

South Staffs Water Customer Challenge Group – Customer Research Task Group

Conference Call, 4pm, August 20th 2013

Taking part:

Rachel Barber	South Staffs Water, Customer Services Director
Steve Morley	South Staffs Water, Compliance Director
Barbara Julye	South Staffs Water, Head of Customer Engagement
Annalise Lister	Cambridge Water
Steve Grebby	Consumer Council for Water/Cambridge Local Water Forum
Rachel Talbot	Citizens Advice Bureau/ Cambridge Local Water Forum
Colin Greatorex	Lichfield District Council/SSW Customer Challenge Group
Jean Swanson	Cambridge City Council/ Cambridge Local Water Forum
Bernard Crump	Consumer Council for Water/ SSW Customer Challenge Group
Richard Thompson	Environment Agency/ Cambridge Local Water Forum
John Thompson	Chairman of the South Staffs Water Charitable Trust
Dr David Wurr	Consumer Council for Water/ SSW Customer Challenge Group
Lisa Gahan	ICS Consultancy
Amanda Borrmann	ICS Consultancy

The purpose of the conference call was to look at the methodology behind the proposed questionnaire on acceptability and agree sample sizes.

Lisa Gahan explained that acceptability research was carried out to measure how acceptable customers thought South Staffs Water's draft business plan would be.

If customers think an element of the plan is unacceptable they are asked to comment on why this is so. She said that while customers could choose to respond "I don't know" to a question, they would not be able to choose a middle or neutral option. Lisa then went through the four key stages of creating the survey:

- 1) Agree the plan to test
- 2) Agree fieldwork requirements
- 3) Design the survey questionnaire
- 4) Pilot and main fieldwork analysis.

1) Agree the plan to test

Bernard Crump said some companies were using acceptability testing to test two plans – a "stand still" version and an enhanced plan. He asked why only one plan was being tested in this case.

Lisa replied that if the customer research had supported a clear strategy, as was the case at South Staffs, then it was only necessary to test one plan.

Bernard then asked if it was possible to include trade offs within the survey.

Rachel Barber pointed out that the full version of the draft business plan did include trade-offs that the company was able to accommodate.

Action: It was noted that all possible trade-offs should be made clear within the acceptability questionnaire.

A draft version of the plan will be circulated to members for comment before it is approved.

2) Fieldwork requirements

Lisa explained that two data sets were being proposed.

Option 1) Minimum: 550 domestic customers, 150 non domestic customers (700 in total)

Option 2) Enhanced: 800 domestic customers, 200 non domestic customers (1000 in total)

She said if members wanted to be able to analyse the data by socio economic groups, geography, age, ethnicity, etc., then the larger dataset (option 2) would be required.

Bernard Crump asked what the confidence interval would be and was told it was +/- 4% for 700 and +/-3% for 1000.

Lisa explained that reducing the confidence interval much more would require prohibitively large data sets.

Colin Greatorex asked if the same people who had completed the Willingness to pay research would be contacted again for the Acceptability research.

Lisa said this was unlikely in the South Staffs region, but could not be ruled out in the Cambridge region where there were a limited number of business customers, in particular.

Steve Grebby said it was important that the data set was large enough to analyse by region, because of the differences in the wastewater elements of the bills. He also asked how information about how much customers pay would be gathered.

Lisa explained that customers were asked to refer to a copy of their bill wherever possible.

Jean Swanson said she would like the larger sample size to be used.

David Wurr questioned whether there was an in balance between the number of surveys being carried out online (CATI) and over the phone (CAPI).

Amanda Borrmann said they could reviewed this but also pointed out that responses could be weighted if necessary.

Rachel Talbot asked how hard to reach groups, such as people who were illiterate or did not speak English would be reach by the survey.

Lisa explained that people who took part in the telephone (CAPI) surveys would be guided through the questionnaire by the interviewer.

Action: It was agreed the larger sample size would be used

Action: ICS agreed to review the weighting of CAPI and CATI surveys.

Action: It was agreed that vulnerable customers, WaterSure customers and customers who had received a donation from South Staff's charitable trust would be included on the survey distribution list.

3) Design the survey questionnaire

Lisa showed the group examples of how the survey could be laid out.

4) Pilot and main fieldwork analysis.

Lisa said the survey would be designed in September and launched early in October. A pilot would be carried out among 100 customers to test whether the survey could be easily understood.

David Wurr asked if "Attitude to risk, speed of change and the bill profile" would be addressed by the survey. Lisa said these would be included if they were relevant.

Next steps

It was agreed that:

- 1) The larger sample size of 1000 would be used
- 2) The balance between the number of surveys being carried out online and over the phone would be reviewed
- 3) Vulnerable customers, WaterSure customers and customers who had received a donation from South Staff's charitable trust would be included on the survey distribution list.
- 4) A draft questionnaire would be circulated to all members on the conference call for comment
- 5) A follow-up conference call would take place 22 August 2013.