

Invest In Yourself



Advocating for the marketing research industry is hard coded into MRA's DNA. This includes government affairs, where we represent MR before government officials in a legislative, regulatory or judicial setting to elevate public policies that support the industry and curtail potentially detrimental ones.

Advocacy includes media affairs, where we proactively and reactively market the concept/value of marketing research to the business community and general public through general, business and social media. This public education improves respondent cooperation.

Advocacy includes business, where we market the concept/value of marketing research to prospective buyers. Increased awareness of the value of MR translates directly into more business for you.

Advocacy includes professionalism, where we self-regulate to incentivize acceptance. In MRA's case, this includes the promulgation of MRA's *Code of Marketing Research Standards*, Professional Researcher Certification (PRC) and MRA Certificates. As two more examples, CASRO offers ISO certification to companies and Canada's MRIA offers its Certified Marketing Research Professional program to individuals.

It's likely that you, like many in MR, already are contributing to advocacy in some way. Providers share press releases to show how research improves the bottom line for their clients. Marketers of research

try to explain why and how to integrate MR into business practices. Corporate researchers try to make the same arguments internally.

I've always felt that the apex of association success is the effectiveness of its advocacy efforts. MRA's membership dues, conference attendance, exhibits, sponsorships and advertising revenue all funnel back to support this effort.

Tucked down at the bottom left of the new Insights and Strategies Conference (ISC) microsite home page is the following "About MRA" text:

"ISC is sponsored by the Marketing Research Association, an organization dedicated solely to furthering the growth of marketing research. MRA's total reinvestment of all revenues back into our profession directly enriches your career and those of other researchers like you."

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Although it's probably not news to you, MRA – like ARF, CASRO, MRIA, PMRG and others – is a not-for-profit association. Legally, that means that all of our income must be used to benefit the profession from which we draw our members. Practically, it signifies that we're really not here to make money off of MR, but rather to support the profession. In our case, that means we're here to support you and your company.

This can be a challenge in that we're up against some formidable for-profit competitors. They have a different mission – to make as much money as possible for their shareholders. If you're one of those shareholders, this is a noble purpose.

However, if you're not one of those shareholders and your career is in marketing research, the *profits* of our for-profit competitors – generated through their education, networking, advertising or sale of other products and services – are not used for advocacy but to provide a return for their shareholders. As a result, the for-profit sector doesn't do advocacy fully or well as they're financially incentivized not to.

At play here really are two practical issues for our profession if you value advocacy:

1. Tactically, how successful are the business models of all of the not-for-profit organizations serving the marketing research profession? Are we truly offering products and services worth buying so that we can generate the profits to fund critically important advocacy programs that are not typically money makers?

2. Strategically, how important is it for the members of the profession to recognize the unique role not-for-profits play, and make a deliberate decision to support them in their own long-term self-interest? This fairly can include the demand that those products and services be best-of-breed and truly valuable to someone writing a check, or even better than that offered by the for-profit sector.

All this matters because profits can be used to help drive the growth of the MR profession, or to enrich shareholders outside MR with no benefit to the profession.

That's the realistic, candid choice.

Looked at another way, support for private sector competitors, while often tactically satisfying (you reach your market today, for instance), may strategically harm economic development as it diverts resources totaling millions which exit the profession, away from MR's economic development.

Education, networking and market access certainly are widely available, so at the end of the day...you have a choice.

You can choose to invest in yourself and the growth of your profession – a win-win – when you choose to invest in the not-for-profits genuinely committed to the growth of marketing research.

For our part, we are working daily to win that challenge, with MRA's new and improved ISC a great example of what's possible for your benefit. Turn to page 51 to see how we're doing, with sincere thanks from all of us at MRA for your continued support. ▼

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