



**Inside Insights hosted by Marc Dresner  
Johanna Skilling, Chief Strategy Officer  
Saatchi and Saatchi Wellness**

**As a quick note to our listeners, I just let everyone know that the data collected from the 2010 Wellness Study are currently being analyzed and Johanna will be sharing the actual results in a symposium at The Market Research Event. So, today what we are going to take a look at is how the methodology behind this Study has evolved since the first iteration and delve into some of the lessons that we've learned since then.**

**Johanna, 2010 marks the second iteration of SSW's Annual Wellness Study. Would you give us a little background about the Study?**

**Johanna:** Sure. We are the only agency that we know of that has "Wellness" in its name. So, we wanted to start digging into what wellness means and how it affects people and be able to add value. So, in the spring of 2009 we decided to do a survey about wellness. And because the economy was such a big issue at that time (of course, still is), we created a survey about "Wellness and the Economy".

**You did this study based on using exclusively social media. This was because of a budget issue, if I'm not mistaken?**

**Johanna:** Right.

**It seemed like the only viable option under the circumstances. Is that correct?**

**Johanna:** That's absolutely correct. Yes, when you and I talked before, my big wish was to go the normal kind of classic way: hire a survey company who would recruit people, fielding the study either online or by phone. It wasn't super expensive in the realm of things, but I kept getting a budget

back of about ten grand. And that was getting things as efficiently as I possibly could. Like every other company, we have a lot of wishes of places to spend our own money and, unfortunately, the survey was not on the top of the list. So, we had just started our own social media presence in Facebook and Twitter, the way a lot of companies have, and kind of in desperation, I said: “Let’s field it on social media and see what happens.” So, that turned out to be an exciting thing from the aspect of saying: “Okay, we are just ourselves getting to social media. Let’s use that to show where we are. Let’s use the survey to get attention through social media and let’s see what we get.” My expectations, honestly, weren’t that high.

**As I recall from when we spoke earlier, you weren’t very enthusiastic about the methodological constraints of social media. In fact, you used the term: “grumpy.” Can you tell me why you weren’t too terribly enthusiastic about taking that route?**

**Johanna:** That’s funny because “grumpy” is such a great word. Because I felt like it was not going to be that classic Nth Name Select. I was worried about it being representative. I was worried about our reach as far as social media went and how many people would actually respond to us. I was worried about the fact that we were putting it out there, there was no incentive, there was no real credibility around it from, again, a classic research point of view. And it was a relatively long survey as surveys go. It was about 20 questions with a lot of parts in it. And I was worried about completion rates on top of everything else just because you send something out, people don’t know that they are going to take a survey, they are not primed for a study and what does that mean about the results you get back?

**So, if you had had your druthers, you would have taken an Nth Name Select, maybe used a panel, etc., etc?**

**Johanna:** Yes. My wish would have been an Nth Name National Select covering the country with 2000 people or even 10,000 people if we could afford it. But, something that really had weight and gravitas and that we could go out and say: “Here’s our survey of 10,000 people across America (or 1000 people).” The fact that I didn’t get my wish was kind of a cool thing

because it forced us into trying something new and different and, ultimately, successful.

**As you pointed out, you eluded to expectations that you had in advance of fielding this study in this way. Your expectations were what? What did you think was going to happen?**

**Johanna:** I was worried. I was worried about how many responses I would get, first and foremost. I was worried about who they would come from. Were they people who were over-indexed in some way that we couldn't imagine for being healthier, for being unhealthier? In other words, would it be representative? At a good age spread? Would we get a good gender spread? Would we get a good geographical spread? How good would this information be as far as being able to say: "Here's a trend" or "Here's what's happening with wellness". To get some new or interesting information out of it. So, frankly, I was concerned about that. I was concerned that we didn't have a timeline for it at that point because, obviously, if you hire somebody and you get a survey panel or get a dedicated group of people to email or call people, to go online or to answer a survey, you know that in three weeks or four weeks that you are going to have your answer. And I didn't know that and that was a concern, as well.

**A lot of unknowns. This is really foreign territory and you were taking a leap of faith here. So, stepping back, you were restricted to social media. Specifically, what social media? How did you use them to accomplish the Study goals?**

**Johanna:** Well, the ones I mentioned. So, we had our Facebook page from around 2008. In fact, when I joined the company, that's how my announcement was made about joining. I had to write my own Facebook page that they linked to. So, we had our Facebook page, we started a Twitter presence and we basically said that those are our two main engines. But, we also had, frankly, email, which I know that people will not say is social media. But, it is a viral medium. We asked everybody in the company to send out email. We started with ourselves. That was the other thing we had. The medium was ourselves. So, we started with our company and some sister companies. We are a part of PHCG - Publicis Healthcare Group.

So, we did ask for help from everyone we could. And we asked everyone in the company to send it to their friends, to their family, to put it on their personal Facebook pages, to tweet about it personally. And we got really good pick up. Everyone in the company was invested in it. And then you say: “Gee, is that representative enough?” We had to wait and feel that out. Results came in trickling. We didn’t have that classic bell curve of a few results and a lot of results and then that last little bit and you know you’re done. They trickled in, trickled in, trickled in. It comes back to some very old days in direct response when you had to send out -- maybe they still do it. Magazines used to send out up to six invitations to renew because that was profitable for them. I had that model in the back of my mind. So, we sent out numerous reminders and we posted it over and over again on our company pages and certainly on my personal social media presence because (and I think we talked about this before) what I’ve learned about social media is that it is kind of like a river. You can’t just go in there and expect that it will be the same. It changes. Everybody’s page changes every minute and if you happen to look at it at a certain moment or if you happen to have something flagged, it will show up. But, otherwise it’s easy to miss. So, we made a decision that we were going to keep asking and keep asking and keep asking because the landscape on everybody’s social media pages changes so quickly.

**In fact, you had mentioned the Greek philosopher Heraclitus that you can’t step in the same river twice.**

**Johanna:** I love that quote. Yes, that was also in the back of my mind because when you think about social media like a river, if you think about your own Facebook page or LinkedIn page or Twitter page, you see things flowing. You see them flowing and it’s never the same. Even if you look at Twitter twice a day, there is so much happening in-between. So, there is only so much that you are going to see at any given moment that you dip your toe in that river. So, we made a decision to keep showing up on the river, keep showing up as much as we could to give ourselves the chance to be seen.

**One of the other things that you mentioned to me when we spoke earlier was that when you are entering a house, there’s more ways than one**

**(front door) to go in. Can you expand on that a little bit in terms of lessons learned in social media?**

**Johanna:** Well, again, it's coming from this classic idea that you go in the front door of the house and you introduce yourself. The old-fashioned researcher would knock on the door and say: "Can I ask you a couple of questions?" We've kind of kept that metaphor of sending an email: "Can I send you some questions?" Getting a phone call: "Can I ask you some questions?" And social media, you have the opportunity to tap on the window and say: "Hey, can you look at me?" You can go in through different media that people are paying attention to in their own time and space. So, I don't mean to suggest that we are stalking people, but instead of just knocking on the front door, everybody has an opportunity to say: "Gee, let me show up where you are." So, we are showing up where you are in your tweet stream. We are trying to show up where you are on your Facebook stream. We are trying to show up where you are on your LinkedIn stream. We are trying to show up where you are through your friends and email. So, we actually tried to use the digital marketing techniques that we recommend for clients to get attention in a very crowded marketplace.

**You had a sort of study design, if you will, and expectations going in. But, things were fairly on the fly because you were learning as you were going along here. What kinds of surprises or challenges did you encounter along the way this first go round?**

**Johanna:** Well, one of the challenges was certainly time. So, it's just like anything else. Good, fast and cheap. So, this was cheap. So, time wise, we had to take longer. So, as I said, we tried to really push it in front of people; keep it moving in the social media stream. We didn't have a panel to go back to, an outside third party that we could even go back to. There was nobody to look for to say: "Can you make this happen faster?" And my goal was very conservative; just 500 people. So, that amount took a few months. So, that was a surprise and that was something that, you know, you usually try to get results for any kind of study faster. And we had a little bit of luxury of time. But, in a perfect world, it would have been one month.

One of the other surprises, though, was that we actually got great distribution. By the time everything was said and done, we were in something like 31 States and nine countries. So, not perfect geographic distribution, but certainly my concern was that it was going to be friends of friends, which would really center it in the New York area. And we went well beyond that.

**And the important thing here was that you used the various social media in the way that they are supposed to be used. That is, you asked people to participate and then to share and to help you recruit. Is that correct?**

**Johanna:** Yes, at the end of every survey we had a link saying: “Please share with your friends”. And many, many people did just that. And that’s exactly how it spread, from friend-to-friend. That made it successful. So, if you think about the fact that in the agency, the average age is 20’s to 50’s, we reached the spectrum of 18-70’s in terms of age. We had more women than men, but I think that’s typical of an open-ended survey. So, that was a surprise, too. I did not think it would be that skewed. We really had a very female-centric population who answered, which, if we had our druthers, it might have been a little more balanced. But then, that’s a learning by itself. In fact, when we presented the results last year, it was at a conference called: “Marketing Wellness to Women.” So, we were able to use the results to say: “It’s really women-centric findings.”

**So, you were, essentially, over-indexed in social media and you still got the spread that you wanted?**

**Johanna:** We were only in social media, unless you count email. And we got a very, very good representation. And that was a really nice surprise. The biggest thing of all, we got really, really interesting findings that gave us an incredible story to tell. The survey asked people their definition of wellness. Self-reported, but the previous year it was: “Well, I used to think, before the economic crisis, wellness was about fitness and health and being balanced. This year, wellness is surviving. Holding on to what I have. This was a change.” So, we had an incredible story that said: “the definition of wellness is completely different.” And we asked a number of other questions that went with it, different areas from food to medicine to

appearance. We learned that women were taking their appearance into the house and going to salons less. So, we had things to help our clients to start thinking about their audience and what wellness means in a little bit of a different way, which is exactly what we had hoped for.

**Let me take a step back. The time and incentive structure here. We are looking at maybe a month. It turned out to be about three. Is that right?**

**Johanna:** Exactly.

**So, about three times as long and there was zero incentives for people to participate. They weren't primed. You had to increase the frequency of your outreach and yet you've got this incredible, if you looked up the exact numbers, I think it was something in the way of two thirds of the US population representative-wise, plus some Internationals. You had teens through 70, as you said, and you also had some pretty robust verbatims attached to it.**

**Johanna:** The only thing I want to be careful of from a US Census perspective we didn't represent. But from just a spread, we totally got representation. And we got phenomenal verbatims. And for me, that's the heart of it. When you and I talked before, quant for me definitely has its place and it's critical, but qual is where my heart is. To hear people's words like you would in any other situation. Like you would in an ethnography or sometimes even in a focus group. But to hear people's honest, unrehearsed reaction to some of the questions. We asked people about their diets and one woman said: "I don't have any money, so I can't afford better food. No money and more weight. Great. My life is over." You know? And, of course, many positive or hopeful comments. But, you hear that and it gives a texture and a color to the findings that I think are irreplaceable.

**You got a lot of things and some surprises. Social media was not what you thought it was going to be going in. If you had to encapsulate your lessons from that first experience, what would those be?**

**Johanna:** Allow more time than you think you need. Social media does work, but you have to work at it. And you have to have a real team of

people or you have to have a very robust presence to make it work the way we wanted it to work. We had the benefit and support of every single person in our company and their friends and our other colleagues helping pump this out. If it had just been a couple of people or just the company presence, we wouldn't have made it. So, it's a real team effort and a real group effort. And yet, we got back fantastic, robust, interesting results. So, I think the need to approach it differently and the need to approach it with a different state of mind is something I learned. And the need to allow the time. But, as you said, we didn't spend a dime. And when you don't have the luxury of money, time is a good antidote. So, it balances out. The output was everything I had hoped for and more.

### **You weren't a believer going in, but you are now. Is that safe to say?**

**Johanna:** It is, but that leads us into our next step, I think, which is: "What do we do from here?"

### **Let's move into year two. What changed?**

**Johanna:** Well, the funny thing that changed is that we had an opportunity through our managing director to partner with Health Magazine and health.com (which is a division of Time Inc.) So, all of a sudden, instead of doing social media, we had the option of having a partnership with a panel with readers of Health and health.com, which is one of the premier health magazines in the country. They do have a female readership and a panel of about 300 women. So, what we did this year was really interesting. It was building on what we learned last year and taking a step forward. So, we had the panel. We also invited people who came to the health.com website to participate and in addition to that, we used the social media techniques from the year before. That combination actually yielded a real representation. And I really give credit to the health.com folks and our colleagues at Health. We got a representation that is within a couple of percentage points for the Census representation of the US. We got a higher number of responses and we changed the questionnaire a little bit. Obviously, both parties at this point had some objectives. So, we kept our original one and added some very important questions for the Health folks. And where I said before that the weakness in my mind was that it wasn't as

representative of the population, this really solved that. So, we are getting the same quality input, but we know that it is even more representative of the country as a whole. Now, this one we also went and targeted women. We did wind up picking up some men. So, we have a women's study and then we'll also have some results for the male component. There are some small differences, but we are looking at a national profile of wellness based on women.

**So, if you will, this multi-modal approach that you've taken, this second approach seems to have been much more successful than the first. You built upon learnings from the first. You've used some longitudinal types of questions, as well as introduced some new questions. What new lessons have you learned from the experience overall as a market researcher?**

**Johanna:** Well, I love that term you just used, which is: "multi-modal" because I think there's an idea that we're getting in marketing as a whole that you can't just use one media one way to accomplish your goals. There's a term that I started thinking about called: "Distributed Marketing". It came from the idea of distributed computing, which of course Apple made famous. The idea of distributed marketing is not a new idea. You have to go where people are in order to reach them. You have to use multiple means to reach them. I don't think that research is any different. I think that the people who traditionally -- and you brought this up. The people you traditionally get at home anymore are not representative because most people are out and working. The people you can get online have the time. The people on social media are the people in social media. So, I think the beauty of the multi-modal approach, as you put it (which, by the way, is a term that I'm going to start using, thank you very much) is that you have more chance of getting the kind of people you want to talk to who do have a wide variety of media that they use and places that they go. Now, we happen to be skewed toward a health population because that's our mission and we have a shared mission with the health brand to really unearth new insights about health and wellness. So, from that point of view, we targeted very specifically. But, from a learning perspective, we used a lot of different tools to capture the information and I think that's a huge lesson for me personally and something that other people might be interested in.

**When we spoke, you were a little bit concerned that people might go: “Oh, Skilling’s lost it. She’s gone off the deep end here.” Can you tell me a little bit about how you feel about that?**

**Johanna:** Well, I don’t know how many people would say that I’ve lost it, at least in this case. I’m sure for other things it would be very valid. But, social media at the basic level is what we’ve been doing since we all collectively were cavemen. Right? We are talking to each other. It is just enabled by other means. So, not too much different to me than going into a park with a clipboard and saying: “Well, what do you think?” Old-fashioned mall research. You go into a mall with a clipboard and grab people and say: “What do you think?” So, here, we are kind of going into the digital marketplace and saying: “Can you talk to us for a few minutes?” And a friend is saying: “Oh, they are asking some interesting questions. Why don’t you check this out?” So, social media is a very new approach to a very old, human connection, in my mind. And I think that is true in advertising and marketing, as well. So, when you are asking people questions, they will naturally turn to their friends if they are interested and say: “Wow, this is pretty cool. What do you think?” And that is where social media is so wonderful and valuable. I think panels are still critical and important. I think they provide a heart and gravity to the questions or to the overall responses that gives you a way to see: “Gee. How grounded are we? How close is this to the truth?” So, we did a very careful examination of how the panel differed from the general population. And then we know that we have people who are quote: “Very invested in health and wellness” and people who treat it, not casually, but not with the same degree of importance. That feels like reality in that context.

**So, overall, based on the entire experience (and forgive me if there is some redundancy in this question), what kind of advice would you offer for your peers who might be dabbling in this space? Who might be nervous, like you were initially, and might be very interested in moving forward? There are some enormous advantages, clearly, to both iterations of the Study.**

**Johanna:** The advice I would give is pursue it, pursue it, pursue it. Everybody asks questions on social media. Digital is all about sharing information in an easy way with a lot of people and having those iterations and having the feedback and having it be a multi-level, multi-person exchange over time. So, that's not going away. It's only going to get more so. We've all seen a million surveys and a million things online. There's no reason we can't do it. I think what needs to happen is we need to have our expectations in place about what we get, from whom and how long it takes. What it takes from our end. And that's a little bit different than classic research. And I do think multi-modal is a very comfortable place to live right now because it takes learning from the classic research that market researchers have been doing for a while and takes the future into account with where people are and where they live online and allows us to get the best of both worlds and really get robust learnings that we can get very rich insights from.

**At the end of the day, for your next iteration, do you envision any radical questions to the methodology? Or are you pretty comfortable with where you are at right now?**

**Johanna:** This minute? Just having come off the experience with our partners at Health, I hope we do it just the same way next year. It's been a fantastic experience and the fact that they are great partners is part of it. But, the fact that we can do this (I'm going to use the word again), this multi-modal methodology for getting insights, I love it. It takes some of the onus off the social media, but we still have the social media component to add to it. I'm very high on it right now and the results that we are getting are incredibly interesting. They have taken a shift from last year on the longitudinal questions, which keeps it interesting, and it's a question we want to keep pursuing.

**Are you running into any challenges in terms of reconciling the different modalities?**

**Johanna:** We are mindful of where they come from, but only where we -- we are seeing some differences, like I said, from the people who are the panels in the general population, who came either from the Health website

or through social media. But the important thing to me, honestly, is how the questions are answered and what that says overall and how everything ladders up into the picture of what's happening in the country. Yeah, there are polarities and we have some people who are very, very affected by the economy and their wellness is affected. And there are people who are somewhat less affected. Although, what is interesting is that virtually the entire population of last year and this, regardless of income, is affected in some way, shape or form. But, what I'm much more interested in is taking the whole mix and seeing what's happening. Does that answer your question?

**It does. I'll tell you that you've given us some really wonderful insights and lots to think about. I'm really eager to see what you are ultimately going to come up with in terms of results. I'm also eager to pin you down again and just extrapolate a little more from you on this because it's really a terrific case study for researchers. To quote you, when we last spoke offline, you said one thing that really stuck out and that's: "Classic research doesn't have to be the only way." That's one of the things that I learned. I really love the fact that the trial and error here has not only produced such an incredible success story, but it has also really opened your mind to exploring even further, potentially.**

**For our listeners who may be interested in hearing more from Johanna Skilling, she will be leading off The Market Research Event on Monday, November 8<sup>th</sup> in our Culture and Research Trend Symposium. Her presentation is entitled: "*What's Next in Wellness? New Research from Saatchi and Saatchi Wellness.*" For more information about The Market Research Event, I would encourage you to please visit [www.iirusa.com/research/](http://www.iirusa.com/research/)**