



7 Ways to Push the Limits of Online Bulletin Boards for Better Insights



Push the Limits. Think outside the Box. Take it to the Next Level.

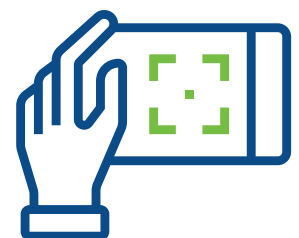
Why?

The fact of the matter is that marketing is hard. You always have to be better, faster, or cheaper. There are more channels than ever, more information than ever. And that means you need better information – always. To get better information, researchers have to apply their tools in new, different, and creative ways to dig into the consumer psyche to better understand why they do what they do.

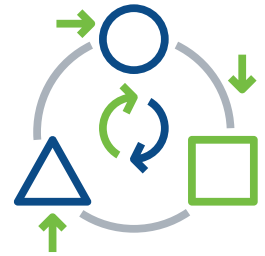
Online Bulletin Boards have been around for nearly two decades. Once used to explore highly technical or complex topics, or decisions that are made over a longer time, online bulletin boards have grown into flexible tools that can be used creatively to meet your research objectives.

Here are some outside-the-box uses of online bulletin board research:

- **Contextual Inquiry Assignments.** We regularly use multi-media functions available in bulletin boards to more deeply understand the perceptual and behavioral triggers of consumers. Consumers can take video or photos of them using a product, shopping, their experience at event, and so on. The possibilities are literally endless. This, combined with various other exercises and techniques, opens up new territory for consumer access and insight.



- **It's Complicated.** Another project that we conducted with online bulletin boards tests a new medical device with physicians. Typically, we would have done this through in-depth interviews due to the complexity of the topic. Because the doctors could participate on their own time, they embraced the online bulletin board technique. Plus, we got broader representation geographically and saved money on travel!
- **Advisory Boards.** We often hold some customer advisory council meetings via bulletin boards to save time and money, and make it easier for the participants. Online bulletin advisory boards work well with B2B participants or professionals who may have a long-term relationship with the company.
- **Pop-Up Communities.** Without the expense and commitment of an MROC, you can convene an online bulletin board quickly as a research community. Get quick feedback about a new idea, a research problem, or a marketing tactic – before you get too far down the road in development.
- **Digital Ethnography.** Online bulletin boards can document product usage or customer experience. For example, have participants document their hotel stay through the bulletin board. In addition to their “regular” activities (e.g., check-in and out), you can give the travelers specific assignments (e.g., use the pool, have room service, etc.) and ask them to document their experience with video and photos as well.
- **Before OR After.** Use online bulletin board discussion before quantitative research to better understand consumer perceptions of the research problem and the language used in the specific context. Or conduct online bulletin boards after quantitative research to further illuminate and clarify findings. If you are conducting your bulletin board discussion after the survey, you might be able to use the survey to recruit participants.
- **Before AND After.** Conduct the first wave of online bulletin board research before the event (or flight of advertising) and again after the event. This allows the researcher to see whether perceptions have changed, as well as to explore what caused those perceptions to change.



Online bulletin boards give you much flexibility for bringing participants together in creative and unexpected ways. Bring a fresh perspective to this research tool, and you might get some fresh – and valuable - perspective back.

Stay tuned for a few more insights on online qualitative research...

Let's get creative with online bulletin boards!

Contact Research America to discuss how to use online bulletin boards in your next research project.

(610) 356-1800

info@researchamericainc.com

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