Custom Panel Management

7 Key Principles Best Practice Guide

A guide to best practices for managing a custom panel or research community
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1. How will this guide help you?

Whether you are thinking of setting up a new online panel, a research community or managing an existing one, we at Beehive have put together a clear, practical road map to help steer you in the right direction.

Our 7 Principles of Custom Panel Management will demystify the process of developing your customer panel into a key business asset. This guide will help you tune into the true voice of the customer, improve the integrity and validity of your panel and, through panel enrichment, deliver greater depth of insight in research findings. We will show you techniques to keep your panel in good health and maintain information accuracy, while ensuring your panel members are engaged and motivated.

We highlight tried and tested quality control routines that will help you standardise your practices and improve consistency. This guide will also help you avoid the potential costly pitfalls of failing to meet legal compliance and Industry codes of practice.

Through reading this guide our key aim is to save you money and, ultimately, enable you to make better informed business decisions.
2. **Who is Beehive’s Best Practice Panel Management Guide aimed at?**

This Best Practice Guide has been created to help organisations achieve **Quality Custom Panel Management**, by understanding the key principles that make a custom panel or research community more successful. The guide explains the best practice routines that enable small, medium and large organisations derive the most from their interactions with customers, prospects, stakeholders or employees.

In particular, this report is aimed at:

- **Marketing, Research or Insight Directors** responsible for an organisation’s research or customer engagement strategy, who want to understand the issues they should consider in implementing a Quality Panel Management Strategy
- **Panel Managers** who already manage a custom panel and want to benchmark their own process or consider improvements to their panel
- **Research Managers/Insight teams** responsible for customer research who need to engage with customers cost effectively and efficiently
- **Research/Digital Consultants** who have clients that would like to build a custom panel but either have limited or no practical experience in managing one

Key features of this guide:

- **Applicable** – all of the areas we discuss have been implemented in panels that we have built or managed and are proven to be key features of a successful custom panel
- **Practical** – explains how the key principles can be implemented and why they are so important to a quality custom panel
- **Leading edge** – incorporates the latest best-practice advice from practical experience and the most up to date information
- **Simply written** – to demystify the process and remove the jargon
3. Why is Quality Panel Management so important?

Investing in a custom panel or research community pays huge dividends to an organisation, not only in the cost saving that can be gained from conducting research to the group (savings of 40 to 50% not uncommon), but also in the valuable and rapid insight that the panel can give to help make informed decisions and drive businesses forward.

However, when making important decisions that can have an impact upon the success or failure of a new product or service, an ad campaign, a pricing strategy or other strategically important objective, the credibility of the information on which the decision is based must be robust otherwise the wrong direction can be taken.

Your key asset
For this reason the quality of the sample or audience interviewed must therefore be of the highest quality otherwise any cost saving derived can be insignificant to the impact of a misdirected decision. Custom panels therefore, whilst a massive business asset, must be treated as such and the implementation of a well-designed custom panel and a quality panel management process does lead to better informed decisions, competitive advantage and a better return on the investment.

Every custom panel should be treated as the asset it is and by adhering to our principles of best practice will deliver the organisation greater value, more robust results and more informed decisions.

In this guide we have isolated 7 key principles of Best Practice Quality Panel Management that will make an organisation’s custom panel more effective:

7 key principles of Best Practice Quality Panel Management

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principle 1 - Diversity and representation</th>
<th>“Obtaining balanced opinions”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principle 2 - Validation and enhancement</td>
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<td>Principle 3 - Information accuracy</td>
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<td>Principle 5 - Reporting &amp; monitoring</td>
<td>“Panel health”</td>
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<td>Principle 6 - Quality control</td>
<td>“Auditable processes”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principle 7 - Compliance</td>
<td>“Keeping it legal”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. Beehive’s 7 key principles of Quality Panel Management

4.1 Principle 1 - Diversity and representation - “Obtaining balanced opinions”

Key principle - to understand and manage the diversity within the panel, understand how representative each segment is and how actively each segment is participating.

Whatever the methodology of research study, knowing and understanding who is being interviewed and how representative the group is of the target audience is vitally important in ensuring the robustness of the results and the validity of any decisions made from the findings.

This is equally true for custom panels and research communities, and whilst “listening to the voice of the customer” is one of the primary goals, it is also equally important to understand which voices are being heard and which are not. Diversity and representation should therefore be carefully managed to ensure that feedback is balanced and robust or, if there is a bias to the panel or the audience, that this is fully understood in the context of the wider marketplace.

The management of diversity and representativeness will vary from one Business to Consumer (B2C) panel to another and the measures used in a Business to Business (B2B) panel will also be different to those used in a B2C one. The choice of variables to monitor should be defined within the panel design process but common benchmarks could be:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Common B2C panel benchmarks</th>
<th>Common B2B panel benchmarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Age</td>
<td>• Industry/SIC code</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Gender</td>
<td>• Company size /turnover</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Region</td>
<td>• Customer type / value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Ethnicity</td>
<td>• Job function</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• etc</td>
<td>• etc</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The use of standard demographics is just one way to manage the diversity of a panel; there are numerous other variables that can be used, such as customer type, spend, or loyalty all of which will have a bearing upon the balance of the panel.

Selection of the right criteria to measure is therefore one of the most important decisions and should reflect the specific nature of the panel. In addition to overall panel composition it is equally important to understand which segments are actually active. Panel composition overall may well be truly representative, however if certain segments are over active or under active, the “voice of the customer” can be easily distorted.

The value of segmentation in managing diversity.
Segmentation can be an extremely useful tool for managing diversity particularly where the segmentation system can be applied to the entire universe.

The following example shows how using a segmentation system in a custom panel can highlight just how varied the composition of a panel can be from the UK norm. Chart 1 below shows how the profiles of certain defined groups compare to a predefined benchmark i.e. the UK population. The figures (%) shown in this example are fictitious, but the principle is to show that without careful understanding or monitoring, it can be too easy to be listening to too many of certain voices and not enough of others.

In the chart, the profile of the UK population is represented in grey as the overall benchmark, whereas the organisation’s customer profile is shown in darker orange, the profile of their panel is shown in lighter orange and the profile of those members who are actually active in the panel shown in yellow.

Thus in this example, when listening to the ‘voice of the customer’, we can see that we can potentially be listening too many to people from the “Twilight subsistence” segment and not enough from “Grey perspectives”, when comparing active panel members to the customer base or the UK population as a whole. By understanding this skew, the Panel Manager or the Insight team can either make amendments about who they want to talk to or use this information to put some context to results or insights being extracted.

**Chart 1 – using MOSAIC to monitor diversity**

**Action** – find the right metrics for the panel. Monitor these against defined benchmark, constantly review the customer profile, panel profile and active members and understand the dynamics of the panel in the context of results.
Churn and recruitment
A custom panel or research community never remains static and is constantly evolving. Its composition will be affected by:

- New people joining
- Existing people leaving
- Panellists having a break in participation
- The organisation’s customer base changing
- Panellist’s circumstances changing (i.e. their life stage, hobbies etc. – their own profile)

Thus a panel may not have an absolutely consistent profile and by understanding, monitoring and managing the diversity of the panel over time gives the Panel Manager real insight into how their panel is evolving and provides the tools to understand how this may impact on research activity.

By managing the panel in this way, the Panel Manager may choose to increase the representation of certain segments through selective panel recruitment to ensure the panel remains as balanced as possible and that “the voice of all customers are truly heard”.

“a panel may not have an absolutely consistent profile...”
4.2 Principle 2 - Validation and enhancement - “Real people, real information”

Key principle – to ensure people are who they say they are. What information do we already have on them that can enhance panel management and research results?

Validation
With the Internet accessible to a worldwide audience, it has become increasingly important for Panel Managers to know that the people they are talking to are who they say they are. This has primarily arisen because of the ease with which individuals can create one or more free email accounts with different ISPs, and unlike a physical postal address there is little that obviously ties an email address to an individual.

The impact for the Panel Manager can be two fold. Firstly, individuals can potentially create more than one account on the panel using different email addresses, thus creating duplication within the panel. The second is that the individual can potentially have different profiles and without any validation, the legitimacy of the panellist and the accuracy of the information provided can at times be questionable.

It is therefore vitally important for the Panel Manager to know who it is that they have on their panel and some degree of understanding of how legitimate each panellist is. This is particularly important in panels that are ‘open’, where anyone can register to join, whether a customer or not, as opposed to ‘customer invite only’ ones where an invitation to join is something that can be controlled more carefully. However it is best practice to be able to measure panellist validity in some way and not to assume that all panellists are who they say they are and that they tell the truth.

Controlling panel member validity
To maintain the integrity of a panel the Panel Manager has numerous ways to measure or control panel member validity:

- Tightly control panel invitations so that only known individuals can join
- Capture name and postal address information and validate against customer records or nationally available data sources
- Request unique customer reference numbers and check against the customer base
- Capture information such as IP address - useful in identifying their geographical location. In a panel only open to UK residents, someone with an IP address in India may be something to flag. It could be the person is legitimately away when they join the panel, but flagging such anomalies the Panel Manager can investigate further.

Therefore a good practice for the Panel Manager to adopt is to devise a scoring system that allows them to allocate a confidence score against each panellist. Thus for example, introducing a simple coding system like bronze, silver or gold membership, where a panel member becomes a bronze member upon joining, but moves up to silver or gold according to the confidence that the Panel Manager has that they are who they say they are.
By introducing a scoring system the Panel Manager can either allow a panel member to take part in research activity or to block them until their confidence score has reached the acceptable level. This enables the Panel Manager to be confident that the results they deliver from any panel survey are at least from individuals who they have been able to validate as genuine.

**Action** – check panelists are who they say they are. Introduce confidence scores for each panelist. Define how panel members who don’t reach the appropriate confidence score are to be treated (and link to Terms and Conditions of membership – see Principle 7)

**Enhancement**

One of the advantages of undertaking a validation process and identifying genuine customers on a panel is this can enable the Panel Manager to deliver a far greater depth of information in research studies, allowing insight that otherwise may not have been available to be extracted.

Once a panel member has been identified or validated as a genuine customer, relevant information can be appended to the panel member’s profile which can have several benefits:

- Information can be used in analysis
- It can be used in targeting, sampling for specific studies
- Information can be used in questionnaire routing so only certain questions appear to relevant people
- These questions do not need to be asked within the questionnaire, avoiding the situation where a customer may feel “but you already know this about me”

Obviously when considering appending information it is important to ensure that all legal obligations of Data Protection and other industry codes and best practices are being met, however the sort of information that can be useful could include:

- Customer type or segmentation
- Customer spend
- Products or services purchased
- Loyalty

When adopting the strategy of enhancing records, the Panel Manager must also take into consideration recency of such information and should really implement a regular update programme, which we discuss further in Principle 3.

**Action** – define what information would provide additional value and insight. Check all legal obligations are being met in terms of DPA and other guidelines. Maintain information recency.
4.3 **Principle 3 - Information accuracy – “Keeping it current and true”**

**Key principle** – keeping profile information recent, relevant and accurate and ensuring panel members are answering genuinely

The custom panel is a business asset and should be managed like an asset, otherwise over time the value that is derived from it can actually diminish without the Panel Manager actually realising.

As with all customer information, it is only ever valid on the day it is collected and naturally degrades with time. Therefore a vital role for the Panel Manager, is to ensure that panellist information is as accurate and as up to date as possible –, which means being able to monitor this effectively and having an update programme in place (monitoring and reporting is covered in Principle 5).

Information accuracy should ideally be monitored by the Panel Manager in the following areas:
- Profile information provided by the panellist
- Customer information enhanced on the panellist record
- Accuracy of the responses given by panellists in surveys

**Profile information**

Panellist profile information is usually gathered to enhance targeting, avoid asking respondents the same question in every survey and to provide fields that can be used in cross tabs or analysis of results. Within a panellist’s profile there are usually different types of fields, some of which are:
- Fixed and should never change e.g. date fields like Date of Birth, Date joined the panel, etc.
- Fixed and really unlikely to change e.g. Gender
- Changeable based on circumstance e.g. Marital Status, Children, Address, Type of home, Products used, Income, Occupation, etc.
- Changeable on a specific time basis e.g. age or age band, how long a panellist has been a member of the panel, etc.

Because a large proportion of fields are changeable over different life stages it is critical to the value of the panel that this information is kept as up to date as possible, otherwise research results can be reported inaccurately. For example on average approximately 5-10% of people move home each year. Some stay local but others move from one county to another and in doing so can move region; unless this information is kept regularly up to date the results can be reported wrongly in any regional breakdown.
Though some fields are fixed and constant, like Date of Birth, unfortunately derived fields like age or age band are not and these need to change either on a yearly basis or when the panellist moves into the next band. The Panel Manager therefore needs to ensure that their panel information is updated at the appropriate time either automatically or by requesting new information from the panellist. The best practice is to avoid re-asking questions that should be derivable where possible; however common mistakes made by Panel Managers can be either to ask the wrong question in the first place i.e. “In which age band are you?” or asking a person’s data of birth but not having an automated process to set their age and age band correctly.

In addition to actual personal profile information it is also best practice to know when a person joined the panel and when they last fully updated their profile. This enables the Panel Manager to monitor panel loyalty, churn and overall “panel health”. We cover panel reporting and monitoring further in Principle 5.

**Keeping customer info up to date**
As with panel profile information, any appended customer recency, frequency or monetary (RFM) data has a finite life span and for the panel to be a real business asset this information should be kept regularly up to date.

The ideal situation would be to have this information available on a constant feed, however whilst technically feasible this could require significant integration of systems. The alternative option for the Panel Manager is to set up a regular update programme that updates the customer data monthly or quarterly or at the very least six-monthly.

**Are panellists giving valid responses?**
The final area that a Panel Manager should spend some time understanding is just how accurately different panel members answer survey questions. The accuracy of respondents’ answers is usually less of an issue in an organisation’s own custom panel than in commercial access panels, where the motivations of respondents to participate are often different and frequently incentive lead. Nevertheless in best practice panel management the Panel Manager should spend some time understanding:

- **Speeders**
  Respondents who complete a survey faster than it is possible to read and understand the questions and are therefore unable to answer them in a reasonable fashion. Whilst this may not be something that the Panel Manager does on every survey it is something that should be done as a “pulse check” at regular intervals. This can be achieved by setting up a hidden field in the survey to log the time from survey start to survey finish and flag anyone who responds faster than X minutes.

- **Flat liners**
Often a common feature of speeders answers is to answer a grid question in a straight line. A simple example is shown below:

*Diagram 1 – an example of flat lining*

- Inconsistent responses

Another useful technique that a Panel Manager can adopt in assessing the validity of panellist’s answers is to monitor inconsistency in the responses they give – either within a survey or between two separate surveys or a survey and the information provided in the panellist’s profile.

These double-checks can either ask the same question again (allowing the Panel Manager to compare answers directly) or ask a question in a different way to provide answers that can be compared. A simple example of the latter might be:

Q1. In the panel profile:
   **What is your Date of Birth?**

Q2. In a survey:
   **Which zodiac star sign are you?**

Whilst there are some discrepancies around the cusp, in the majority of cases the respondent should be able to select the star sign that matches their birth date. Any discrepancies should be flagged and provide the Panel Manager with quantifiable data that enables them to put a confidence score on the overall validity of a survey’s responses.

**Panellist confidence scores**
In every consistency test that a Panel Manager does i.e. checking speeders, flat liners, inconsistent answers, a confidence score can be added or taken away from a panellist’s record. This confidence score could either be a simple numerical scale starting at 0 and increasing by one point with every positive result or decreasing by one point with every negative result, or a more complex calculation based around percentage points or other calculation.

Being able to monitor the panel on a validation level (like the bronze/silver/gold level we covered in Principle 1) and a confidence score, enables the Panel Manager to create a matrix of panellists’ activity that can provide further insight into the makeup of their Panel and enable them to determine how to treat different groups e.g.

*Diagram 2 – EXAMPLE confidence score and validation score matrix*

**Confidence score**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Confidence Score</th>
<th>Bronze</th>
<th>Silver</th>
<th>Gold</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>+5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td>+4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+4</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>+2</td>
<td>+3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+3</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td>+2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+2</td>
<td>-3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>+1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>+1</td>
<td>-4</td>
<td>-1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>-5</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>-1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Prospective VIP’s**

15% of panellists – not yet validated but appear to provide valid responses to surveys

**VIP’s**

70% of panellists – have been validated and appear to provide valid responses to surveys

**Disruptors**

5% of panellists – have not been validated and appear to provide inconsistent / dubious responses

**Potential Disruptors**

10% of panellists – have been validated but appear to provide inconsistent / dubious responses

**Action** – determine how frequently information needs to updated. Set up processes to maintain information accuracy. Monitor panellist activity and response confidence, understand panel make up. Determine how to treat different panellists in accordance with Terms and Conditions (Principle 7)
4.4 **Principle 4 - Managing engagement** - “All people are not the same”

**Key principle** – everyone is different and their motivations vary; understanding panelist motivation enables engagement

Every person is different, each with different desires, goals and motivations. Preferences vary greatly from the channels they prefer to use or communicate by, the degree of involvement they want with a brand or organisation, to their overall opinions and loyalties.

This mix of characters provides the richness of diversity but can equally pose a challenge for the Panel Manager as to how to engage with everyone in a way that they prefer.

Motivation is a vast topic and has been written about extensively, but an important area that a Panel Manager needs to understand, even at a very basic level, when trying to obtain feedback and engage with panellists. There are a number of factors that create motivation to provide feedback and the following diagram shows a few examples of these:

*Diagram 3 – Typical motivations for providing feedback*

In understanding what motivates their panel members; whether they are doing it for reward, out of loyalty, because of dissatisfaction or simply because they like their voice to be heard, the Panel Manager is able to align any engagement strategy to ensure that as many of their panellists remain engaged and reduce churn.

**Understanding motivation**
Best practice is for the Panel Manager not to assume anything and to really find out what does actually motivate panel members. Some will undoubtedly state incentives or reward, others may want to communicate with other members (though this can be surprisingly small), and others may just want to know they have been heard.

Incentives are often falsely seen as the most important motivation for panellists, but for many the opportunity to influence and be heard or the simple desire to help an organisation out through brand loyalty can be stronger motivators than an incentive. In such cases the reward is often not in leaving feedback, but in knowing that the feedback will make a difference.

The following are examples of feedback obtained from different panels about what would features would motivate panellists in the future; in both cases there are some strong parallels, however questions were asked differently and to unrelated audiences. What is most important here is that motivations are trying to be understood to enable the Panel Manager to shape communication and engagement to their own panels.

Chart 2 – what panellists would like to see in future – panel 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>More quick polls</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More in depth feedback on research findings</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More frequent surveys</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The chance to ask questions and get answers</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The chance to suggest topics for surveys and quick polls</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The chance to have a debate with other community members</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chart 3 – how panellists ranked new panel features – panel 2 (NB. scores nearer to 1.0 are the highest ranked, nearer to 8.0 the lowest ranked)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feature</th>
<th>Rank</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To see the results to surveys you take part in</td>
<td>2.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incentives for completing surveys</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A regular panel newsletter</td>
<td>3.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To post topics for review or comment</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More useful content in the member’s area</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To be able to suggest surveys that I’d like to do</td>
<td>5.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More surveys to complete</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To be able to communicate with other panellists</td>
<td>6.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Engaging with panel members should be an ever evolving process but always leaving the panellist with the feeling that they are important, that their views are valuable, that they are being listened to and that they can see the changes that have been implemented as a result of their involvement.

*Action – understand panellist motivation and diversity. Listen to what will make a difference to them and devise an engagement strategy that takes as many panellists on the ongoing journey with the organisation as possible.*
4.5 Principle 5 - Reporting and monitoring - “Panel health”

Key principle – monitor and review. Panel health can only be maintained by quality reporting of panel health indicators

Monitoring
This is arguably one of the most important principles of quality panel management; a lack of quality panel reporting means panel health cannot be tracked over time, diversity is difficult to monitor and ultimately the robustness of results from panel research can become questionable.

Panel Managers should ideally monitor a number of key panel health indicators on a monthly basis to determine overall panel health and these include:

- Overall panel volume
- Unsubscribe volume by month
- Volume of new panellists per month
- Recruitment channel
- Email status – valid emails, temporary or permanent errors
- % of panellists updating their profile in last 3, 6, 9, 12 and 24 months
- Activity levels – completing a survey in last 3, 6, 9, 12 and 24 months
- % of available panellists (subscribed, valid email, active in last 12 months)
- Survey response rates
- Invitation / Completion ratios - % of panellists who have completed 10%, 20%, 30%, 40%, 50%, 60%, 70%, 80%, 90% or 100% of the surveys they have been invited to
- etc.

“monitoring panel health is vital to maintaining a quality panel...”

Chart 4 – Example Panel reports

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Available panellists</th>
<th>Valid panellists</th>
<th>Temporary errors</th>
<th>Permanent errors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>December 2015</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 2015</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 2015</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 2014</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Recruitment success</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Panel health can only be maintained by quality reporting of panel health indicators...
By monitoring and benchmarking the panel across a number of key Panel Health Indices the Panel Manager is able to ensure that the panel has sufficient diversity, representation, activity and panellist availability to ensure that research studies can be fulfilled.

Panel audits
In addition to monitoring overall Panel Health Indices the Panel Manager should also undertake a detailed panel audit once every 12 months.

The panel audit should review all aspects of the panel and include:

- Site content
- Legal information
- Panel composition
- Data field population consistency checks

**Action** – create detailed panel reports. Monitor monthly against known benchmarks. Undertake necessary corrective action to keep panel health high.
4.6 **Principle 6 - Quality control** - “Auditable processes”

**Key principle** – to ensure that all panel activity has standardised documented processes that provide an audit trail.

Best practice quality panel management is best achieved where the Panel Manager has a defined set of processes that enable consistency of action across all of the key areas involved in managing the panel, panellists or the surveys / interaction with panellists.

Typically routines should exist for:
- Panellist recruitment
- Panellist data enhancement
- Unsubscribe handling
- Panel reporting and monitoring
- Panellist query handling
- Panellist communication
- Panellist management – i.e. T&C’s enforcement
- Sampling rules
- Survey creation / authoring
- Survey deployment
- Campaign management
- Incentive management
- Diarised activities – i.e. fields in the panel that require regular / infrequent updates e.g. product lists, questions involving a new year (2009, 2010)

For efficiency and consistency the Panel Manager should identify all of the areas where a process is involved and ensure that the tasks can be repeated consistently and are auditable. In addition a fully diarised plan of key activities should also be kept and logged upon completion.

**Diagram 4 - Example survey check lists**

**Action** – define and document the processes that need completing. Diarise activities that need to occur at specific times and log completion.
4.7 Principle 7 – Compliance - “Keeping it legal”

Key principle – ensuring that all elements of the panel and any interaction with panellists meet current legislation and that there is consistency across the whole panel

Whilst all of the other Principles of Best Practice are as they say, best practice, realistically compliance is arguably not just best practice but an absolute must and should perhaps be the number 1 priority for any Panel Manager.

UK panels
The issue for the Panel Manager is not just fulfilling key obligations of UK law but also Industry Codes of Practice and best practice guidelines such as:

- Data Protection Act 1998
  - Secure storage of personal data
  - Data processing and data transfers
  - Opt in / Unsubscribe requests
- MRS / ESOMAR codes of practice
  - Incentives and rewards - non organisation related, i.e. avoiding “SUGGING” (“Selling under the guise of research”)
  - Prize draw rules
  - Interviewing U16 year olds
- Gambling Act 2005
  - Gambling, gaming, lottery, prize draws and sweepstakes
- Disability Discrimination Act (DDA)
  - Web site access for blind and disabled users

The Panel Manager must also ensure that there is consistency across the Panel website and any details provided in survey or panellist communications:

- Terms and Conditions of Membership
- Privacy Statements
- Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)
- Prize Draw Rules (if applicable)

Failure to comply
Failing to meet compliance obligations can have serious implications for not only the organisation, but can also impact certain individuals within the organisation. Apart from legal challenges and loss of Industry membership, the organisation can also be open to unwanted bad publicity.
**Multi region / country panels**

A further complication does arise for the Panel Manager who is managing a Panel where panellists need to be managed across more than one country, especially if panellists are from outside of the EU/EEA.

The Panel Manager will need to ensure that localised laws, codes of practice and Industry best practice are met in each region that the panel operates and uses languages that enable native speakers to easily understand terms and conditions.

**Useful compliance links**

The following links provide more detail on the issues that a Panel Manager needs to consider as part of best practice in panel compliance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Compliance Link</th>
<th>URL</th>
</tr>
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</table>

**Action** — review the compliance of the Panel extremely carefully. Monitor legislation changes and Industry best practice codes and make appropriate amendments. Check compliance regularly and at the very least yearly.
5. How Beehive can help your organisation

We hope you have found this guide useful in addressing the key issues about Custom Panel Management.

If you have any specific concerns that haven’t been directly addressed, or require any further assistance regarding Custom Panels, please email (info@beehiveresearch.co.uk) or call 0203 714 4174.