



Reflecting on 20 Years in Market Research

Last fall (2021) marked 20 years of providing insights to clients through Nobles Research. It was during the week of 9/11 in 2001 that I left Procter and Gamble to start Nobles Research as a qualitative research consultant. Three things stand out to me as I reflect over the 20 years: changes in technology, friendships / relationships formed along the way and the thousands of conversations across a wide variety of topics.

Technology

"The more things change, the more they stay the same." - Jean Baptiste Alphonse Karr

When I started, qualitative research was done primarily in-person or by phone. Online bulletin boards soon became another forum for engaging respondents. It is amazing how things have changed just in the last two years. On March 12, 2020, I flew home to Tampa from Los Angeles as a project I was working on was cut short due to the emerging pandemic. That would be the last in-person research I would conduct for 16 months. In fact, I have only conducted one in-person research project since March 2020. Once the dust settled from the March halt, research picked up again in May 2020 with everything being conducted by phone or online.



The pandemic has changed our lives in many ways. As a qualitative researcher, it has accelerated the adoption and use of online methodologies to conduct qualitative research. In a span of 20 years, qualitative research went from being conducted in-person or by phone to primarily phone and online. Yet **vital, insightful conversations** are still occurring despite changes in communication. This year I think about the touching, heart rending conversations I have been privileged to be a part of through my computer screen: Rheumatoid arthritis patients sharing their pain of everyday life and fears for the future, Black small business owners sharing the joys and challenges of building their businesses and a respondent sharing the loss of a loved one due to COVID.

Relationships

"One good conversation can shift the direction of change forever." - Linda Lambert

This quote speaks well to the impact of Providence and friendships in my career.

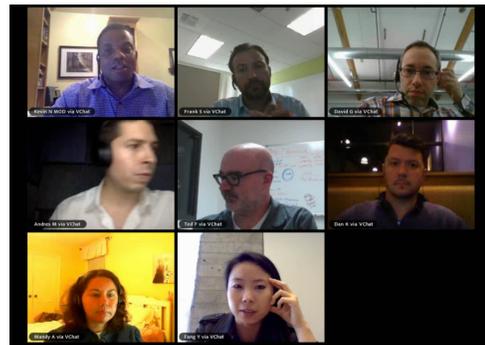
I remember leaving P&G, thinking I would build a market research practice leveraging my product design expertise to help P&G and other CPG companies build their businesses. I simply had no idea the breadth of industries and companies I would get to provide insights to in 20 years. After initially starting in the CPG industry, I have had the opportunity to conduct research in healthcare, food and beverage, financial, video game, alcoholic beverage, retail, software and restaurant industries.

So, here is a big shout out and thank you to the people along the way that have helped create business opportunities for me: Cathy Prewitt, Tammy Smith, Cyndy Dinius, Kirk Lake, Jim Rulli, Charles DuReau, Carissa Luch, Priscilla Tuan, Rex Repass, Will Krieger, Kathy Fitzpatrick, Dan Weber, Sondra Brown, Illya Thomas, Julie Cudmore, Albert Sanchez, Jenny Karubian, Pepper Miller, Natalie Robuck, Kendall Nash, Krissy Polley, and Tara Wiley.

Rich, Rewarding Conversations

"Let your conversation be full of grace, seasoned with salt... Apostle Paul

Every time I write a discussion guide, I am creating a framework and flow for a conversation. Obviously, I am designing the guide to satisfy my clients' research objectives and deliver the insights they seek. Well-designed questions will also create opportunities for the people I will be speaking with to explore their thoughts and feelings. This has been especially true in health care research, D&I studies and other sensitive, potentially emotionally charged subjects.



The most rewarding conversations over my career have been the ones where the respondent(s) I have been talking with at the end say, that really helped me to talk about this, or if it's a group, they may say, it would be helpful to have more conversations like this one. It is a bonus for me when the participants gain a blessing beyond the incentive.

As a listener, I have had the privilege of getting to hear people express frustrations, hurts, disappointments, joys and successes. The nature of conversation creates opportunities for the participants to explore a topic and sometimes come away with new ideas, a new perspective or the satisfaction and peace of being heard.

2022

Heading into 2022 at Nobles Research, we are looking forward to leveraging technology in new ways, broadening our network and having more rich conversations that are beneficial to both clients and participants. Over the next 12 months, I hope to share some reflections on my most favorite conversations from the past 20 years.

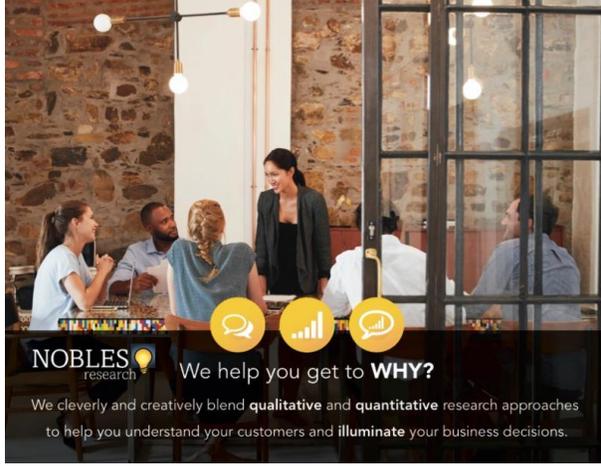


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