



# Getting the Mix Right: Best Practices in Sample Blending

BY: EMI RESEARCH SOLUTIONS

Opinions on blending sample have changed over the last few yers. In the past, sample blending was believed to be a necessary evil, where research firms and brands knowing a single provider or panel can provide the entire sample, held their nose as they employed multiple companies to hit their project numbers.

Now, in today's world, it is commonplace to utilize multiple sample providers and panels when running a study. There are even firms and sample providers who purposely blend their sample for better results.

While this is great, not everyone blends sample the same. We have put together some best practices to follow when blending sample or using a provider that blends sample.



# 1. Use 3 sources, ideally 4, in your blend

✓ BY USING ONLY TWO SOURCES, YOU AREN'T REALLY BLENDING SAMPLE. USE THREE OR MORE SAMPLE SOURCES SO YOU CAN BETTER MANAGE RISK OF SUPPLIERS FALLING SHORT OR HAVING ONE SAMPLE BE OVER REPRESENTED.

▲ THIS ALSO REDUCES THE IMPACT OF AN INDIVIDUAL SOURCE IN CASE YOU HAVE TO REPLACE ONE.



## 2. Take the systematic approach

✔ THIS GOES HAND-IN-HAND WITH USING THREE OR MORE SOURCES. WHEN DOING SO, YOU DON'T WANT TO JUST PICK THREE PANELS AND SAY YOU HAVE A BLENDED SAMPLE. YOU WANT TO LOOK AT THE DIFFERENCES IN PANELS IN YOUR BLEND, RECRUITING TACTICS, TENURE, AS WELL AS ATTITUDINAL AND BEHAVIORAL DIFFERENCES. YOU DON'T WANT TO USE 3 OR MORE PANELS AND HAVE THEM ALL BE THE SAME MAKE-UP. YOU REALLY WANT THE PANELS IN YOUR BLEND TO COMPLEMENT EACH OTHER.

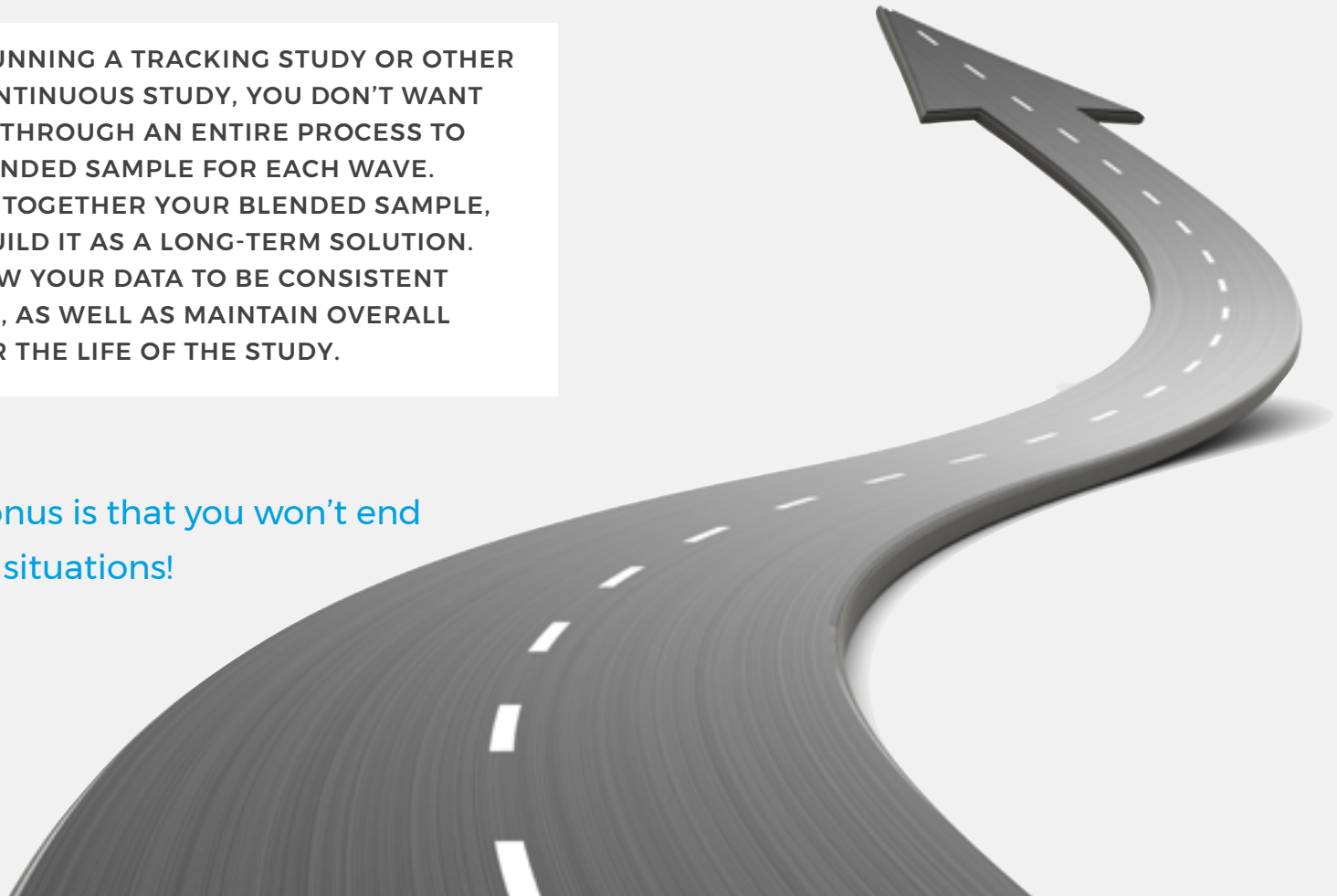
▲ CUSTOMIZE EACH BLEND FOR YOUR STUDY'S OBJECTIVES. YOU WILL LIKELY HAVE VARIOUS BLENDS DEPENDING ON THE TARGETING ABILITY, IR, BASE SIZE, TARGETS, QUOTAS, ETC.



### 3. Build a long-term solution

✔ IF YOU ARE RUNNING A TRACKING STUDY OR OTHER LONG-TERM CONTINUOUS STUDY, YOU DON'T WANT TO HAVE TO GO THROUGH AN ENTIRE PROCESS TO BUILDING A BLENDED SAMPLE FOR EACH WAVE. WHEN YOU PUT TOGETHER YOUR BLENDED SAMPLE, YOU SHOULD BUILD IT AS A LONG-TERM SOLUTION. THIS WILL ALLOW YOUR DATA TO BE CONSISTENT WAVE-TO-WAVE, AS WELL AS MAINTAIN OVERALL FEASIBILITY FOR THE LIFE OF THE STUDY.

An added bonus is that you won't end up in top-up situations!



## 4. Launch partners in the same order/time/day each wave

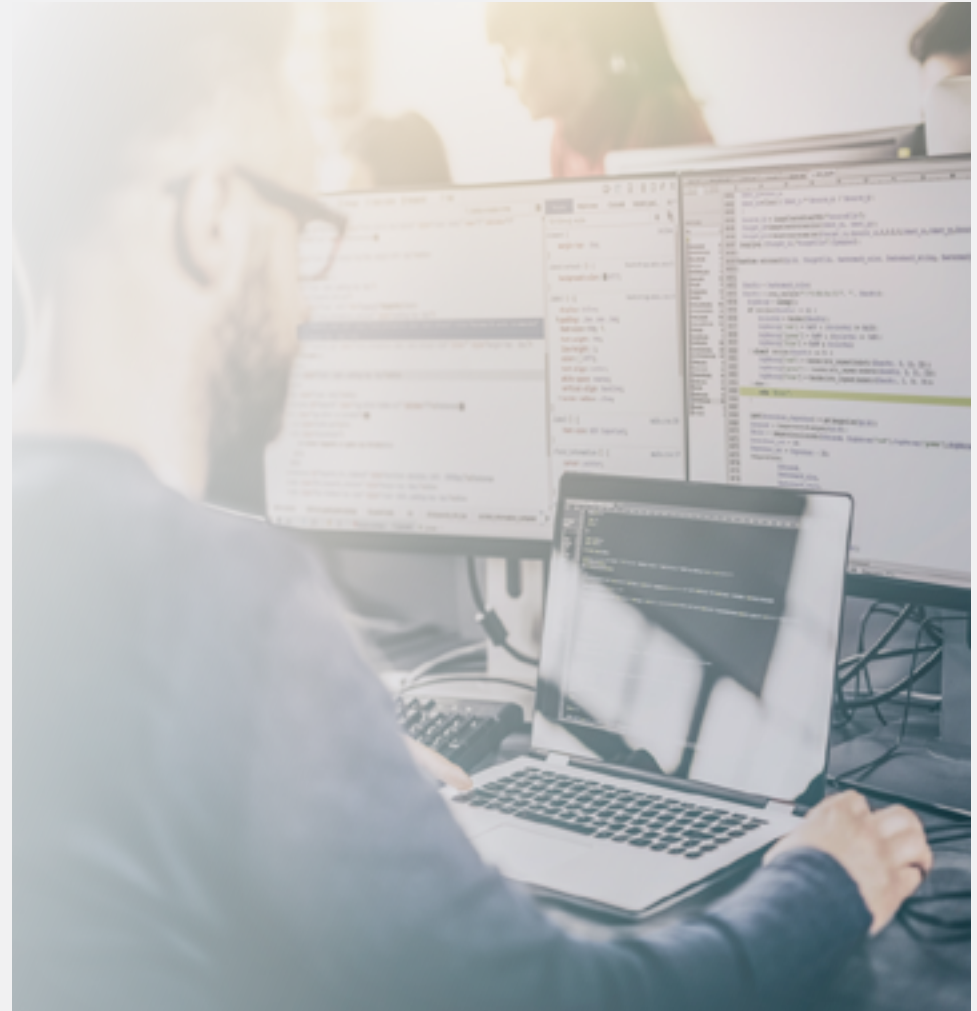
✔ WHEN YOU ARE BLENDING PANELS TO GET YOUR SAMPLE FOR YOUR STUDY, YOU WANT TO BE SURE TO LAUNCH IN THE SAME ORDER (INCLUDING DAY AND TIME) WITH EACH NEW WAVE OF YOUR STUDY.

This way you ensure your data will be consistent wave-to-wave.



## 5. Utilize technology to manage all quotas

With a blended sample, you want to make sure that you utilize quotas to manage the amount of completes each partner provides. But, it is extremely difficult to manage this manually. Be sure to utilize technology to manage your quotas, that way you can set them up by partner and any other specific criteria you have prior to launch, and you will always have the ability to adjust on the fly if needed.



## 6. Have a back-up plan

As Mike Tyson so eloquently put it:

“Everyone has a plan until they get punched in the face.”

✔ THIS CAN BE THE SAME FOR YOUR STUDY PLAN. THAT’S WHY YOU SHOULD HAVE A BACK-UP PLAN ESTABLISHED INCASE YOU RUN INTO ANY UNFORESEEN PROBLEMS WITH FEASIBILITY OR A SPECIFIC PROVIDER HAS A MISSTEP.



## 7. Work With An Unbiased Sample Provider

✔ AN UNBIASED PROVIDER WILL BE WILLING TO WORK WITH MANY DIFFERENT PANELS AND SAMPLE PROVIDERS, AND WON'T GIVE PREFERENCE TO A SPECIFIC PANEL.

▲ AN UNBIASED PROVIDER WON'T TRY TO FORCE YOU INTO THEIR OWN PROPRIETARY PANEL, EVEN WHEN IT ISN'T A GOOD FIT FOR YOUR PROJECT.



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