echo 1

MEASURING WHAT MATTERS:
THE ECHO HOW-TO SERIES

How to commission successful stakeholder research

How to prepare a brief

Use the following checklist to help you prepare the brief.

- What is the **problem/need** to be addressed by the research?
- What is the **background/context** to the problem/need?
- What types of **decision** are likely to be influenced by the results?
- How will the **results** be used?
- Who will **see** the results?
- What **budget** is available?
- What is the **scope** of the research (who, where etc)?
- What is the **schedule/deadlines**?

Business objectives

- What problem/need is the research addressing? What are the reasons for the research?
- What might change as a consequence of the findings? What types of decisions might be influenced by the results?
- Who will be affected by the results?

Research objectives

Frame the scope of your reputation study by considering '*reputation for what, among whom, for what purpose*'.

- Which stakeholders are to be researched? If they are specific and targeted, do you have a list of those you want to hear from? Do you need help identifying stakeholders (eg. stakeholder mapping)?
- What is the geographical scope – which markets matter to you most?
- What are the key issues to be covered? Would initial depth interviews be helpful in fleshing out key questions and areas to explore before you go fully 'live'?
- Is it to be qualitative or quantitative (or a mixture of both)?
- Can incentives be offered for participation (eg. charitable donation or the offer to share topline findings?)

Remember that research is a form of communication in itself – done well, wisely and respectfully, it can pay tremendous dividends to show you are listening and want to engage.

Methodology

- What benchmarks or data is already available that would be useful to build on or continue? Is there a need for consistency with how the research has been done in the past?

- Do you already have some of the information and need an external view on how best to use it?

- What methods are currently used?

- Do you have a preferred method?

Transparency

- Stakeholders increasingly need to know who is commissioning the research – an email or letter of introduction as to why they will be contacted and how their information is to be used is best practice.

- Is there a reason why the survey sponsor should not be revealed, e.g. so as not to bias an awareness section of the study? If so, accommodate good research practice by revealing the sponsor's name at the end of the survey.

Timings

- When does the research need to be completed? Are there any intermediate deadlines?

- When do the findings need to be prepared? Are there any lead times for taking action?

Deliverables

- What is expected: Raw data (anonymised)? Data tables? Verbatim responses (anonymised)? A report? Presentation? Consultancy? Ongoing assistance?

Budgets

- What is the anticipated budget? Is there any contingency should the scope change throughout the project (eg. additional interviews, markets, debriefs, etc)?

GDPR and contractual requirements

- The agency should guide you on GDPR, research Codes of Conduct and offer formal terms of business.

One of the most important elements of working with a market research agency will be developing a good working rapport. Establishing and agreeing a clear brief at the outset will get the relationship off to a good start.



How to choose the right research partner

- Do you need data caputure/survey analysis or more comprehensive consultancy?
- What resources do you need?
- Does the agency have knowledge of your field?
- Has it managed similar projects before?
- Do you need a specialist?
- Do you need international capabilites?
- Does the agency offer value for money? Can you afford it?
- Who will you be working with?
- Can you develop a confident and comfortable working relationship?



The research partner's role

In most research projects, the external agency will be responsible for the following steps:

- Deploying the right team with specialist expertise with senior level oversight throughout the process
- Advising on the most appropriate methodology
- Achieving the right number of interviews
- Interviewing the right people
- Asking the right questions – development of the interview material – with your input
- Communicating with you regularly throughout the process
- Monitoring progress and alerting you should problems arise
- Analysing, interpreting and debriefing the results

Agree your expectation in terms of communication and what works best for you.

- Arrange to speak on a regular basis
- Agree schedule for progress reports
- Don't hesitate to ask for a meeting or progress report
- On large projects, weekly project meetings are not unusual



How to make the most of the findings

The point of market research is not to do it, but to **use** it.

- Ask your research partner to report in the way you and your internal client find most comfortable. One possible model is:
  - o Research partner does the research.
  - o They prepare a draft presentation for you to comment on.
  - o After 'tweaking' they present to you and your internal client.
  - o You get together with your internal client and discuss the way forward (with or without your agency).

- Consider your internal audiences and what reporting formats will work best for them – eg. scorecards, executive summaries, country / business sector reports, video explainers.

- If possible, incorporate other management data (e.g. media analysis, sales information, leads generated) so that you / your research partner can link market research findings to the rest of the business.

- Keep a clear sight of the original objectives – and make sure your research partner has addressed them.

- Once you've explained your objectives, trust your research partner to do their best. They are the experts and will work with you to design graphics and interpret the results.

- Consider how your research partner can help you disseminate the findings within your organisation eg. workshops and debriefs with your internal stakeholders.

- Long term relationships work best – the research partner gets to understand your needs and budget constraints.

- Ideally as a trusted partner, your partner should be geared to refresh, update and challenge research support ahead.



About our stakeholder research services

Evidence-based insight for reputation, brand and communications

Echo's market and stakeholder research gives you evidence-based insights into reputation, brand, and communications effectiveness. We offer forward-looking insights to enhance corporate reputation, competitive positioning, and brand health.

With global capabilities, we have expertise in interviewing a wide range of stakeholder audiences, including consumers, employees, businesses, professionals, patient groups, journalists, policymakers, regulators, government officials, NGOs, activists, and influencers.

As a multidisciplinary research agency, we tailor solutions to your needs using a mix of primary and secondary research, quantitative and qualitative research methods, and face-to-face, telephone, and online approaches.

We offer fully integrated analysis of brand and reputation, combining stakeholder research with media analysis and business metrics for actionable insights.

- Reputation measurement
- Drivers of trust and reputation
- Perception audits
- Stakeholder engagement studies
- Brand health tracking
- Competitor benchmarking
- Communications / marketing effectiveness
- Message / concept testing
- Reputation dashboards, reports and executive debriefing



About Echo Research

For over 30 years, we have delivered research-led, board-ready insights to Business leaders working around the world.

Our award-winning, global research, analysis and insight gives our clients the confidence to make informed decisions to support communications strategies that protect and build corporate and brand reputation.

35-year track record

700+ clients

100+ industry awards

80 staff, analysts & associates

Global research in 50+ languages

STAKEHOLDER RESEARCH

Inform strategy and understand the perceptions of your target audiences through bespoke quantitative and qualitative research

REPUTATION ANALYSIS

Enhance your reputation and demonstrate communications effectiveness by integrating stakeholder research, media analysis and social listening

REPUTATION VALUATION

REPUTATION DIVIDEND

Quantify the financial value of your reputation through rigorous statistical modelling of financial and reputation data. Offering practical insights to guide strategic priorities

BRITAIN'S MOST ADMIRED COMPANIES STUDY

BRITAIN'S MOST ADMIRED COMPANIES

Unlock insights into the drivers of your reputation and benchmark them against peers, drawn from the UK's longest-running survey of C-Suite and analyst perceptions of FTSE companies

MEDIA & SOCIAL MEDIA ANALYSIS

Human-led, AI-enhanced news and social media analysis delivering tailored, actionable insights into reputation and communications effectiveness

RISK & ISSUES MONITORING

Reputational risk monitoring powered by AI and human-led expert analysis – delivering early warnings, risk radars, and strategic guidance to manage reputation

INFLUENCER MAPPING

Identify the most influential online and offline stakeholders, providing evidence to effectively prioritise and guide stakeholder engagement

THOUGHT LEADERSHIP RESEARCH

Authoritative, media-ready research designed to elevate brand visibility and thought leadership with robust and credible insights

Measuring what matters – the Echo how-to series

01 **How to commission successful stakeholder research**

02 How to commission successful media & social analysis

03 How to make the most of the Britain's Most Admired Companies study

04 How to conduct a reputation audit

05 How to value your company's reputation with Reputation Dividend

echo

RESEARCH INSIGHT ADVISORY

Experts in communication, brand and reputation research

echoresearch.com

enquiries@echoresearch.com

+44 (0) 20 8050 3610