



# focus: small business

Mary DiPaolo

## Unused research a pointless waste

The decision to undertake research significantly affects management's ability to successfully satisfy customer needs and wants on an ongoing basis. But it must be made clear that research results don't mean a thing if they are left to collect dust.

Any organization's well-being is dependent on the talent and wisdom of its decision-makers. When decisions involve situations where past experience and judgment cannot be relied upon exclusively, management must follow a more formalized decision-making process to get the answers it needs.

This is when marketing research may be used to help management successfully carry out the decision-making process through all its phases.

The first step of the decision-making process is to recognize and identify what specific problem or opportunity exists and requires further action. Sales may be up, but no one really knows why.

Rather than hoping the trend continues, marketing research may be used to help identify what factors may be contributing to an increase in sales, while uncovering related opportunities that may have otherwise been ignored.

Next, management must identify alternative courses of action. Doing nothing is just as much a course of action as to increase advertising, for instance.

Exploratory research may be used to help managers not only recognize

and identify areas of problem and opportunity but also provide alternative courses of action that may be evaluated later on in the research process.

Exploratory research is appropriate during these early phases of the decision-making process and is designed to obtain a preliminary analysis of the situation with a minimum expenditure of time and cost.

The common methods used to carry out exploratory research include focus group interviews, searching published data sources, observation, case histories, and interviews with experts.

Once alternative actions have been identified, conclusive research may then be conducted to provide information which helps management evaluate and then select a specific course of action.

Increasing advertising nationwide vs. focusing sales efforts on a local level are just two examples of alternatives that would be evaluated as part of a firm's conclusive research efforts. Possible research methods include customer surveys, experiments, simulations and observation.

Next week, we will conclude our discussion on marketing research for independent businesses.

Mary DiPaolo is the owner of *MarketTrends*, a Farmington Hills-based business consulting firm. She is also producer and host of the cable television series, "Focus: The Small Business Environment."

## datebook

### ● PURCHASING MANAGEMENT

Thursday, Jan. 21 — Purchasing Management Association of Detroit meets in Farmington Hills. Information: 363-5200.

### ● BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

Thursday, Jan. 21 — "How to Choose the Right Opportunity" workshop offered 7-9 p.m. in Troy. Fee: \$25. Information: 649-8846. Sponsor: Start A Business Store.

### ● MORTGAGE WOMEN

Thursday, Jan. 21 — Association of Professional Mortgage Women meet in Birmingham. Information: Polly Lawthe, 686-9359.

### ● WOMEN'S BUSINESS OWNERS

Thursday, Jan. 21 — National Association Women's Business Owners meet. Information: 864-3300.

### ● FACILITY MANAGEMENT

Thursday, Jan. 21 — International Facility Management Association meets in Farmington. Information: Maureen Ditsan, 824-5200.

### ● RUN A BUSINESS

Thursday, Jan. 21 through Feb. 25 — "How to Run a Successful Small Business" offered 7-10 p.m. in Troy. Fee: \$300. Information: 542-4220. Sponsor: Small Business Management Schools.

### ● MONEY MANAGEMENT

Saturday, Jan. 23 — Short course on money management 10 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. in Bloomfield Hills. Fee: \$15, including lunch. Information: 540-8710.

### ● DESKTOP PUBLISHING

Saturday, Jan. 23 through Feb. 13 — Desktop publishing class on Macintosh computers offered from 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. in Rochester. Fee: \$115. Information: 370-3120. Sponsor: Oakland University.

### ● FUNDAMENTAL IBM PC

Saturday, Jan. 23 to Feb. 13 — Operating an IBM personal computer will be taught 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. in Rochester. Fee: \$115. Information: 370-3120. Sponsor: Oakland University.

### ● WOMEN'S AD CLUB

Monday, Jan. 25 — Women's Advertising Club of Detroit meets in Southfield. Information: Carole Deyma, 362-4800.

### ● FINANCIAL EXECUTIVES

Monday, Jan. 25 — Financial Executives Institute meets. Information: Donald L. Foehr, 626-3156.

### ● START A BUSINESS

Monday, Jan. 25 — "Start Your Own Business" offered 7-9 p.m. in Troy. Fee: \$25. Information: 649-8846. Sponsor: Start A Business Store.

### ● ENGINEERING REFRESHER

Monday and Wednesday, Jan. 25 through March 30 — Part I Professional Engineer refresher course will be offered 6-9 p.m. in Troy. Information: 832-5400. Sponsor: Engineering Society of Detroit.

### ● CONSULTANTS NETWORKING

Tuesday, Jan. 26 — "1988 — The Year of the Prosperous Consultant" information and networking meeting 6-10 p.m. in Southfield. Fee: \$25 in advance. Information: Charlene Manuel, 342-8772. Sponsor: Success Development Corp.

### ● INVESTING WHILE RETIRED

Tuesday, Jan. 26 to Feb. 9 — "Investing During Retirement" will be offered 7-9 p.m. in Rochester. Fee: \$22. Information: 370-3120. Sponsor: Oakland University.

### ● INVESTING WHILE RETIRED

Tuesday, Jan. 26 to Feb. 16 — "Getting Your Money's Worth" money management course will be offered 7-9 p.m. in Rochester. Fee: \$25. Information: 370-3120. Sponsor: Oakland University.

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### ● ENGINEERING REFRESHER

Tuesday and Thursday, Jan. 26 through March 31 — Part I Professional Engineer refresher course will be offered 6-9 p.m. in Southfield. Information: 832-5400. Sponsor: Engineering Society of Detroit.

### ● OAKLAND CHAMBER

Wednesday, Jan. 27 — Oakland County forecast luncheon held in Bloomfield Hills. Information: 644-1229.

### ● HOW TO INCORPORATE

Wednesday, Jan. 27 — "How to Incorporate" offered 7-9 p.m. in Troy. Fee: \$50. Information: 649-8846. Sponsor: Start A Business Store.

### ● BUILDING MANAGERS

Thursday, Jan. 28 — Leasing office space is topic at Building Owners and Managers Association of Southeastern Michigan meeting in Southfield. Information: Susan Adler, 737-4477.

### ● BEGINNING COMPUTER

Monday, Feb. 1-22 — "Beginning Computer . . . a Hands-On Class in Surviving the Computer Age" offered 7-9 p.m. in Bloomfield Hills. Fee: \$75. Information: June Fasang, 645-3635. Sponsor: Cranbrook Schools.

### ● LOTUS 1-2-3

Tuesday, Feb. 2-23 — "Lotus 1-2-3 Beginning on the IBM PC — Spreadsheets for Home and/or Business" offered 7-9 p.m. in Bloomfield Hills. Fee: \$75. Information: June Fasang, 645-3635. Sponsor: Cranbrook Schools.

### ● MEDICAL MALPRACTICE

Wednesday, Feb. 3 — A medical malpractice risk management seminar will be held from 8 a.m. to noon at the Berkshire Hotel, 2811 Telegraph, Southfield. Fee: \$95. Information: Annette Hill, 647-0004. Sponsor: Stratton-Cheeseman Management Co. Inc.

### ● LOTUS SYMPHONY

Wednesday, Feb. 3-24 — "Lotus Symphony, Beginner on the IBM PC — Spreadsheets for Home and/or Business" offered 4:30-6:30 p.m. in Bloomfield Hills. Fee: \$75. Information: June Fasang, 645-3635. Sponsor: Cranbrook Schools.

### ● INTERMEDIATE SYMPHONY

Wednesday, Feb. 3-24 — "Lotus Symphony Intermediate on the IBM PC" offered 7-9 p.m. in Bloomfield Hills. Fee: \$75. Information: June Fasang, 645-3635. Sponsor: Cranbrook Schools.

### ● WORD PROCESSING

Thursday, Feb. 4-25 — "Word Perfect on the IBM PC" offered 7-9 p.m. in Bloomfield Hills. Fee: \$75. Information: June Fasang, 645-3635. Sponsor: Cranbrook Schools.

### ● ENTREPRENEUR EXCHANGE

Friday-Saturday, Feb. 5-6 — 1988 Entrepreneur Exchange Conference in Troy. Fee: \$200. Information: 964-4000 Ext. 326. Sponsor: Greater Detroit Chamber of Commerce.

### ● TAX-FREE INVESTMENTS

Wednesday, Feb. 10 — Investment seminar on tax-free and tax-advantaged high-yield investments begins at 7 p.m. in Rochester. Free. Information: Diane Sheppard, 625-3886. Sponsor: Shearson Lehman Brothers.

### ● HIDDEN CASH FLOW

Wednesday, Feb. 10, 24 — "Uncovering Hidden Cash: The Company President's Guide to Cash Flow Management" offered at the Michigan Inn in Southfield. Information: Lorraine Hendrickson, 1-487-0225. Sponsor: Eastern Michigan University.

### ● PR REVIEW

Wednesday, beginning Feb. 10 — Review sessions for Public Relations Society of American accreditation examination offered in Detroit. Fee: \$45. Information: 645-6499. Sponsor: Public Relations Society of America.

### ● GMAT PREPARATION

Saturday, Feb. 13 through March 12 — Graduate Management Admissions Test preparation workshop offered 9 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. in Rochester. Fee: \$140. Information: 370-3120. Sponsor: Oakland University.

Information for this column should be sent to the business editor, Observer & Eccentric Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia 48150. Information must be received by Monday to be published in the Thursday issue. Publication cannot be guaranteed. Information should contain a daytime telephone number where information can be verified.

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