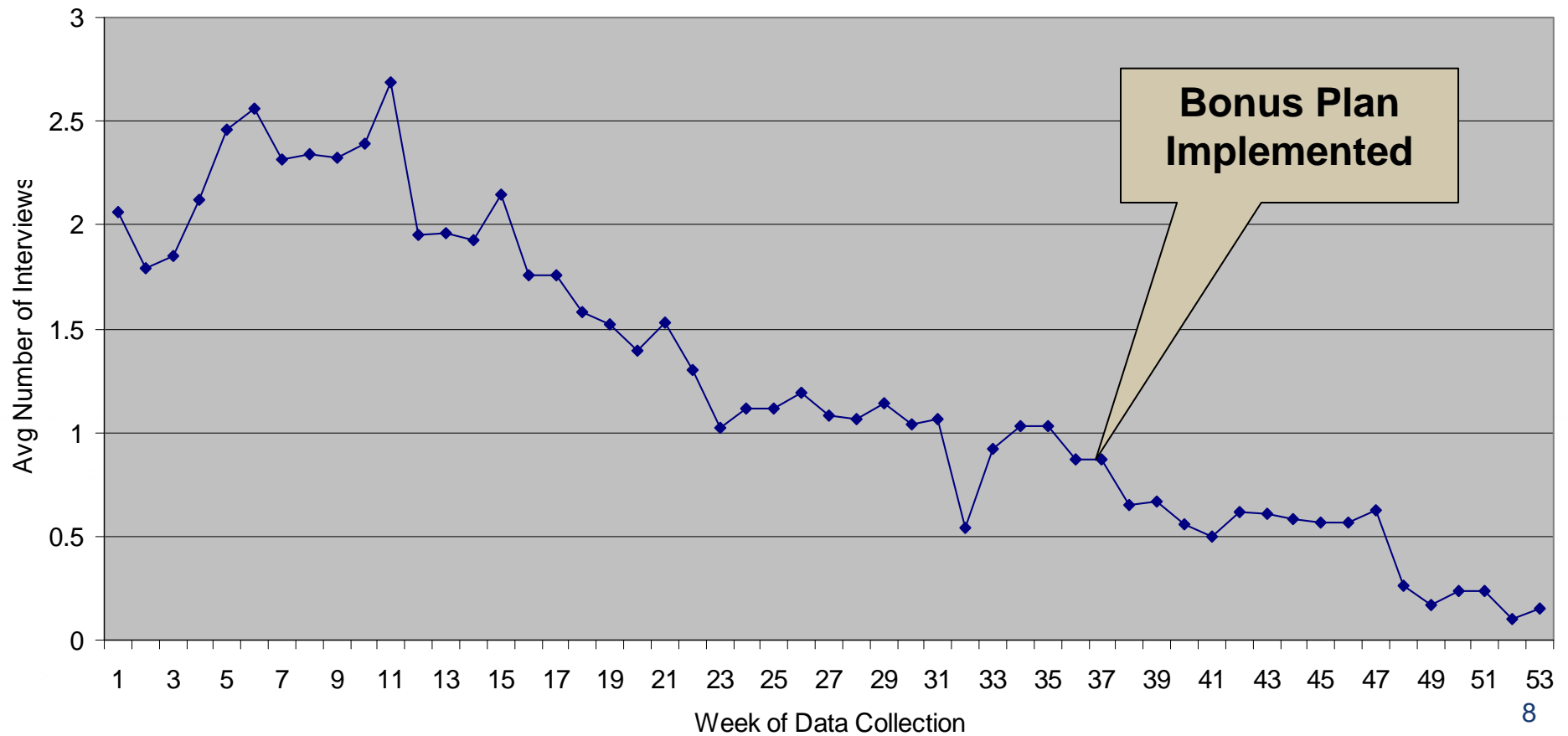
- **Tiered Bonus Plan**
 - \$20.00 per interview for first 4 (interviews 1-4)
 - \$30.00 per interview for next 5 (interviews 5-9)
 - \$40.00 per interview for tenth interview and beyond
- **Implemented Week 37 of a 54 Week Data Collection Period**
 - 150 Interviewers received a total of \$43,710 in bonuses
 - Highest amount received \$1670 (45 completes)
 - Lowest amount received \$20 (1 complete)

Add Health—Type of Bonus

- Monetary Bonus
 - Paid as expense, no taxes due from the Interviewers
 - Paid at the end of the field period
 - Amounts varied based on the number of completes

Add Health – Results

Average Number of Interviews Per Week



UNC Study- Background

- 7-year panel study of low to moderate income renters and homeowners
- Funded by the Ford Foundation through the UNC – Chapel Hill
- Mixed mode data collection (CATI/CAPI)
- Data collected on homeownership, wealth and assets, living situations, household composition, and attitudinal scales

UNC Study- Year 5 Interviewer Bonus

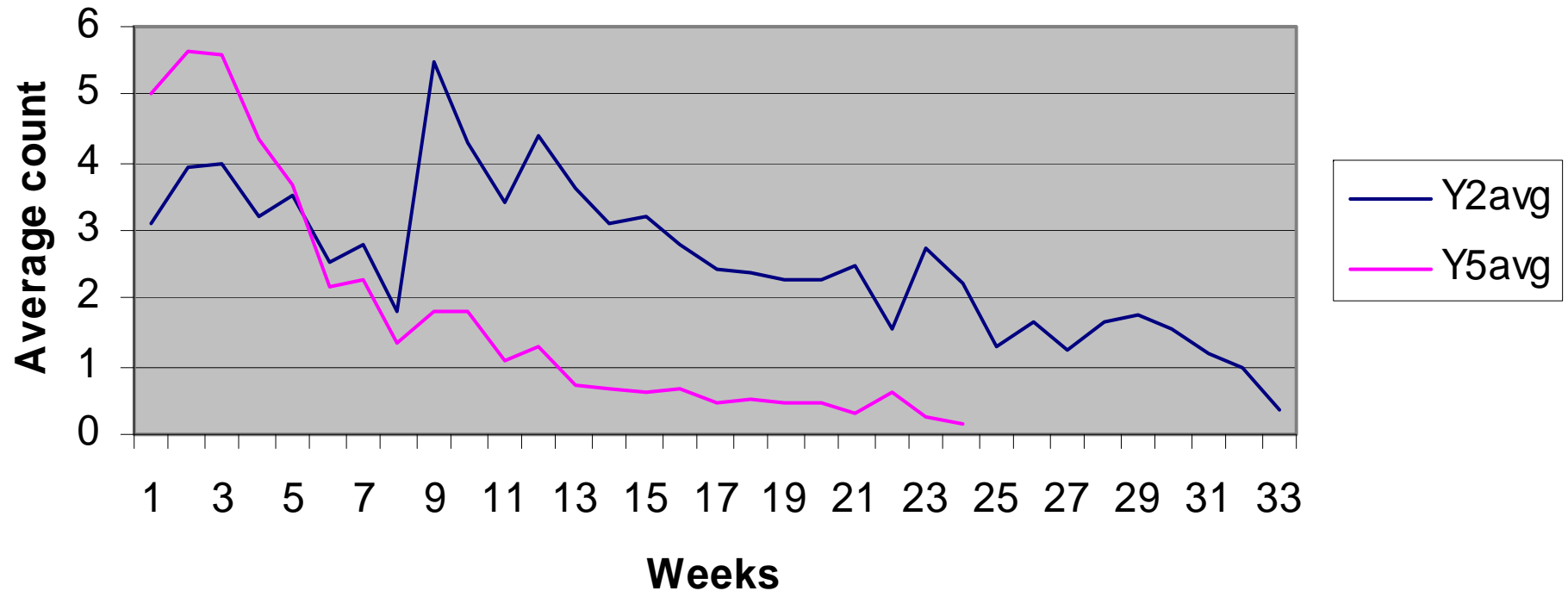
Bonuses used at beginning of data collection	Bonuses used last two months of data collection
Implemented 1st six weeks of data collection	Implemented last two months of data collection
All cases new	Clean-Up Cases
Received \$10 or \$20	Received \$10 or \$20
53 Interviewers received a total of \$15,430	38 Interviewers received a total of \$1,400
Highest Amount Received \$460 (41 completes)	Highest amount received \$100 (5 completes)
Lowest amount received \$100 (10 completes)	Lowest amount received \$10 (1 complete)

UNC Study - Type of Bonus

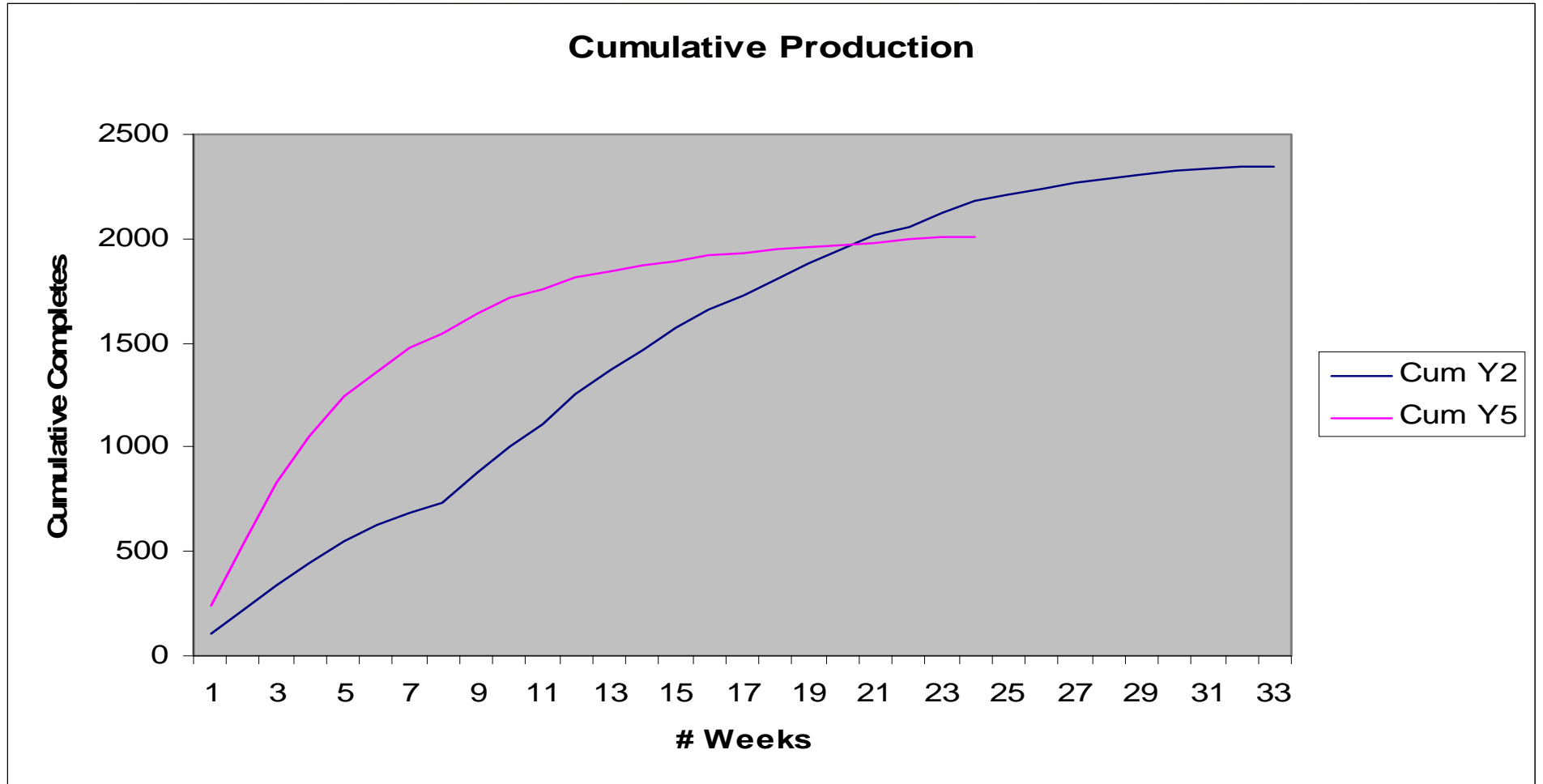
- Gift Cards
 - No taxes due from the Interviewers
 - Paid at the end of the bonus period
 - Amounts varied based on the number of completes

Year 2 and Year 5-Average Number of Completed Interviews Per Week

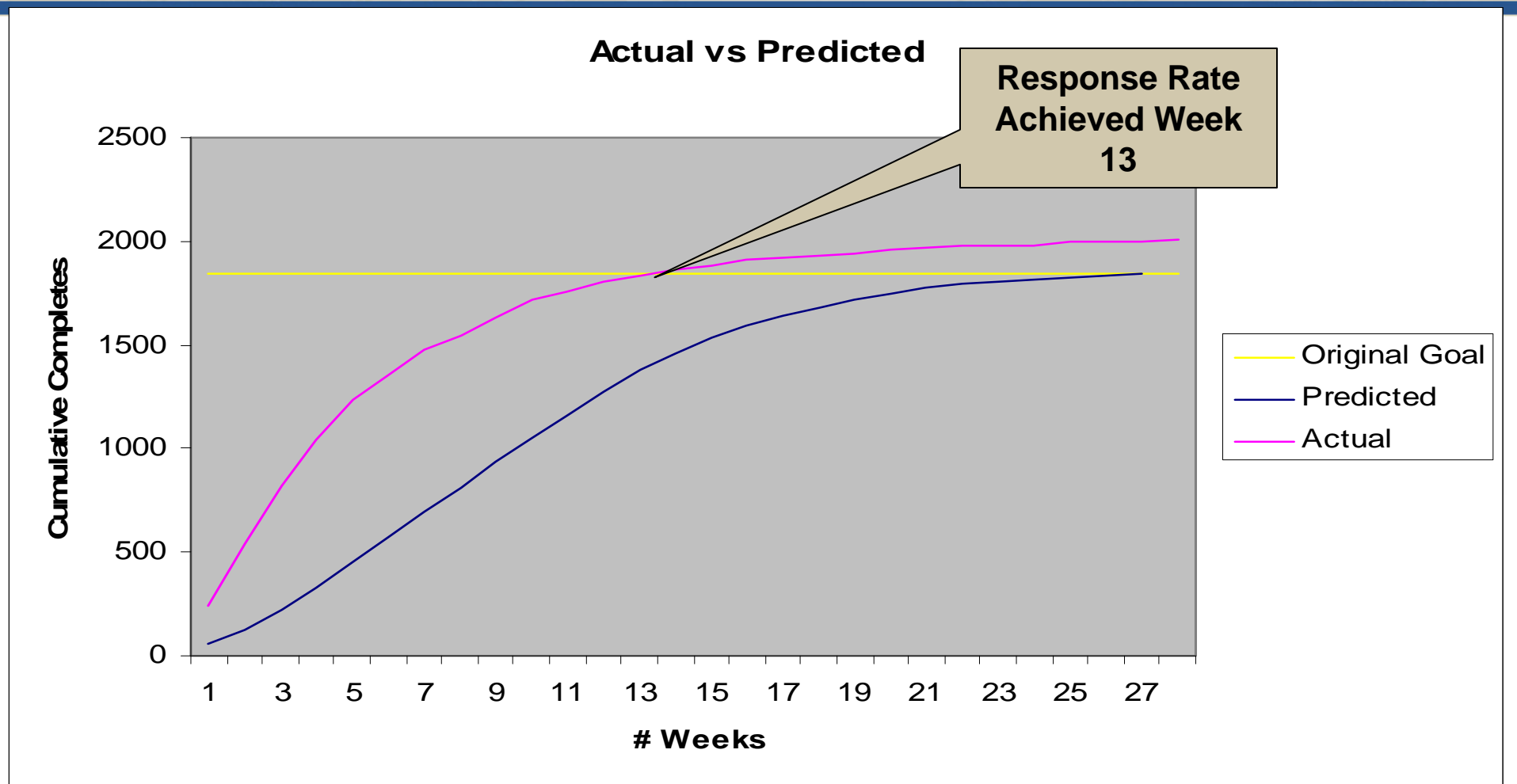
Average number of completes per week



Cumulative Production



Year 5 –Actual vs. Predicted



Timing of Bonuses for Field Interviewers

The timing for when interviewer bonuses are launched during data collection has the potential to impact several elements of a project.

- Shorten the field period?
- Cost savings?
- Higher response rates?
- Attract and keep high quality staff?



Timing of Bonuses for Field Interviewers

<u>Advantages</u> of implementing bonus plans at the <u>beginning</u> of data collection period	<u>Advantages</u> of implementing bonus plans <u>mid to late</u> in data collection period
Jump starts production	Motivates staff to work more difficult cases
Motivates staff and creates positive energy	Re-energizes the field team
Predicts future production rates	Boosts production at a time when it would traditionally be lower

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Timing of Bonuses for Field Interviewers

<u>Disadvantages</u> of implementing bonus plans at the <u>beginning</u> of data collection period	<u>Disadvantages</u> of implementing bonus plans <u>mid to late</u> end of the data collection period
Rewards staff for working easiest cases	Less staff to work cases (due to attrition)
May make working the more difficult cases later on less appealing to field interviewers if there is no bonus	May deflate staff due to only having difficult cases to work, meaning bonus would be lower
May impact attrition rates	May not have a strong field team remaining (due to attrition)

Planning for Interviewer Bonuses on Your Project

- Setting a Timeframe
- Creating a Budget
- Developing a Payment Structure
- Tracking Progress

Positive Results of Using Bonuses

- Improves Production and Efficiency
- Improves Interviewer Morale
- Decreases Interviewer Attrition
- Rewards Interviewers
- Motivates Interviewers to go the Extra Mile on Tough Cases

Negative Results of Using Bonuses

- Risk promoting shortcutting and falsification
- Withhold working cases with the anticipation of receiving a bonus later in data collection
- Unexpected project costs if bonuses were not planned
- Punish good producers and reward poor performers

Recommendations

- Bonus payout should be structured to be paid at the end of the bonus period to ensure retention of staff
- If bonus is paid out at the start of data collection, a solid plan for clean up of difficult cases should be established
- Plan for interviewer bonuses at an unconventional time. Many field interviewers expect bonuses during the end of data collection to boost production.

THANK YOU!

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