

5 tough questions to test your market research company

- 1. What can you tell me about my business I don't already know?**
- 2. How will you help me grow my sales?**
- 3. What's your point of difference versus your competitors?**
- 4. Why do you think consumers don't choose my brand now?**
- 5. How will I calculate the return on the market research investment I make with you?**

Read pages 2 to 7 for answers

How to evaluate the research company responses

These questions are *deliberately* tough.

There are actually no perfect answers to these questions.

The following pages give an indication of what a good answer would contain, and what a poor response would be.

But also consider, *how* they answer the questions. The way they answer the question will also give an indication of whether you will work well with them. e.g.

1. Do they reference YOUR business or are the answers generic?
2. Are they easy to understand or do they resort to jargon?
3. Do they seem well prepared and forward thinking or do they get flustered?
4. If they don't know something, do they admit it?
5. Do you feel confident they value and want your business?



What can you tell me about my business I don't already know?

Why ask this question?

It's a good way to see how much the research company values your business.
It gives you an idea of how much they think about consumers.
It gives an indication of how straight-talking or evasive they'll be.

What would be in a good answer?

If they tell you something you genuinely didn't already know.
If they say they can't answer that question until they talk to *consumers*.
If they talk about any research they've done *before* the meeting with you.

What would be a poor answer?

If they go straight to the process of how they will do the market research.
If they give a generic answer e.g. "*we'll help you grow sales*".
If they give an answer that contains too many assumptions or guess-work.



How will you help me grow my sales?

Why ask this question?

It's a good way to see if the research company understands sales value.
It's a good way to check if they think ahead to the commercial impact.
It's a good way to see if they are business people or market research purists.

What would be in a good answer?

If they tell you how the research will grow your sales.
If they give examples of marketing decisions the research will support.
If they give you a ballpark estimate or range of the likely improvement in sales.

What would be a poor answer?

If they hide behind market research processes and don't answer the question.
If they give a vague answer with no estimate or range of a sales number.
If they tell you that's not the purpose of market research.



What's your point of difference versus your competitors?

Why ask this question?

It's to check if they understand branding and competitive forces enough to have an answer to this question.

What would be in a good answer?

If they tell you their point of difference in clear terms.
If they give examples of the value their point of difference adds.
If they have more than one point of difference they can articulate.

What would be a poor answer?

If they say they hadn't thought of that before.
If the answer is related to price or cost.
If the point of difference sounds generic or can't be substantiated.



Why do you think consumers don't choose my brand now?

Why ask this question?

It's hard to answer this question without being critical of your current business. But sometimes market research will present bad news to you. So this question is designed to see how they cope with presenting bad news.

What would be in a good answer?

If they tell you specific answers that sound close to the truth.
If they say they don't know but give examples from other similar clients.
If they use the question to talk about how the research will answer this question.

What would be a poor answer?

If they say they hadn't thought of that before.
If they try to flatter your brand too much.
If they waffle or use technical language.



How will I calculate the return on the market research investment I make with you?

Why ask this question?

It's hard to answer this question exactly since you need the answers from the market research to tell you what the return will be. But it's really a question to check if they think about how the research will drive your sales and profits.

What would be in a good answer?

If they can give you a minimum sales and / or profit target that would be needed to cover the cost of the research.

What would be a poor answer?

If they say they hadn't thought of that before.
If they say you can't calculate an ROI on market research.
If they say market research is just a cost of doing business.

