



Qual Col

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Online qual: increasing options

The Internet itself is now a more robust network than it was, and there are more and more options for online qualitative researchers. Here's a list of some of these options for your next online qualitative project.

A provider that offers both real-time chat and asynchronous bulletin board groups. Itracks (itracks.com) is a pioneer in the field (first study in 1999) and has recently hit the 10,000 mark for online qualitative projects. Recent feature enhancements include breakout rooms, on-the-fly tagging and annotation of comments, online recruiting through its U.S. and Canadian panels, and a moderator community where users can tap the expertise of their peers. Itracks offers its software in twenty different languages.

Mobile qualitative. 20/20 Research (2020research.com), another pioneer, now offers QualAnywhere, a text messaging approach for mobile research. Other recent additions to its lineup are QualMeeting for live webcam interviewing and QualJournal for online journaling. These offerings complement its flagship product QualBoard. One of the original online bulletin board platforms, Qualboard now offers annotating functionality and allows both participants and moderators to upload multimedia (pictures and videos) into the discussion.

Immersive research and online ethnography. Revelation (revelationglobal.com) bills itself as the online qualitative software for the social media culture. In a blog-like asynchronous environment, respondents participate by engaging in tasks or activities assigned by the researcher and reporting back on these assignments through online journals, photos, videos, projective exercises, standard questions (both closed- and open-ended), or group discussions (added in January 2009). The interface also includes analytic tools to speed up report writing. Language support includes French, German, Latin American Spanish and, of course, English.

A familiar bulletin board interface with budget-friendly pricing. Lidlow (lidlow.com), a relatively new entry, currently offers a bulletin board application called Progression, which is designed to simplify and reduce set-up times. The latest feature is an advanced probing system that ensures a much better completion rate for probes by providing respondents with multiple, distinct visual cues to inform them that there is a probe that they are required to answer.

Brand sorting exercises and other uses of an interactive whiteboard. FocusForums (focusforums.net) provides these options, as well as a facility that allows participants to access a bulletin board from their cellphone via text messaging. Focus-

Forums prides itself on a willingness to engage in extensive customization of a platform suitable for discussions, blogs and journals. Instant transcripts and data analysis tools complete the package.

Real-time focus groups with voice and video. Channel M2 (channelm2.com) was one of the earliest proponents (2004) of webcam or multimedia groups and offers complete field support, from recruiting to webcam fulfillment. Applications include virtually everything online: focus groups, IDIs, ad research, ethnography, bulletin boards, blogs and diaries. Channel M2 now also offers real-time voice analysis, making for better questions and safer answers.

Body language vs. text-based research. Investigate qualvu (qualvu.com), where webcam meets bulletin board. In the VideoDiary application, moderators launch video questions with their webcam; then, at a time that is convenient to participants, they record and submit their answers, also using their webcam. The possible applications of this asynchronous video are many and include online usability studies, concept and advertising testing, in-home use tests, and ethnographic research.

Have a happy summer!

Our profession has attracted and developed, and continues to profit from, a creative class.

Pierre Bélisle is a seasoned qualitative researcher with a special interest in online qualitative. His blog, virtual qualitative, is at <http://pbelisle.blogspot.com>.