

**Conducting Market Research Project**

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| Introduction  Before you decide to develop a product to solve a perceived problem, it is advisable to perform direct market research as part of your overall market research effort. Direct market research can help you determine whether your perception of the problem is accurate. If consumers feel that the solution to a problem is not usable or not worth the cost, then the design effort is not justied. The needs and wants of the consumers and users should be evaluated before investing significant time or money into the development of a new product or process. Data gathered first hand from direct observation or feedback gathered verbally or in written form directly from the consumer/user can provide valuable information that can help you estimate the potential market for your solution.  For this project your team will design a market research plan and collect market data about the problem that you intend to solve directly from potential consumers and/or users. As you begin to devise potential solutions to the problem, it may be judicious to perform additional market research to justify specific solution paths.  Equipment   * Engineering notebook   Pencil Procedure  Plan and perform direct market research to help define and justify your problem. Then analyze the results of your research in order to determine consumer/user wants and needs. You can choose from different methods to gather market data. No matter your method(s), you should seek information that is directly related to your problem statement and that leads to answers to the following questions:   * What do you need to know in order to design and develop a solution to your chosen problem? * What is the need or want in your problem statement that is causing a problem? * What customer(s) will be interested or served by a solution to the problem? * Is the assumed target market correct, smaller, larger, etc.? * Do products exist that already serve as a solution? * What competitors affect your solution options? * What solution characteristics and features are most important? * How much would people pay for a solution? * Is the problem definition adequate or is the problem broader or narrower than the original problem statement indicates?   Depending on the data necessary, one or more of the methods described below may be used to meet market research objectives. In order to obtain data that is directly applicable to your project justification, administer your market research to people who can provide useful information. In other words, if you plan to design a method of ankle support for athletes, attempt to limit your administration to athletes and sports medicine professionals. Feedback from a sedentary senior citizen would provide little useable information in this case. Look for opportunities where you can reach a large number of people that will be users or consumers of your product.  Personal Observation  Personal observation puts you in a position to learn more by watching what others do and how they do it. You can also observe processes. If you are observing people, you will obtain better results if you are minimally involved or hidden. If you plan to observe participants in their natural setting, describe the behaviors for which you will be looking. If you will create a scenario and ask participants to perform some specific task, describe the setting, materials and instructions you will provide and make a list of specific behaviors for which you will be looking.  Informational Interviews  You may want to have a structured interview, or you may choose to interview people more casually. Structured interviews can provide more thoughtful answers, but the structure can make the respondent uncomfortable or can cause the respondent to answer in ways they think you want. Casual interviews can provide candid but sometimes less thoughtful answers.  Surveys  Surveys are generally the best way to obtain responses from a large number of individuals. You can deliver and retrieve surveys in person, by phone, using the Internet, or by mail. For this course, in-person or online survey tools are probably the best methods.  Focus Groups  Focus groups bring together a small group of people who have been identified as potential buyers and/or users. A facilitator should lead the discussion and keep the group focused. It is best to find participants that the leader does not know.  Designing the Market Research Plan  You may decide that one method or a combination of methods is best used to gather the information you need. Make a written plan for administering your market research that will result in the collection of useful data important to the validation of your problem. Your market research plan should identify the research tools that will be used, the type of respondent targeted, how the research will be administered (i.e. where, mode of administering, collecting and gathering of data, etc.) and when you will conduct the research. After finalizing the design of your market research, have your teacher review your plan, your research tools (surveys/interview questions/etc.) and your expected results.  **Conclusion**   1. Why is it important to conduct market research? 2. Why do companies and individuals with new ideas put so much effort into research and development before moving forward with product or system development? 3. Based on your market research results, describe the wants and needs of the potential customers for your proposed solution. 4. How do the results of your market research help define the scope of your proposed project? |