

Moment-to-Moment **RESEARCH PLAYBOOK**



WHAT IS MOMENT-TO-MOMENT?

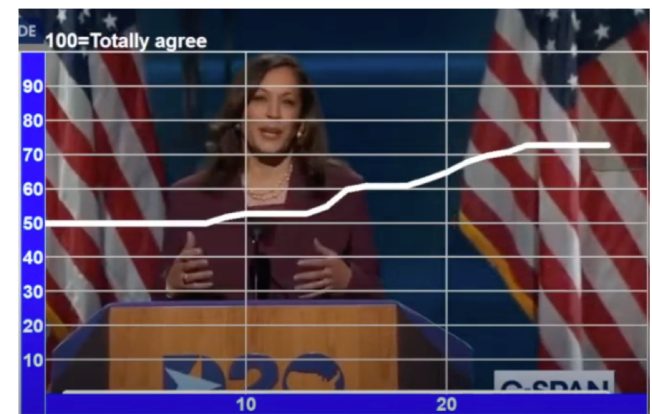
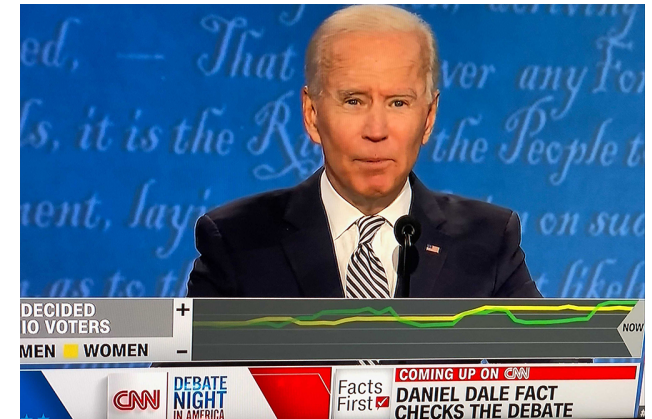
Whether you know it or not, you've likely already seen Moment-to-Moment (MtM) research in action.

MtM and its signature “dial testing lines” have achieved celebrity status for their use by CNN, FOX News and other broadcast networks. This technology has been used to cover key political events such as the presidential debates and State of the Union addresses.

Beyond its use as a news reporting tool, Moment-to-Moment (MtM) research is playing an increasingly vital role in various types of qualitative research.

It's regularly applied in research studies around **marketing, media and advertising, politics and public policy, mock juries and litigation**, academic studies and presentation testing.

This Playbook taps a pool of experts from across the research spectrum to gather and share sound advice, best practices and practical tips to help you get the most out of MtM research.





HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This Playbook is intended for research professionals using, or evaluating the use of, Moment-to-Moment methods and tools in their research.

Our goal is to offer you a practical and informative guide that provides an understanding of the applications and benefits of Moment-to-Moment, and arms you with field-tested advice and tips from experienced researchers who have been using this methodology in their studies for years.

What is Moment-to-Moment?	2
Why do moments matter?	
How can we capture them?	4
The impact of flawed recall and memory bias on market research	6
MtM Research: Online and Offline	7
What's the sweet spot for Moment-to-Moment research?	8
 Case-In-Point: Academic Research Arizona State University	9
Benefits of MtM	10
 Case-In-Point: Political Research CNN	13
Taking MtM Research Online	14
 Case-In-Point: Consumer Product Research j + k solutions	16
 Ask the Expert: Do it Yourself or Hire?	17
 Best Practices: Prepping for a Dial Focus Group	18
 Case-In-Point: Ad & Message Research Project on Race in Political Communications	19
 Ask the Expert: How Do You Keep Respondents Engaged?	20
 Best Practices: Getting Results	22
 Case-In-Point: Presentation Testing TED	26
About Dialsmith	27
Research Contributors / Resources	28

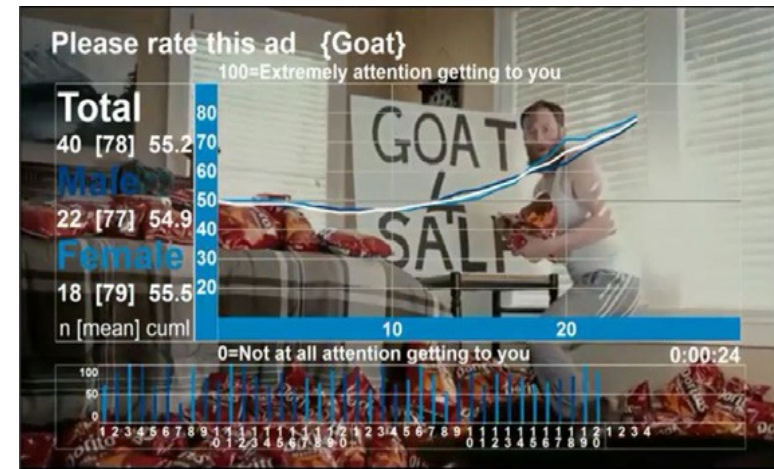
MTM: CAPTURING THE MOMENTS THAT MATTER

Why do moments matter in research? How can we reliably capture the moments that matter the most?

These are important questions for those in research whose job it is to understand and influence consumers, viewers and other audiences. Let's dive into these questions a little deeper.

Why do Moments Matter in Research?

Customer experiences are made up of “moments of truth.” These critical moments impact a customer's perception, sentiment or feeling about an experience or brand. This is why it's critical to identify and quantify the impact of the moments that matter. MtM research can be a valuable addition to qualitative research by offering a much more holistic view of the customer experience and decision-making process. Additionally, with its ability to capture perception, opinion and visceral feedback in real-time, MtM helps mitigate one of the biggest issues in research—flawed recall and memory bias.



“Although I’ve published many papers relying on [memory] recall, I know that it is easily contaminated by external or internal sources. The idea that you could find a way to get into a person’s mind while they are processing the information in the moment...is so valuable.”

Dr. Elizabeth Loftus, Distinguished Professor at University of California, Irvine






Share this
document on
LinkedIn

HOW CAN WE CAPTURE THE MOMENTS THAT MATTER?

There are several types of research tools and techniques for capturing how a respondent feels or thinks in the moment. MtM depends on an active audience response while the majority of other “In-the-Moment” approaches rely more on passive methods.

Moment-to-Moment is a quantitative research technique that uses an active audience response system, commonly referred to as a “dial testing system,” to collect respondents’ continuous, sentiment-based feedback to visual and/ or audio stimuli.

OTHER COMMON IN-THE-MOMENT METHODS INCLUDE:

-  Biometric research (neuromarketing, eye-tracking)
-  Ethnographic methods (observation, fieldwork) Real-
-  time tracking (wearables, mobile)

MtM results are typically displayed as a line graph overlaid on top of, or next to, the test media. The graph indicates aggregated sentiment on a moment-to-moment basis over the duration of the media. Results are used to identify specific moments, messages, statements or segments that have the greatest impact—both positive and negative—on the respondent group.



MITIGATING THE IMPACT OF FLAWED RECALL AND MEMORY BIAS ON RESEARCH

Memory as a research method is not as reliable as once thought. We now know that memory is malleable and prone to manipulation.¹

“When you get out there in the real world and start asking questions, you have no other option than to take someone’s word for it. In that scenario, memory can cause all sorts of problems.”

Dr. Elizabeth Loftus, Distinguished Professor at
University of California, Irvine

“When you start digging into how customers respond to questionnaires and surveys, you start seeing how wrong customers can be...I see that flawed memory, and the decisions we as marketers make based on it, can have a huge business impact—on both the top and bottom line.”

Elizabeth Merrick,
Head of Customer Insights Analytics at Nest



For decades, researchers have relied on recall-based methods (e.g., interviews, surveys, etc.) to provide accurate accounts of how respondents felt, or why they did what they did at some point in the past. But there’s mounting evidence that recall memory, and the research methods based on recall, are flawed. This realization has given cause for researchers to shift from solely recall-based methods to those that can tap into what people are thinking and feeling in the moment.


*Learn more about the impact of flawed recall,
memory bias and its impact on market research.*



¹ Schill, Cook, Jasperson. Political Communication in Real Time. Routledge. 2016.

MTM RESEARCH: Online and Offline

Dial testing is done in multiple ways:

 With **hand-held dials** in focus groups (in-person dial testing)

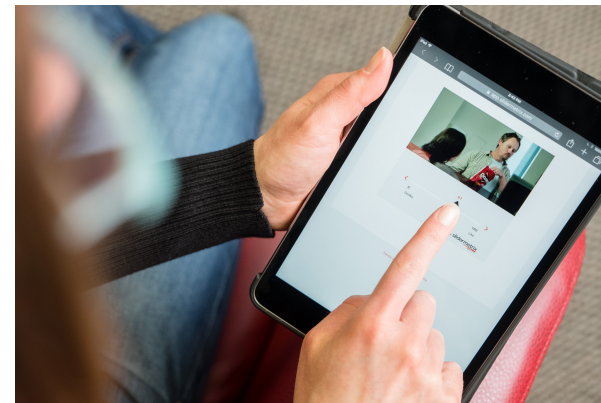


What is in-person dial testing?

Dial testing is used in focus groups for two main purposes:

- 1) To capture continuous qualitative feedback on content (video/audio)
- 2) To capture instant quantitative feedback to help the moderator drive a deeper discussion.

 With an **on-screen slider** in surveys (online dial testing).



What is online dial testing?

Online dial testing uses an on-screen slider to simulate a handheld dial. The slider is located in close proximity to the test media so respondents can move the slider along the scale while viewing and/or listening.

You can also use a **hybrid model that incorporates both.**

WHAT'S THE SWEET SPOT FOR MOMENT-TO-MOMENT RESEARCH?

MEDIA RESEARCH

(TV, Radio and Digital Programming)

Fast Fact: Nearly every major television network throughout the U.S. and globally uses MtM to test pilot programs.

POLITICAL & PUBLIC POLICY RESEARCH

Fast Fact: MtM has played a role in successful election campaigns of every U.S. President since Ronald Reagan.

ADVERTISING RESEARCH

Fast Fact: For more than a decade, MtM has been used to test and refine the highest rated¹ Super Bowl commercials.

¹Based on the USA Today Ad Meterrankings for the Super Bowl commercials.

SALES & PRESENTATION COACHING

Fast Fact: Corporate sales and communications teams use MtM to ensure presentations and speeches are optimized both from a message and format standpoint.

LITIGATION PRESENTATIONS & MOCK TRIALS

Fast Fact: MtM has been used to help legal teams evaluate arguments, presentations and testimonies in preparation for high profile, high exposure court cases.

PUBLIC OPINION RESEARCH

Fast Fact: MtM is regularly featured on CNN, FOX News, CNBC and other major news networks in their coverage of major political events.

ACADEMIC RESEARCH

Fast Fact: MtM is used in research studies by some of the top colleges and universities around the world in studies ranging from psychology to communications to political science.



ACADEMIC RESEARCH



Arizona State University Uses Dial Testing for Clues to How Romantic Couples Regulate Stressful Interactions

IN BRIEF

Drs. Ashley Randall and Nicholas Duran at Arizona State University used the Perception Analyzer to gather in-the-moment reactions from couples' observations during real-time conversations. Based on the moment-to-moment data they collected, Randall and Duran examined the complex differences between each couple member's behavioral exchanges and emotional experiences during stressful interactions.

RESEARCHERS

Dr. Ashley K. Randall, Assistant Professor and Director of Clinical Training of Counseling and Counseling Psychology, Arizona State University, and
Dr. Nicholas Duran, Assistant Professor in Psychology, Arizona State University

OBJECTIVE

Examine complex causalities between partners' behavioral exchanges and emotional experiences during stressful conversations using moment-to-moment interaction data.

SOLUTION

Couples in the study used the Perception Analyzer dials to rate the playback video of their conversations, evaluating momentary changes in their emotional and cognitive states.

RESULTS

Researchers were able to utilize quantitative data from each partner's dial ratings to identify where individual stress corresponded with mutually-shared stress between both partners and which conversations revealed unbalanced stress factors. The resulting data were then used to indicate patterns between behavior and emotion, specifically looking at whether one partner's emotion can be predicted by the behavior of the other.

"Utilizing the Perception Analyzer allowed us to parse out critical moments during partners' stressful interactions, which provides insight into the couple's overall relationship functioning."

Dr. Ashley Randall, assistant professor and director of training of counseling and counseling psychology, Arizona State University



BENEFITS OF MTM

What unique benefits and insights can I expect from MtM research?

Pinpointing the Magic Moments

Recall-based research asks participants to neatly sum up their range of emotions and opinions into one retrospective conclusion. And, as its name implies, is conducted after a respondent's exposure to a message, ad or program, and after seeing other messages, ads and programs. While it provides valuable insights, recall is only part of the equation. Lost in the method are those true, in-the-moment nuances that are vital to a more holistic view of a respondent's opinion.

That's why In-the-Moment methodologies are so valuable to researchers. MtM data provides a respondent's continuous, second-by-second, emotional response to visual or audio stimulus, whether it's a speech, TV ad or program, or litigator's opening or closing arguments. Researchers can get as granular as needed with the data without making sacrifices to the overall quality of the research results.

Overcoming "Groupthink" | Collecting Individual Responses in Group Settings

Dial testing technology can help overcome "groupthink" in a live group setting. According to Dr. Ali Goode, Partner at [house51](#) and expert in the psychology of learning and memory, "In most situations people tend to avoid sticking out from the crowd or refrain from contributing if they hold a minority opinion in the group. This can especially have a negative impact on research relying on recall methods.

With MtM techniques, individualized responses can be collected using the Perception Analyzer dials. And as long as people know their views are not being immediately broadcast to the group, they can report in anonymity, reducing the effects the group or others in the group may have on them."

"In most situations people tend to avoid sticking out from the crowd or refrain from contributing if they hold a minority opinion in the group."

Dr. Ali Goode, Memory Expert and Partner at [house5](#)

BENEFITS OF MtM - continued

Blending Quantitative and Qualitative Data

For decades, market research had two unique silos, qualitative research and quantitative research, and researchers aligned themselves to one or the other. More recently, researchers have begun to realize the immense value of blending the two approaches.

As Monica Zinchiak, owner of Z. Research Services, explained in her Marketing Insights article, “The allure of statistical significance, conjoint analysis or regression analysis is compelling—not to mention the power of a representative sample. Yet quantitative research findings tell the researcher only part of the consumer’s story.

Bringing the numbers to life—collecting the meaning behind the statistical values—is the power qualitative research can provide after the survey findings have been tabulated. It’s knowing that your brand is losing traction with consumers while also understanding why people are behaving this way. The insight of the latter makes the former more informative and actionable.”

With its ability to facilitate the instant collection and real-time display of quantitative results within qualitative research settings, MtM is a popular method for researchers looking to implement a blended qual-quant approach. Moderators and researchers can use the real time, MtM data to focus in on specific content or messages or adapt new strategies on-the-fly to drive deeper and more focused qualitative follow up discussions and interviews.

Reducing the Risk of Memory Bias and Flawed Recall

Market research has traditionally relied upon recall-based methods of gathering information and feedback from respondents. These methods ask respondents to remember and report on how they felt or what they were thinking at some point in the past. As mentioned earlier, these methods are problematic, as memory has proven to be malleable and recall unreliable.

MtM essentially takes flawed recall and memory bias out of the equation with its ability to capture and record real-time feedback, in the moment, as respondents are viewing, listening and experiencing. The results are a real-time “snapshot” of how respondents feel or think at that moment as opposed to relying on them to remember how they felt at some point in the past.



BENEFITS OF MtM - continued

Visualizing the Data | Facilitating Storytelling

Researchers are tasked with presenting results across organizations—in many cases, to stakeholders who are not “numbers people.” Infographics and data visualization in research reporting have become more standard requirements. MtM is beneficial in this regard through its ability to display results in a clear, intuitive and visual manner.



As Growth Hacking Strategist and Serial Storyteller [Kristin Luck](#) verifies, “Dial testing is amazing at determining what specific points are resonating with your target audience... it was instrumental in nearly every trailer and TV test I conducted during my entertainment research years. Its ability to visualize results in an intuitive and compelling way makes it a valuable component to successful reporting and storytelling.”

Data from the Perception Analyzer dials are delivered as a line chart overlaid on top of a video of the test stimuli. Each line in the chart visually represents the aggregated mean score for the total group or for a specific subset.

As the video plays, researchers and their stakeholders can easily see if the lines are going up (typically a positive reaction), going down (typically negative) or holding steady. Moderators, researchers and their clients can view the results in real time as the dial testing is happening. For many clients, it's as dynamic an experience for them as it is for the respondents in the focus group.

Laura Giese, President of Advanced Trial Services, adds, “Once clients see the research method in action and witness the visual overlays and response lines, Moment-to-Moment becomes very convincing. They immediately see and understand the value of the data and the power of the methodology to be able to decidedly recognize the strength and weaknesses in the presentation of arguments in a case.”



“Once clients see the research method in action and witness the visual overlays and response lines, Moment-to-Moment becomes very convincing.”

Dr. Laura Giese
Expert Jury Consultant and President of Advanced Trial Services

POLITICAL RESEARCH

Dialing In to the Pulse of the Nation

IN BRIEF

CNN has distinguished itself in its coverage of live political events by showing real time results from dial testing focus groups on-air as an event is being broadcast. Results from the groups are then used as reporting and discussion points by the broadcast team immediately following the event. The dial groups are conducted by two academic researchers.

RESEARCHERS

Dr. Rita Kirk, Distinguished Professor and Director of the Center for Ethics & Public Responsibility, Southern Methodist University and Dr. Dan Schill, Associate Professor in Communication Studies, James Madison University

OBJECTIVE

Enhance CNN's political reporting by displaying real-time focus group feedback during key political events such as State of the Union speeches, Presidential debates and more.



SOLUTION

Drs. Kirk and Schill conduct and moderate live focus groups with Perception Analyzer dials. Participants watch a live feed of the event and use the dials to provide continuous feedback. The system collects and aggregates the data and sends it to CNN's graphics system all in a split second so it can be displayed as colored lines on the bottom of the screen during the live broadcast.

RESULTS

Researchers were able to show the real time reactions from focus group participants made up of a mix of Democrats, Republicans and independent viewers and voters. CNN used the feedback for news reporting and political analysis after the events.

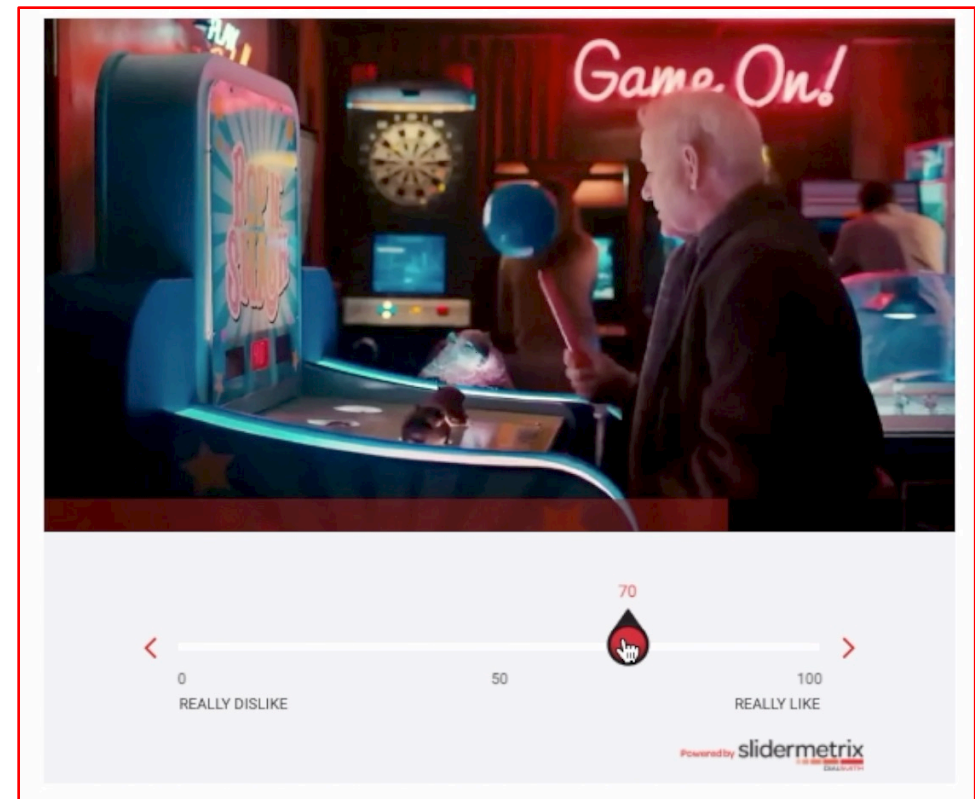
“The Perception Analyzer technology plays a meaningful role through its ability to capture real-time, second-by-second responses... the data from the dials allow us to identify and rank which issues are making an impact and pushing opinion in either a positive or negative direction. And the ability to capture and display this information in real time is a unique benefit.”

Dr. Dan Schill, Associate Professor in Communications Studies, James Madison University

TAKING MOMENT-TO-MOMENT RESEARCH ONLINE

Capitalizing on time and cost efficiencies, online research has become the mode of choice for many brands and content producers. New tools and technologies are allowing researchers to do online much of what previously could have only been done in live focus group settings.

MtM research capabilities have been part of this migration as well, equipping researchers with the ability to conduct online MtM evaluations of recorded media as part of an online survey. Additionally, the flexibility of the technology allows researchers to pair MtM with other online research platforms and methods—online research communities, virtual focus groups and others.



Share this
document on
LinkedIn

TAKING MOMENT-TO-MOMENT RESEARCH ONLINE - continued

In-person vs Online MtM



IN-PERSON MTM takes place in a focus group or live event setting.

With in-person, a moderator runs the session.

Respondents are each given a dial, which they use to respond to questions and give continuous moment-to-moment feedback on live content and/or recorded media (video or audio). The software and console poll the dials continuously every second and instantly display the results for the moderator and observers in the viewing room.



ONLINE MTM supports the testing of any recorded video or audio content. The MtM testing exercise typically resides within a survey but also can be paired with, and in some cases integrated into, other online research platforms such as online research communities. Instead of a hand-held dial, respondents use an on-screen slider (controlled by a mouse or a finger swipe on a touchscreen) to provide continuous feedback. Like in-person dial testing, the slider position is polled every second. Results are updated as soon as each respondent completes the MtM exercise.

While both in-person and online MtM research allow for gathering in-depth audience/consumer feedback, each offers different advantages and challenges.

REQUIREMENT	IN-PERSON	ONLINE
Quick turnaround		✓
Large and/or regionally diverse sample		✓
Limited budget		✓
Need to run many tests in a short period of time		✓
Face-to-face interactions	✓	
Evaluate live content	✓	
Control of testing environment	✓	
Facilitate group discussion or observe group dynamic	✓	

Similar to other methods of research, both in-person and online MtM have their place and may be a better fit based on the requirements of the study and the chosen method and approach of the researcher. Some researchers we work with are now designing MtM studies that take advantage of both online and in-person MtM components—using online MtM for screening and filtering on the initial material, followed by in-person MtM for deeper and more focused evaluation and discussion on a smaller subset of the test material.

CONSUMER PRODUCT RESEARCH



MtM Approach Delivers Critical Consumer Insights for Fortune 300 Client

IN BRIEF

Market research firm, j+k solutions, worked with Dialsmith to design and implement a multi-phase study integrating both in-person and online dial testing to gather in-the-moment feedback.

RESEARCHER

Kari Ullman, CEO of j+k solutions, a market research consulting firm specializing in “Voice of the Customer” research

OBJECTIVE

Help Fortune 300 client to best position and present a new insurance product with their client base, and help distribution partners gain competitive insights to increase sales.

SOLUTION

With help from Dialsmith, Ullman designed a multi-phased, multi-modal study, blending in-person MtM (focus groups with dials) with online MtM (survey with online dial testing).

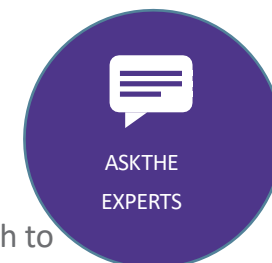
“The ability to view the dial data in real-time allowed for testing multiple revisions of the script, and for zeroing in on which sections were more effective than others. This saved time and money for the client, while delivering rich qualitative and quantitative data in a significant sample size of consumers.”

Kari Ullman, CEO of j+k solutions

RESULTS

Ullman successfully blended online and in-person dial testing into her methodology to best fit the needs for each phase of the study, and to balance the requirements of securing rich qualitative feedback with the ability to gather data from a statistically significant and geographically diverse sample. Results from the in-person and online dial testing enabled Ullman to identify positive and negative “triggers” in the presentation language that were, in turn, used to help optimize the product presentation.

DIY OR HIRE A CONSULTANT?



Now that you've added dial testing to your research repertoire, you're not sure whether you should buy a system now and take your dial testing capabilities in-house or queue up a consultancy like Dialsmith to run everything for you. Here are some key factors to consider when weighing these options:

1

Rule of thumb, if you're conducting MtM groups less than five times per year, you'd be better served by hiring a consultant. The upfront investment to purchase and to train you and/or your in-house team on a system will be recouped over time, but hiring an expert consultant makes much more sense at this level.

2

If your requirement for the MtM research is a custom or "one-off" use of the technology, the experience and technical acumen a consultant provides will allow you to apply the technology in the most optimal and efficient way. And having a consultant at the helm frees you up to focus on project objectives.

3

If you're thinking of doing your MtM testing online or integrating both in-person and online MtM, you'll want to hire an MtM consultant that has expertise in doing both online and in-person groups. Additionally, a company such as Dialsmith can make it easier by consolidating all your in-person and online results into one reporting system.

4

If you are integrating dial testing as a standard part of your research methodology (either through changes you have made to your research or through client requests), then investing in the purchase of your own dial system and training your staff is a worthwhile investment.

5

Before you purchase a dial system, be sure you have dedicated resources in-house that can be trained. This includes staff to program and run the system, as well as IT staff to support the on-going maintenance of the dedicated computer.

"There's an investment here, and your reputation is at stake. You want to make sure you have someone who knows what they're doing and has a lot of practice under their belt. You wouldn't want someone performing surgery on you who just read a manual about how to do it!"

Rich Thau, President, Engagious

PREPPING FOR A DIAL TESTING FOCUS GROUP



It was baseball icon Roger Maris who said, “You hit home runs not by chance but by preparation.” In much the same manner, hitting it out of the park with your dial testing takes a good amount of preparation as well.

Dialsmith’s Vice President of Client Services, Eric Alzuhn, has run hundreds of dial testing groups all over the world, so we asked him for his list of “Must Do’s” when preparing to run one of his dial testing focus groups:

1

Make sure you have enough dials with you for the maximum number of respondents you’ll seat. Then be sure to bring along a few spare dials just in case.

2

Any digital media that you’re testing should be in either .MP4 or .WMV format. These formats are optimal for the MtM overlay deliverable. Also, include one second of black (or silence for audio) at the beginning and end of the media segment as a buffer.

3

Understand exactly what data deliverables and formats your client needs, and make sure you clearly communicate these requirements to your technical consultant, if applicable.

4

Make sure your focus group facility room is equipped with a cable pass through between the respondent and viewing rooms. This allows you to easily set up your client monitor(s) for real time viewing of MtM results.

5

Be sure your project requirements stipulate and address any custom audio/visual requests from the client.



ADVERTISING & MESSAGE RESEARCH

Perception Analyzer Dials Deliver Unexpected Result in Political Ad Study

IN BRIEF

Researchers from The Project on Race in Political Communications turn to dial testing to try to understand how political candidates construct race-based appeals in advertisements and what effect those appeals potentially have on voters.

RESEARCHERS

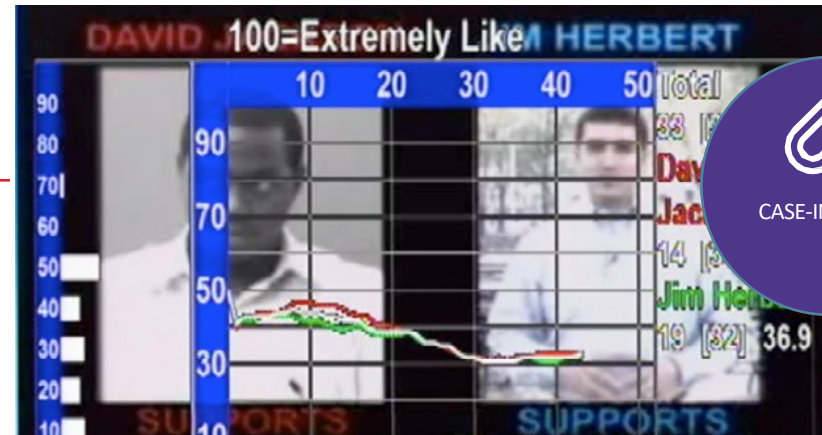
Dr. Charlton McIlwain, Associate Professor of Media, Culture and Communication, New York University (NYU) and Dr. Stephen Maynard Caliendo, Associate Professor of Political Science, North Central College; both are Directors at The Project on Race in Political Communication

OBJECTIVE

Determine if race-based content in a political ad has an impact on participants' perception of a candidate.

“The dial results showed clearly that there are a lot of complicated and sophisticated things going on over the course of an ad. We were able to see the movement (of the dial result lines) at precise moments—the clear static lines and then the stark point where the candidates' ratings start to fall.”

Dr. Charlton McIlwain, Associate Professor of Media, Culture and Communication, New York University



SOLUTION

Drs. McIlwain and Caliendo used the Personal Analyzer dials to test with more than 100 participants, asking them to continuously rate—on a 100-point likeability scale—one of the three political ads with varying degrees of race-based content.

RESULTS

With the MtM results, McIlwain and Caliendo were able to determine each participant's sentiment at the moment race-based content was introduced. They found that in both conditions, implicit and explicit, the participants overall rated the candidate more negatively when race-based content was introduced in the ad. Based on the MtM data, they found that a candidate received an even more negative rating from participants viewing ads with implicit race-based content in comparison to viewing ads with explicit content.

KEEPING RESPONDENTS ENGAGED

With MtM research, you're capturing data every second, so keeping respondents engaged and actively dialing is instrumental to ensuring high-quality results. We polled Dialsmith experts as well as industry partners for methods they use to keep participants engaged and focused throughout a dial testing session. Our experts agreed that these were the top two techniques that their moderators use to keep respondents engaged:

1

Provide clear instruction and practice time

With MTM, don't expect participants to simply pick up their dials and know what to do. While the dials are intuitive in nature, it is important to provide clear instruction on what the respondents need to be doing with the dials and what specific question they are responding to. Our experts recommend allowing for practice time so participants not only become familiar with having the dial in their hand, but also gain confidence on how to use the dial to reflect their opinions.

Dialsmith's Eric Alzuhn recommends waiting until right before the first MtM exercise to mention the dials to respondents. He advises to keep it simple at the beginning and be cautious not to overwhelm the group with too much detail in your opening remarks.



ASK THE EXPERTS

“Being a focus group respondent is a new experience for most, especially for dial groups. Let them warm up to the experience and the technology with a few simple demographic questions.”

Eric Alzuhn, Vice President of Client Services, Dialsmith

Litigation consultant Dr. Lara Giese has her groups start with a short, fun tutorial that includes a behind-the-scenes look at what the dial feedback looks like on-screen. Research consultant Rich Thau also recommends building in time to do a dry run so that respondents can, “work out the kinks,” and get a feel for viewing, listening and dialing at the same time.

With online dial testing, there are more outside variables, such as system hardware, software, and internet and Wi-Fi connection. The technical fluency of the participant is unknown, so instructions should be clear and straightforward. Allow time for participants to become familiar with the rating slider and to troubleshoot any technical issues.

ASK THE EXPERTS: KEEPING RESPONDENTS ENGAGED -continued

2

Design the project to address engagement

For dial testing focus groups (in-person MtM), it can be a challenge to keep respondents engaged when evaluating longer form media, such as full-length television pilots or speeches. But it can be done successfully as long as your moderator plays the role of “engagement cop” by giving proper instruction at the beginning and prompting respondents to continue dialing throughout the testing session.

Using online dial testing to test longer formats presents an added challenge, as it's impossible to control the environment in which respondents are participating and control for outside distractions. While media of various durations are regularly tested—from 30-second ads to 60-minute TV pilots and everything in between—short segments are always best when possible.

Our experts advise breaking longer segments up into shorter segments, if possible, to help keep respondents focused. Each segment can be separated by a follow-up question or two to give respondents a short break and help them re-focus for the next testing round. Additionally, some tools include features to remind respondents to continue dialing. Perception Analyzer Online, for example, can be configured to display an onscreen reminder message if a respondent doesn't move the slider for a designated period of time.





GETTING RESULTS



Instructing a Dial Testing Focus Group

Moderator instructions play a critical role in ensuring optimal results from your dial testing session. Here are some pro tips on how to best instruct a dial testing focus group:

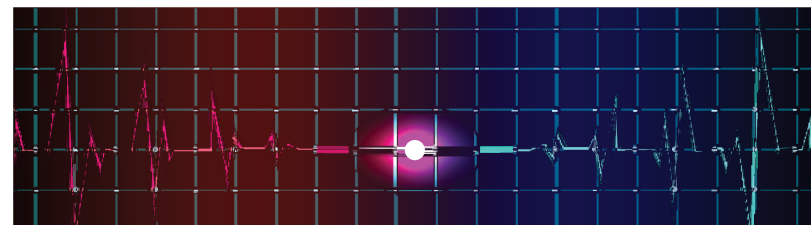
- 1 Have a dial in your hand while running through instructions to visually demonstrate what you're talking to the group about.
- 2 Advise to keep both hands on the dial throughout the viewing/listening session in order to mitigate delays in having to reach for or reposition the dial.
- 3 Instruct the group to make sure they are continuously reacting to what they see and hear. The system collects information from the dial every second so we need them to move the dial throughout based upon what they are thinking at that particular moment. Caution them not to wait until the end to respond.
- 4 Advise to keep their attention on the media while they are dialing. There is no need to look at the number on the dial as they are dialing as we are more interested in the range a respondent is dialing as opposed to any specific number.
- 5 Speaking of range, instruct the group to use the full range of the dial when responding and not be shy about dialing way to the right if they feel strongly positive, or way to the left if they feel strongly negative.
- 6 Advise them to be sure they start the session with their dial in the middle position—typically at 50. Remind them that 50 represents the starting position for each test segments and also represents a neutral opinion.

BEST PRACTICES: GETTING RESULTS - continued

Setting Expectations

As with any research project, it's important to understand what types of results you can expect. With MtM, respondent sentiment is quantified using a customizable scale—typically 0 to 100 with 50 indicating a neutral opinion. The sentiment represented at each end of the scale is best represented by “black and white” oppositional concepts such as like/dislike, strongly agree/ strongly disagree, etc. with the positive concept represented by the top of the scale (100) and the negative concept represented by the bottom of the scale (0). Moving the dial further in either direction indicates a stronger preference towards one of the concepts. The dial position is polled every second for each respondent.

Both in-person and online, results from dial testing are displayed as a line graph overlaid over top of the test material. The lines represent aggregated data from the dial responses. Different lines on the graph represent selected subsets, which can be based on a specific demographic or can be a calculated subset, such as “male, single, age 18 to 24,” or “women, married, age 28 to 42, at least one child.”



FLATLINING – WHAT DOES IT INDICATE?

Flatlining in MtM refers to periods of time when no dial activity occurs. According to Neil Griffiths of London-based research agency Blinc Partnership, flatlining occurs when:

- **Participants are disengaged or distracted**
- **Audience is so wrapped up in the experience they forget to record their reactions**
- **Content is not noticeable or noteworthy**
- **Overall messaging is not working**



Share this
document on
LinkedIn

Understanding Results

As with all research, MtM results should be viewed and evaluated within the context of the study. Here are three factors MtM experts suggest keeping in mind when checking MtM results:

1

ACCOUNT FOR YOUR SCALE. With a scale of 0 -100, you're more likely to see larger inflections in the data. This allows you to focus on bigger swings of opinion and not quibble over the difference between one or two points. Smaller scales, such as one to five, allow less inflection and may be more difficult to interpret differences of opinion.

2

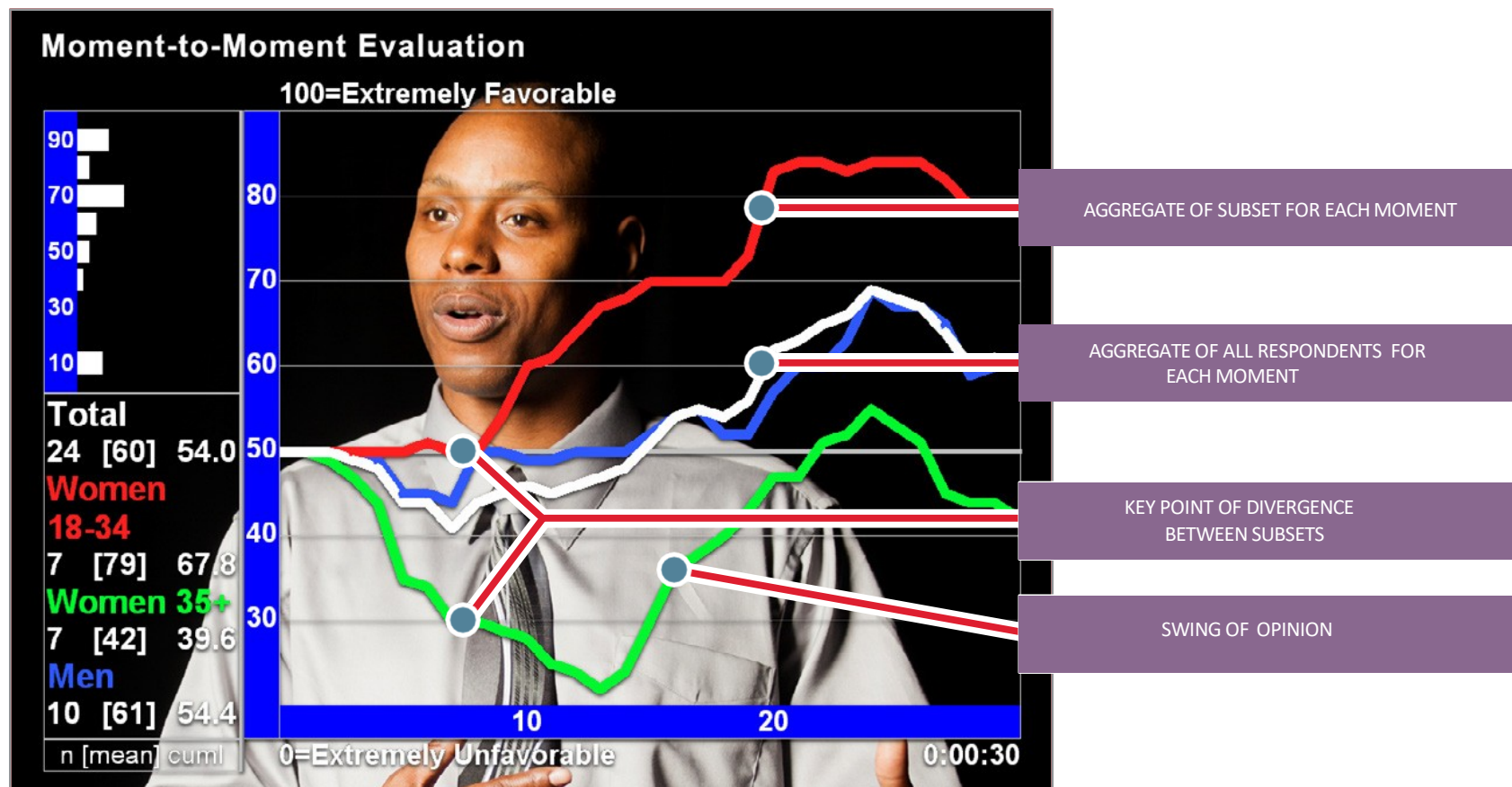
KEEP INFLECTIONS WITHIN CONTEXT OF PREVIOUS RESPONSES. Dial testing results are aggregated totals, so typically the greater the sample group, the less the intensity and abruptness of the inflections. Don't expect to see dial results hit 100 or drop to 0. In some cases, a line that goes up and holds at 60 could indicate a very positive result or one that drops and sticks around 40 could indicate a negative one. Dramatic inflections in the lines indicate moments or segments that require further investigation.

3

HELP TEMPER CLIENT RESPONSE. Neil Griffiths of Blinc Partnership advises being sensitive when presenting MtM results to clients, particularly those in creative fields. "They have deep emotional bonds to their ideas and work, and when they see a response line that 'dies' or goes flat, it can be disappointing for them. In those situations, I explain that the work as a whole isn't 'bad,' there just maybe certain sections that need revision in order to better engage and/or resonate with the audience."

BEST PRACTICES: GETTING RESULTS - continued

Understanding Your Data



PRESENTATION COACHING & EVALUATION



TED Turns to Dial Testing to GetSmarter

IN BRIEF

TED has revolutionized the way in which presentations are perceived and received. These highly popular events take place around the world, and are viewed online by millions. Measuring audience response has been crucial to the success of TED.

At a recent TED Conference, attendees were equipped with Perception Analyzer dials to evaluate each TED Talk in real time.

RESEARCHER

TED is the nonprofit, information sharing organization that asks thinkers and doers to give the “Talk of Their Lives” in 18 minutes or less

OBJECTIVE

TED organizers were looking to identify specific presentation elements that were most appealing to their conference attendees. Identifying these elements would help organizers make key content and format decisions regarding the videos TED chose to share online.

SOLUTION

Audience groups were equipped with Perception Analyzer dials (in-person MtM) to provide continuous feedback as they watched live TED presentations.

RESULTS

TED organizers used the results from the dial sessions to pinpoint moments, segments, speakers and topics that were most compelling. This information was used to select which segments were posted online. Audience feedback was also used to help determine future decisions regarding format and topic areas.



“The ability to monitor audience feedback live offers huge promise. Perception Analyzer provided fascinating data both during and after the conference.” Chris Anderson, Curator for TED

WHO IS DIALSMITH?

Dialsmith is a Portland, Oregon-based technology company that develops products and services for research, audience engagement and live event scoring. We are pioneers in the development of tools for capturing and displaying continuous and moment-to-moment feedback and are the worldwide marketers, sellers and service providers for The Perception Analyzer, Perception Analyzer Online, and Slidermetrix. Featured on CNN, FOX News, Food Network, and others, Dialsmith's Perception Analyzer tools are the gold standard for dial-based focus group testing, public opinion polling and audience engagement.

To learn more, visit www.dialsmith.com.

CONTACT DIALSMITH

U.S., Asia-Pacific, Latin America

Dialsmith

1815 NW 169th Place, Suite 2100
Beaverton, OR 97006, USA

Office: +1 503.225.8418

Email: hi@dialsmith.com

Europe

Dialsmith @ i-view London
Wellington House
125 – 130 Strand
London WC2R0AP

Email: hi@dialsmith.com

For more information on Dialsmith and our dial testing technologies, visit or follow us:



www.dialsmith.com



[@Dialsmith](https://twitter.com/Dialsmith)



[LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/company/dialsmith)

A BIG THANKS TO OUR CONTRIBUTORS

This best practice guide would not have been possible without the clients, researchers and industry experts who shared their insights and practical, hands-on expertise. Special thanks goes to the following contributors for their time and support:

Dr. Lara Giese, President, Advanced TrialScience

Dr. Giese is a nationally recognized litigation consultant who specializes in high profile matters. She is both a licensed psychologist and licensed psychotherapist in the State of California. In addition to being a published author, she is an in-demand speaker and media guest on national networks.

Neil Griffiths, Managing Director, The Blinc Partnership

Mr. Griffiths has worked in a number of business areas within research, including media strategy, public service branding and consumption of the arts. He lists the BBC and Nielsen among his clients. An award-winning novelist, he is founder of the44, the arts and culture discussion site.

Dr. Elizabeth Loftus, Distinguished Professor, University of CA-Irvine

Dr. Loftus is a psychologist and noted expert on human memory. For the last 30 years, her research has focused on the malleability of memory. A distinguished professor at the University of California-Irvine, Loftus holds faculty positions in Psychology and Social Behavior; Criminology, Law, and Society; and Cognitive Sciences. She's published more than 20 books (including the award-winning "Eyewitness Testimony") and more than 500 scientific articles.

Elizabeth Merrick, Head of Customer Insights Analytics, Nest

Ms. Merrick is a well-known researcher with experience across qualitative and quantitative methodologies, domestic and international markets, and a dozen industries. Formerly the manager of customer insights at HSN, her research focus is on the customer experience. She serves on the Board of Directors of the Market Research Association.

Rich Thau, President and Founder, Presentation Testing, Inc.

Mr. Thau regularly advises leaders in Congress, Administration staff, trade associations and corporate executives, and his recommendations have shaped the national debate over Social Security, Medicare and tax reform. Thau is also the co-publisher of a monthly e-newsletter called the Constituent Communications Alert, which is read by senior staff members of the U.S. House of Representatives.

And special acknowledgments to the following for their contributions:

Dr. Stephen Maynard Caliendo, Associate Professor of Political Science, North Central College and Dr. Charlton McIlwain, Associate Professor of Media, Culture & Communication, New York University (NYU)

Dr. Rita Kirk, Southern Methodist University, Public Affairs Research Department and

Dr. Dan Schill, Associate Professor, School of Communication Studies, James Madison University

Kristin Luck, Growth Hacking Specialist & Business Consultant

Drs. Ashley K Randall and Nicholas Duran, Arizona State University

Kari Ullman, CEO of j+k solutions