



Insights and Sound Bites

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"It's what you learn after you know it all that counts." – Harry S. Truman

Seven Steps for Success!

How to make the most of bulletin board research

1) Consider your audience

It's hard to remember a time when texting and instant message didn't exist, when one or two keystrokes replaced paging through the Yellow Pages, or when WiFi sounded like a newfangled radio frequency instead of a complimentary addition to your morning latte. But despite the explosive nature of technology-based communication, we have found that HCPs and many patient segments tend to be less familiar with this platform. With this in mind, treat everyone as a first-timer. Give instructions on logging in. Explain how to navigate the site. Describe how bulletin boards work. Set expectations for responding to questions. Remember, most everyone is happy to follow the rules – when they know what they are.

2) Don't fatigue participants

We often hear, "Why don't we just add one more question?" or "Oh, if we're going to ask *that*, we might as well ask *this!*" Yet, packing your d-guide too full is likely to yield diminishing returns – shorter more superficial answers vs. in-depth responses. Tired participants become non-participants. As a guideline, try to stick to no more than 10 questions per session, and limit sessions to less than 30 minutes – with no more than two sessions per day.

3) Make the most of bulletin board functionality

Bulletin boards have come a long way since their inception. Once a tool limited merely to text, today's platforms now allow moderators AND respondents to incorporate photos and videos. This makes it easy for participants to respond to stimuli, or for participants to upload their own media for richer insights. Another tool that can be effective is "masking" questions as a means to eliminate bias. This can include blinding others' responses until a participant has answered a question, or preventing a respondent from answering a question in the middle of a topic before he/she answers the ones before it.

4) Load with upfront probes

Remember, written word and spoken word are two different beasts. In face-to-face conversations, we have the luxury of asking a simple yes-no question and then following up with, "tell me more about that," in a matter

of seconds. In a text atmosphere, this exchange will be a much lengthier process. Avoid this delay by communicating your intent upfront. Steer clear of closed-ended questions and include your probes with the initial question. For example, "Share your most recent experience with a patient presenting with Disease State X. How do you typically treat these types of patients? Explain your first line/second line therapy choices and why you choose them?" will garner significantly more insight than "What do you prescribe most often for Disease State X?"

5) Stay in touch

In the midst of all this bulletin board banter, remember to communicate with your respondents *outside* of the discussion as well. This means sending daily emails each morning, setting the stage for that day's topic(s). Think of it as a virtual pep rally – compliment them on the work they completed the day before, infuse excitement about the upcoming discussion, remind them to keep checking back in, provide a teaser about what's to come later in the week. Staying engaged with your audience will ensure that your participants remain energized and interested.

6) Build in time for review

Instead of presenting new questions at each session, reserve one or two sessions simply for reviewing and responding to previous posts. Sure, you're reminding respondents to do this each time they log in, but this will *ensure* that participants spend a dedicated amount of time to providing more depth on questions that matter most. To facilitate this, send an email directly to the respondent each time you post a follow-up question. Take every opportunity to remind the participants to pop back online when they have the time.

7) Have fun!

Respondents tend to mimic the behavior and tone of the bulletin board moderator. Show them from the beginning that you want this to be a fun, lively, engaging discussion. Incorporate humor, post emoticons, and throw spelling out the window. The more comfortable environment you create, the more respondents will be willing to share real, honest feedback!

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