

Communique Partners Leverages GMI Net-MR and Net-Panel for In-Home Window Treatment Product Placement Tests



Customer Profile

Communique Partners is a San Francisco-based market intelligence firm that enables senior corporate, research, government and educational leaders to listen to the voice of their customers and stakeholders, so they can make better-informed decisions. Communique Partners builds and manages web-based customer and industry panels, and executes surveys, discussion forums and focus groups to quickly and affordably get actionable intelligence for its customers. Hunter Douglas, a leading window treatment manufacturer, was experiencing design and installation issues. They turned to Communique Partners to conduct research to measure product quality and the effectiveness of the installation process to be able to identify concrete solutions to these problems.

The Challenge

According to industry studies, only 5% of new products achieve their marketing and financial goals in the first year of introduction. Hunter Douglas had an aggressive new product development and production schedule in the 2005-2007 time period. Up to that point, the company had not been able to identify many product and installation problems before full production and launch. Several products had gone into full production with glitches in design and use, resulting in poor early customer experiences and high customer support burdens.

The Solution

Communique Partners worked together with Denver-based branding experts Brandjuice to design a comprehensive national product usage and testing program. To power their research, they selected GMI's Net-MR® online market research software suite and Net-Panel panel management tool. For each of Hunter Douglas' 10 product lines, Communique Partners recruited higher-income target households in one to two major metro areas and built a custom mini-panel with Net-Panel. They recruited and profiled these households, had them measure their windows and sent them to a custom website to enter their measurements. In parallel, Communique also coordinated professional installers who came to households to measure and install the shades when appropriate. Consumers then took two online surveys: one asking them about their shipment, installation and early use experience, and a second one requesting their full usage, experience and satisfaction feedback. Communique used Net-MR's powerful database, survey and reporting capabilities to coordinate all installations, and provide front-line support for ordering, installation, problem shipments, returns, and ongoing use.

The Results

The research that Communique Partners provided Hunter Douglas included valuable intelligence about shipping and packaging issues, expected pricing, installation concerns and usage. Hunter Douglas was able to identify problems in design and fix them before full production and shipment. They were also able to better understand strengths, best uses, and previously undiscovered benefits that they could now highlight during launch and in early marketing communications. Some product lines were discontinued before launch due to poor test results, saving the company millions in customer support expenses and poor customer experiences, while avoiding significant brand reputation damage.

“The research we conducted for Hunter Douglas is a typical example of how we leverage GMI’s Net-Panel tool to develop custom panels,” explains Chris Yalonis, President of Communique Partners. “With a short-term life and focused use, we deliver timely customer input in the development, test market and pre-production stages. Communique’s team has built over 45 custom panels for clients in the past eight years, in partnership with leading market research firms and marketing agencies.”

Partnering with Communique Partners

If you are a market research firm or a marketing agency that uses GMI’s Net-MR online market research software suite, and you wish to learn more about best practices in designing, developing and managing a custom panel, please [contact Chris Yalonis](#) at Communique Partners (+1 415-453-9030, chris.yalonis@communiquepartners.com).