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OBTAINING INDUSTRY COOPERATION IN FUTURE RESEARCH

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United Dairy Industry Association

I work for the dairy industry, which has a very substantial non-brand promotion program. I'm employed by United Dairy Industry Association (UDIA), which is one of several entities involved in the industry's promotion programs.

Among these several entities there is a considerable amount of evaluation of program effectiveness going on. I have been asked to address the issue of how other parties can obtain industry cooperation in letting them participate in future research.

I can provide an answer that reflects our philosophy at UDIA. It may or may not reflect the philosophy of the other entities in the dairy industry or of other promotion organizations, but we hope that it might.

How do you obtain industry cooperation? I'd put the answer in terms of a simple imperative: "market yourself." You have a service to offer — your research capabilities. We in industry have a benefit to gain — the fruits of your service in advancing the state of knowledge for our industries.

So the way to seek participation with industry in future research is to knock on some doors with the story of what you have to offer and how your expertise can benefit the industry's understanding of the impacts of its programs.

Participation actually can take one of two forms.

The first form is participation as the initial and primary analyst of the effectiveness of promotion programs. That is, we in the industry engage you at a fee or on contract as a consultant to conduct primary research on program effectiveness. Typically, we provide any proprietary databases needed and you supply the analysis and report the results to us for our dissemination to those who fund our industry programs and to other interested industry parties.

The other form of participation is somewhat less direct. When we acquire databases that provide us with appropriate measures of effectiveness of our promotion programs, it's up to us to report the main effects to the funders of our programs with due haste so that appro-

priate decisions can be made about program directions. But after this task is completed, there remain the rich databases, just ripe for further analyses for either practical or heuristic purposes. Come and tell us what we both have to gain if we participate with you by providing these databases for your analyses.

Is gaining participation really that simple?

It can be, in the sense that we at UDIA regularly over the years have had parties engaged with us in both the direct primary and the more indirect secondary forms of research.

In terms of primary research, we regularly need and welcome the kind of expertise that we can obtain from consultants in the academic or business community in terms of program evaluation. We respect the theories, the models, the computer capabilities, and the other resources we can obtain there.

In terms of the secondary analysis of databases that can be accessed through us, we appreciate the resources that the academic community can turn loose on the meticulous, detailed analyses of the full scope of information in the databases. These analyses provide a good complement to our analyses of the main effects of programs.

I must go on to tell you that there are some restrictions that both of us must live with in any cooperative research arrangement. They are not unreasonable restrictions in our judgment, and you should be able to live with them.

The first applies to the databases that we in industry acquire. Frequently, we purchase data such as product sales movement from research firms that sell the information to multiple clients on a syndicated basis. We must sign non-disclosure agreements with these firms that preclude our release or publication of any of the data they provide without their permission. These agreements often reserve to the firms the right to review and approve drafts of proposed publications or releases based on their data. Both we and you must honor these restrictions established by the research firms. We have found that most firms are relatively understanding and willing with regard to this matter — they recognize that by the time any of their data appear in print, it is old enough to have lost most of the economic value it had to them when it was new. Thus, their concern is not at all a matter of censorship or interference, but just a legitimate desire not to have their data appear in public in a way that will compromise their ability to sell it.

Another potential restriction is our non-brand promotion organizations themselves. You must be aware that the money for our research comes from the funders of the promotion organizations, who in a majority of cases are the producers of the commodity in question. They set the policies for the organizations. They and those who serve on their staffs have to be satisfied that research directly funded by them

or research based on data provided through their funding is meaningful, of good quality, actionable, and carried out by accomplished researchers.

Again, it is your responsibility to market yourselves and your capabilities so as to provide a convincing case that your participation in research will satisfy these criteria.

When you propose to conduct some of the more indirect secondary research by soliciting the use of industry databases, please counsel closely with the industry organization involved. Tell them in detail what the objectives of your research are, what the proposed methods are, who is going to be doing the research, and in what form and through what channels your research outcomes will be disseminated.

This makes sense for both you and the organization. First, the organization knows its databases and their sources well. They cannot only provide them to you at no cost or little cost, but their working knowledge of them can be of great assistance to you. They also have perspectives on the history of promotion in their industries that can be helpful in deciding what kinds of research are likely to be meaningful and insightful and what kinds are not. They also are familiar with any previous evaluations of program effectiveness, which can be a help in achieving consistency of results from one research activity to another.

If you observe these considerations with regard to the industries conducting promotion programs, you should materially enhance your chances of participating with them in research.

To sum up, let me repeat what I believe is the most effective way for you to obtain industry cooperation in research: market yourself. You are marketing a service — your research capabilities. And we in industry can gain a benefit from that service. So come convince us why we both have something to gain, and you'll have the best possible chance of obtaining industry cooperation.