Creating Executive Communities: Coding, Warehousing and Trend Analysis of Qualitative Content

Background

One of the world's largest consulting organizations has built and maintained a networking and thought leadership program among leaders from organizations with greater than $5B in annual revenue for over five years. To build brand awareness and deepen relationships with its C-level executive prospects and clients, the company has established multiple executive peer communities, one for each key decision-maker with whom the enterprise does business, including COOs (Chief Operating Officers), CSOs (Strategy), CFOs (Financial), CHROs (Human Resources), CIOs (Information), CPOs (Procurement), and Supply Chain Executives.

The company hosts live events and phone-based roundtables so that these leaders can network with each other and share their experiences. Prior to each group interaction, one-on-one telephone interviews are conducted with executives planning to attend the event in order to understand how the upcoming gathering can best meet their current needs.

To optimize the value of the program, the consulting organization, a CSR client since 2002, needed to capture insights and share them with many different audiences: the executives participating in each interaction, other members of the networks who did not participate, and internal stakeholders. The goal was to transform the input from a multitude of qualitative interactions across a broad range of topics into insights that could:

- Be trended over time
- Be combined and/or trended across executive groups
- Be detailed at a firmographic level, such as based on industry and/or region
- Address special topics, such as innovation, growth and risk, and explain how the challenges and initiatives around these special topics are similar and different across executive groups, industries and regions

The Approach

CSR needed to capture ideas from more than 60 roundtable discussions and 600 IDIs per year, all of which were recorded and transcribed. The difficulty with categorizing ideas from these interactions is that questions and topics vary widely from one network to another.

So, rather than tying the classification of ideas to specific questions, we created an "idea warehouse" using our proprietary content coding software. We identified business themes repeated across multiple types of discussions, such as growth, risk, opportunity, current economic conditions, metrics, social media and collaboration, and others. Under each theme, we created categories for more granular ideas, and added new ideas over time.

The key to producing insightful reports is the ability to extract information by group, and to be able to compare it to information provided by other groups. CSR therefore, collects firmographics and demographics for each individual participating in every IDI and event. We tag each contribution each person makes during group interactions, which then allows us to extract ideas by factors such as job title, industry, geographic location or special topic.

Results

The results of the program overall are dramatic. Our client has reported that to date, this program has generated a significant amount of incremental revenue. Companies with executives participating in this program generate measurably more revenue and profits for our client than non-participating companies. In addition, considerable anecdotal evidence of the program's success in building brand awareness and "opening doors" for client relationship-building has been provided by many client development leaders within the firm.

One of the keys to the success of this initiative is the focus on sharing insights. CSR creates several very different types of reports from the interactions we analyze:

- Reports created for C-Level executives participating in each interaction: These must accurately reflect the content of the executives' contributions without creating confidentiality concerns.

- Reports created for non-participating C-Level executives: Of course, with executives at this C-Suite level, not every executive can attend every interaction. Therefore, reports that are shared with non-participating members must help them stay informed as to what they may have missed and build their enthusiasm for attending upcoming events, but again, without creating confidentiality concerns.
- Reports created for our client's internal purposes: These provide deep, strategic insights and recommendations for business and expansion opportunities for our client, who uses this information to solidify relationships with its clients and prospects.
- Thought leadership reports that CSR's client uses for marketing purposes, to support relationship and brand-building efforts among clients and prospects.