

Online Research Communities A Win-Win Scenario for Royal Mail, Brass & Toluna

When Royal Mail sought to improve its customer insight programme and engage more with its customers, it turned to Marketing Communications Agency Brass to develop an online research community. Identifying a solution that required advanced but user-friendly technology, Brass approached Toluna....

The Background

A new research solution is required

Although part of the nation's fabric, Royal Mail is also a business operating in an increasingly competitive landscape. To grow revenues, it must deliver the right products, services and experiences to both its business and personal customers. To do this, it must listen to and engage with those customers.

Up until July 2009, Royal Mail's ad hoc B2B research panel had consisted of monthly surveys emailed to a database of around 5,000 business customers. Although useful, its falling response rates, lack of two-way dialogue and limited ability to target specific segments rendered the process no longer fit for purpose. Clearly, a new research solution was required.

The Objective

A new, exciting & engaging way to interact with customers

Against this backdrop, Royal Mail approached Marketing Communications agency, Brass. The brief? To develop a "new, exciting and engaging way to interact with customers to help the business move forward".

A future-focused and technology-savvy agency, Brass immediately saw the need for a bespoke online community. However, given a finite budget and a mere six-week lead-time, Brass needed a proven operational platform. Soon, the next step became obvious.

The Solution

An online community using Toluna's PanelPortal™ technology

Rather than spend significant time and budget on developing a new technical solution, Brass approached Toluna. In addition to owning the world's largest online market research panel, Toluna is a leading provider of online panel technology and expertise to brands and their agencies. Using its **PanelPortal™** solution, Toluna was able to build the '**Royal Mail Opinion Forum**' to Brass' bespoke specification.

Comprising advanced survey software, panel management and web community management, PanelPortal enabled Brass to manage the entire panel creation, management and data collection process through a fully integrated and extremely intuitive interface. The functionality of Toluna's software meant that Brass could tailor how the website would appear to both business and personal customers, ensuring relevance and symmetry with Royal Mail's brand guidelines and tone of voice.

Ultimately, two separate web portals were created – one each for business and personal customers – along with separate discussion zones based on business size and sector. A multi-functional agency-client team was established and a research programme planned. Suddenly, Royal Mail had customer insight literally on tap.

" The Opinion Forum is an excellent rapid response channel for customer feedback which allows me to make viable commercial decisions."

Senior Manager, Royal Mail



The Results

A sea change in the effectiveness of Royal Mail's B2B research

- ✦ **Royal Mail's business customers can now set the agenda for research;** businesses can talk directly to Royal Mail on their own terms, start their own discussion threads and suggest their own topics of interest
- ✦ **Shorter time frames and lower costs.** 300-500 completed online survey interviews in 1-2 days and survey response rates at 50-70% are significantly higher than traditional surveys
- ✦ **Return on investment** is significant, outperforming equivalent Face-to-Face and ad hoc methods by a factor of 2:1
- ✦ **In 2010, Royal Mail and Brass won an MRS award for its work on the Royal Mail Online Forum**



What can you do with PanelPortal™?

- ✓ **Convert customer records** into your branded panel community
- ✓ **Build & manage the community** without additional expertise or resources
- ✓ **Manage the health of your panel** for maximum responsiveness & reliability
- ✓ **Create online questionnaires** & discussion forums
- ✓ **Generate instant results** on your surveys & discussions
- ✓ **Get insight on demand** to refine marketing activities

"The functionality of Toluna's PanelPortal software provided us with all our required tools whilst still enabling us to influence the final design, layout and structure of the pages."

Simon Shaw, Brass

About Toluna

Toluna is a global provider of online sample and survey technology solutions to the world's leading market research agencies, media agencies and corporates. Unlike other panel providers, Toluna has developed a unique online community approach to the management of its panels. Through the use of web 2.0-based technology it has created the world's first social voting community site toluna.com, focusing on maximising panellist engagement to offer increased survey responsiveness and data reliability to its clients.