

## Lightspeed Research + GMI; Looking to the Future

By David Day, President and Global CEO



"This move will allow the combined company to meet our clients' needs not only today, but well into the future." This quote by Michael Brochu, CEO and President of GMI, from the press release announcing the merger of our companies, expresses what it's all about: The Future.

At Lightspeed Research, we've been thinking about and planning for the future for some time. And when we entered into talks with Michael and the senior executives at GMI we learned that they had been, too.



### Well Positioned for Change

The future holds some profound changes for our business. The proliferation of mobile devices and tablets, the increase in the use of social media and decrease in the use of email (especially by the younger generation), the ubiquity and growing sophistication of online experiences, and the increasing demand by clients for transparency and industry standards for respondent quality are just a few of the sea changes we've been studying.

All this was top of mind for us as we negotiated the acquisition of GMI, one of the world's leading online survey and sample providers. Not only will our panel capacity grow significantly as a result (most notably in the U.S., Canada, and the European "Big 5," as well as giving us a footprint in South America, India, and numerous additional Asian markets), but by completing this merger, we are well-positioned for the future in many other ways.

For example, GMI has very strong thought-leading talent. A primary driver of the acquisition was to tap in to GMI's innovative technology and the people who championed and developed it.

### Unparalleled Range of Capabilities

GMI's suite of capabilities includes sophisticated routing, workflow automation, sample blending tools and a variety of sourcing options, including social media. GMI's award winning interactive survey design technology and data-capture techniques improve respondent engagement and promote data quality. Coupled with Lightspeed Research's custom panel, behavioural tracking and mobile services, we can now offer an unparalleled range of capabilities to all of our clients.

### Focus on Quality

Finally, we have long been vocal proponents for common industry quality standards and greater transparency about online panel research practices. Based on our experience, we believe TrueSample is the best option today for an industry-wide solution. Lightspeed Research is focused on a U.S. rollout of TrueSample in 2011. GMI, which has been an active participant in all industry leading initiatives on data quality and standards, has recently signed an agreement with MarketTools to have its panels TrueSample certified.

Lightspeed Research's acquisition of GMI will substantially enhance the combined organization's ability to provide maximum feasibility, drive industry standards on quality, and continue to bring innovative technologies to market. We are confident in leading our industry into a future that delivers on the promises of today.

As it's been said before, "The best way to predict the future is to create it."

## New Routing Techniques Can Help Deliver Targeted Sample

By Efrain Ribeiro, COO



The days of the census representative “gen pop” sample are past. In today’s online market research, clients want to interview smaller, more specifically targeted populations. Increasingly, clients are interested in small and precise populations that exhibit specific buying habits and attitudes, and who reside in narrow geographic areas. For example, where clients in the past may

have desired to target consumers aged 25 through 49, today the same clients want to focus on women aged 25 through 49 who have at least one child, live in a West Coast urban center and regularly purchase organic foods.



This example demonstrates the challenge for the online sample provider – it requires a large pool of pre-profiled respondents to meet the sample size. Today, average respondent qualification incidence of studies is running below 20 percent. This means that four of five willing respondents are disqualified before they can complete a study they have been invited to. A survey router, carefully administered with the appropriate research sampling considerations, can match disqualified respondents with other study opportunities so that the respondent is able to complete a survey without being turned away. Survey routing has evolved to help deliver those targeted samples, finding available online panel members and matching them to surveys they can qualify for and take. Further, responsible users of routers utilize the respondent’s survey history to guide him or her to the appropriate study and limit the number of surveys a respondent is invited to. Used responsibly, survey routing is an important tool in the business of a panel provider.

### Justifiable Concern

However, today there is justifiable concern with the routing practices sometimes found in the industry. Some suppliers have not been clear and transparent about when they are using routers to direct respondents to surveys or what the decision process is for matching respondents to surveys. As part of Kantar, Lightspeed Research is one of the biggest buyers of supplier samples, in addition to being a sample provider ourselves. We have been concerned about the broad use of routers in today’s online research due to its potential impact on data quality and the panelist experience. We have dedicated significant resources to investigating how the sample suppliers we utilize employ survey routing on the studies we commission.

Our investigation has identified a wide spectrum of application of routers. At one end are suppliers that use routers more than 95 percent of the time, at the other are suppliers that use them occasionally and for very specific studies, and still others at points in between. Some will allow survey-takers to complete an unlimited number of surveys in one sitting. And to complicate matters, those suppliers who rely heavily on routers also depend less on pre-profiled panel sample, and more on live-web traffic for sourcing. This broad range of activities is happening because there are no current rules or guidelines for the use of routers in our industry. As a result of these findings, we direct our suppliers to use routers on our studies only when we direct them to do so, to utilize panel-sourced sample on our studies, and to be transparent on their routing methodology. With these measures in place, we can be confident of the consistency and quality of the sample we get from our suppliers.

### A Critical Part of the Future

Lightspeed Research and Kantar believe that survey routers are a critical part of the online research future. Their role in enhancing the respondent experience is crucial in maintaining consumer interest and long-term participation in the research process. Today at

Lightspeed Research, we employ routers under firm rules governing how and on which studies they are used. As a result, fewer than five percent of our online interviews are currently router sourced. Our measurement scientists are currently refining our routing methodology and systems to help increase our use of routing and provide a better survey/panel experience to our respondents.

In addition, we support the work of the ARF Router Committee and other industry organizations – with the participation of online sample suppliers – to help educate research buyers in the use and potential impact of survey routing on their research results. This initial step will set the foundation for future research so that the use of routers can become a reliable and welcomed way to source online respondents. Working in collaboration with our colleagues in the online research industry, we at Lightspeed Research are hopeful that by the end of 2011 we will have established standards and practices that will help guide the responsible use of routers throughout our industry.

## Lightspeed Research Demonstrates Commitment to Transparency with Adoption of TrueSample®

Susan Frede, VP Research  
Chris Stevens, Chief Research Quality Officer



As we have previously communicated and demonstrated, Lightspeed Research and Kantar are committed to quality and have been at the forefront in this important area. For example, Lightspeed Research's online data quality program, *RealRespondents. RealResults.*, offers automated quality processes for duplicate detection, address validation, and detection and removal of speeders and straight-liners.

Lightspeed Research and Kantar have taken our commitment to quality to a higher level by partnering with MarketTools with the objective of implementing its TrueSample® solution. The benefit of TrueSample to a client is that it is a third-party program that adds greater transparency and confidence to Lightspeed Research's and Kantar's quality practices. The adoption of TrueSample allows Lightspeed Research to meet client demands for an industry solution for online data quality. It is an integrated solution with evidenced-based standards.

TrueSample ensures that respondents are real, unique, and engaged.

- Real – Uses third-party databases to validate all prospective panelists and survey respondents to guarantee that they are who they say they are.
- Unique – Employs sophisticated digital fingerprinting to eliminate duplicates from surveys, ensuring that no respondent can take a survey twice.
- Engaged – Applies engagement technology to eliminate speeders and straight-liners in real time, and measure and benchmark survey design.

There are three components to the TrueSample quality process:

- Panel validation – Proactively highlights probable fake and duplicate panelists from panels so that they do not get invited to participate in surveys.
- In-survey validation – Identifies and eliminates probable fake, duplicate, and unengaged respondents in real-time when they take a survey.
- Survey design evaluation & improvement – SurveyScore measures and benchmarks the quality of the survey instrument and its impact on respondent engagement.

Lightspeed Research is striving to improve respondent engagement as we understand the detrimental effects that a bad survey has on a panelist. To support this, within the TrueSample suite, SurveyScore Predictor is a tool which can calculate probable survey performance. This means that survey design can be reviewed and amended before field work starts to help increase respondent engagement.

TrueSample Validation complements the Lightspeed *RealRespondent* process which will remain in effect. This includes IP check at registration, Captcha, e-mail verification, proxy detection, and IP Geofencing.

Lightspeed Research has conducted early research to understand the implications of the TrueSample panel validation process in the U.S. Based on the initial validation of the MySurvey U.S. panel, 95%+ of the panelists are found to be real. The non-real or fake panelists tend to respond to surveys at a lower rate, so their impact on survey results in the vast majority of cases is negligible. For those research programs that might be effected, additional Research on Research will be planned.

TrueSample will be initially rolled out in the U.S. in 2011. There is a review process in place for rolling out into other countries which include Canada, U.K. and Germany.



## Lightspeed Tip • • •

According to our recent research on research, total questionnaire length should be under 20 minutes to ensure respondent engagement and minimize drop-outs.



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