Business Retention & Expansion

Process for Developing the Research Report and Related Presentations

Overview

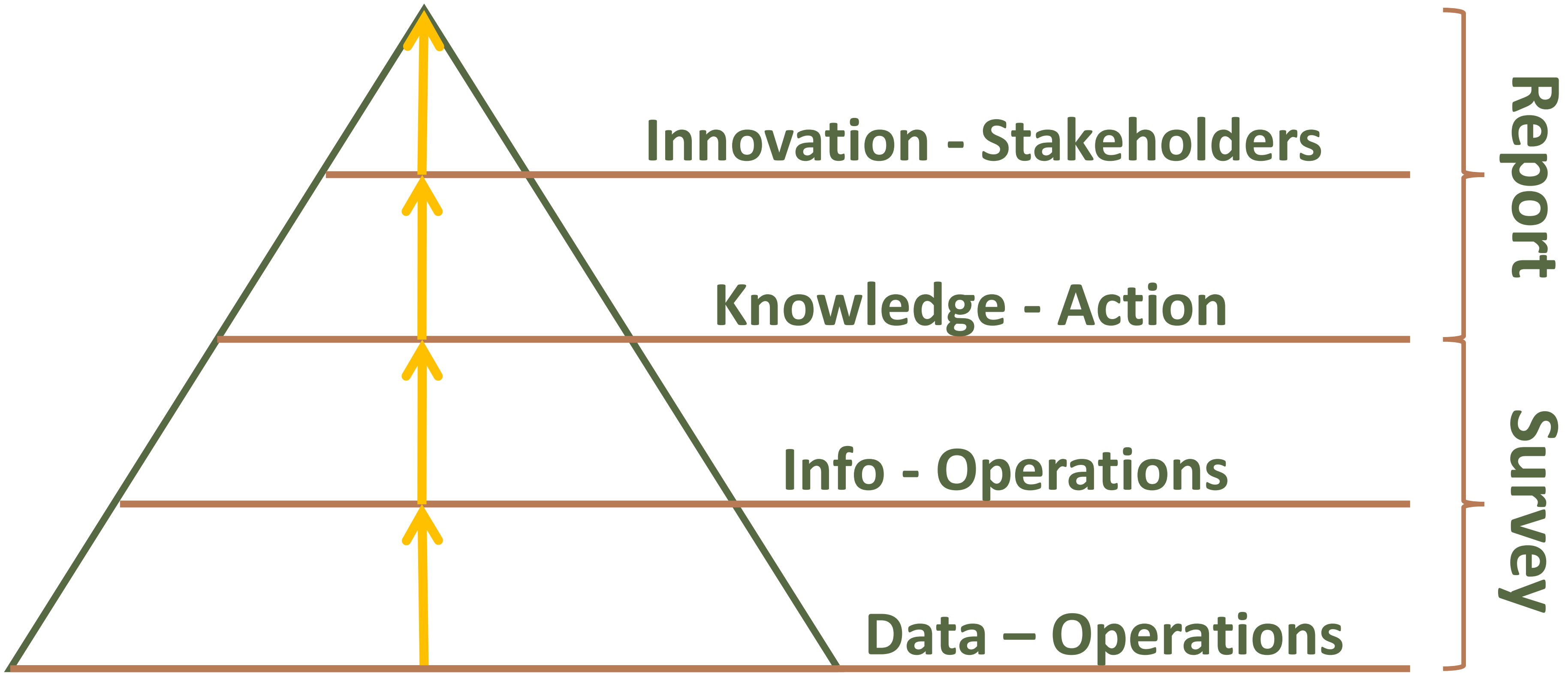
- It’s all about communication!
  - “The single biggest problem with communication is the illusion that it has taken place.” George Bernard Shaw
- The responses that you receive from the businesses are data – you are responsible for turning this data into information
- While much of the focus of this presentation is on developing a full-fledged written report, the same principles apply to short, fact-sheet type products that are targeted for specific audiences

Rationale

- Remember that the BR&E process is also concerned with building community and community appreciation for businesses
- Written reports can benefit the Action Team’s economic development planning efforts
- Written report(s) to stakeholders and the public can do much to build community support for the program
- Presentations will mean the most to the community, but the written report is the basis for these presentations

What should the research report do?

The analysis and report should provide the basis to move from data (survey results) to innovative action within the community



Source: Steve Deller, University of Wisconsin. NACDEP presentation, 2010.

Components of a written report

- Abstract or executive summary
- Problem statement including background information (community profile is the source for this)
- Survey methods and procedures (including difficulties or errors)
- Survey findings
- Implications – what does it all mean
- Appendices

Components of a verbal report

- Title slide showing Action Team and stakeholders
- Presentation objectives
- Relevant key survey findings
- Survey difficulties (including errors)
- Exact wording and format of questions to be analyzed
  - Don’t attempt to analyze all questions – fit the presentation to the audience
- ***Simple*** graphics
- Summary of main findings, implications – encourage discussion

Survey analysis options

- Option 1 – Hire/recruit someone else to do it
  - ***Before you begin this process, you have to have a solid idea of what the organization needs***
  - Above all, get references
  - Ask for sample reports
  - Ascertain whether the researcher/consultant did the "**proper**" job
  - Did the researcher/consultant perform the analysis in a timely manner?

Survey analysis options

- Option 2 – Do it yourself
  - Do you know what you’re doing?
    - Can you handle large amounts of data?
    - Are you familiar with the basic statistical tools?
  - Do you have the time and resources to perform an effective, timely analysis?
  - Get examples of “good” reports; you have to have an idea of the direction that you need to take
- You will likely need multiple written and verbal reports targeted to different audiences

Questions for BR&E report writers

- What do you envision as being included in the report?
- Do you provide assistance to our group in reaching a consensus for an action plan?
- What outputs are generated as a result of your efforts?
- Can you provide references from previous writing efforts?

Basic analysis questions

- What should be contained in the report?
  - Outline of information
  - Report should be conducive to community/organization strategic planning
  - Are suggested action plans inherent in the report?
- What are the **needed/desired** outputs?
  - Strategic plan summary
  - Presentation materials
  - Survey response summary

Basic analysis questions

- What roles will be played and by whom?
  - Who will present the report to the community?
  - Can this person present information to increase knowledge and stimulate innovation instead of just presenting data?
  - How can the researcher assist the task force?
  - ***Will*** the researcher assist the task force?

Analysis guide – SWOT worksheet

- What appear to be the primary opportunities for and/or threats to these businesses?
- What appear to be the firms’ or the community’s primary strengths and/or weaknesses in dealing with these opportunities or threats?
- How can potential projects be identified from using the SWOT approach?
- Should another approach such as PESTLE (Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal, Environmental) be used?

SWOT analysis

- First analysis of the questionnaire
  - What issues really “jumped out” for this community?
- Second analysis of the questionnaire
  - What can the community do to respond to the concerns and opportunities for local firms
- What are the pros and cons of using this approach to develop the research report?

Understand the issue with the question

- Identify the "best" method of presenting the question responses
  - Would frequencies describe the responses better than averages?
  - Utilize tables and (simple) graphs whenever possible
- Look at the cause of the responses
  - If newer businesses are facing problems, what is the cause of those problems?
  - Provide **possible** solutions in the write-up or presentations
- You are trying to identify the fewest number of factors that have an impact on the most issues faced by businesses

Starting at the end – before you design the survey instrument/discussion guide (Section 3)

- Think about the evaluation – what were the short-, medium-, and long-term goals that you want to achieve?
- Design your survey questions so that they lend themselves to the type of analysis that will be entered into the report and presentations
- Given your questions, identify the clearest statistical measures that will enable you to communicate your findings in the most transparent method possible
- Remember that the report's mission is to impart information to your audience – **just because you can perform an advanced statistical analysis doesn't mean that you should!**

Analysis tips

- Data collection
  - Use technology – iPad, Surface, smart phone, etc. – to capture responses
- Several platforms can be used for this
  - Online survey platforms (SurveyMonkey or Qualtrics)
  - Spreadsheet (Excel)
  - Database (Access)
  - “Canned” survey client (Bludot, Executive Pulse)

Analysis tips

- Online survey platforms
  - Provide raw data downloads for further analysis
  - Perform basic analysis (mainly counts and averages)
- Canned survey clients
  - More detailed analysis for specific questions based on the author's ideas of what is important
  - Advanced topics such as cross-tabulation can be made much easier

Crosstabulation

- Crosstabulation analyzes data in different ways to obtain more information
- Compare the basic business ownership counts from a fictional community with 100 businesses

Business Size	Number
0-5 employees	70
5-10 employees	15
10-20 employees	10
Over 20 employees	5

Owner Gender	Number
Male	53
Female	47

Owner Race	Number
White	46
Black	37
Other	17

Owner Age	Number
18-35 years of age	25
35-65 years of age	47
Over 65 years of age	28

Crosstabulation

- But what if we want to ask some different questions?
  - How many females of each race own businesses?
    - **White females – 19**
    - **Black females – 18**
    - **Other race females – 10**
  - How many whites versus blacks in each age group own businesses?
    - **White 18-35 years – 13**
    - **White 35-65 years – 21**
    - **White Over 65 years – 12**

    Black 18-35 years – 9

    Black 35-65 years – 20

    Black Over 65 years – 8

Crosstabulation

- Crosstabulation offers a much finer look at the data, but it can be taken too far to be used as information
- Statistical analysis packages can perform crosstabulation to 15 levels – it is unlikely that you would get much information with this fine an analysis; you would likely just be generating more data
  - Online survey platforms likely can't do this; canned survey clients only do this to the degree to which they've been programmed; can be done with Excel and Access, but this is tedious
  - The best tools to use for this are statistical packages such as Stata, SPSS, SAS, etc.
- Again – just because you can do a particular analysis doesn't mean that you should do that analysis

Statistical measures tips

- It’s tempting to quantify the data and run averages of all responses
- Example, a community has 100 firms. There are 50 sole proprietorships, 25 partnerships, 10 LLCs, and 15 corporations.
- Your information collection database codes a sole proprietorships as a 1, a partnerships as a 2, an LLCs as a 3, and a corporation as a 4
- A simple average of these numbers would yield a value of 1.9. This number has no meaning.
- Better to report the frequencies of the different types of businesses as contained in the second bullet above

Statistical measures tips

- For responses that are quantifiable and can be averaged, it is sometimes useful to report the standard deviation of the responses
- The standard deviation is an easily calculated measure of the variability in the responses
- A low standard deviation indicates that there is little variation in the responses or that the respondents think very much alike
- A high standard deviation indicates that there is a great deal of variation in the responses; the opinions of the respondents are very different

Analyzing open-ended questions

- It is easy to measure something that is quantified (has numbers attached to the response). It is not easy to measure something that is not quantified.
- The key to measuring open-ended questions is to quantify them.
- Read through the questions to become familiar with the range of responses
- Develop a spreadsheet or table with the various response categories as column headings and the survey number as the row heading
- Re-read the responses. Indicate the category contained in the response by entering a “1” in the appropriate table cell.
- This may involve you reviewing the responses several times, but you will be able to report frequencies and (perhaps) other quantifiable statistical measures at the end of the process.

Questions?

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