

## Executive/ High Value Audience Communities and Panels

### Background

An insurance carrier wanted the ability to quickly access some of its most critical audiences in order to gather input to inform strategic and operational decisions. While many of this carrier's competitors have also been experiencing this challenge, most of them have formed communities and panels to address it. Nearly all the communities and panels these competitors have formed are branded (ie, the carrier's sponsorship of the community is disclosed, in fact, in most cases, prominently and clearly communicated). But our client was more interested in taking an unbranded approach, so as to avoid any bias that the power of its name and reputation might impose on research results.

### The Approach

To address this carrier's concern about sponsoring and branding panels and communities, CSR investigated whether any other carriers and human resource/ benefits consultants shared similar concerns. Among those who did, we found that there was interest in working with other carriers and consultants to build a panel of brokers and employee benefits decision-makers, to whom these carriers and consultants would share access. CSR helped form a consortium of these interested carriers and consultants, whose goal was to sponsor and maintain such a panel.

On behalf of this consortium, CSR then created a panel of employee benefits brokers and corporate-side benefits leaders (CHRO, CFO, and team members directly reporting to them) in order to gain strategic insights from these key audiences about market trends, potential areas for product development, and industry opportunities and challenges. Founded in 2007, the panel, [NEBAF.org](http://NEBAF.org), has grown to include over 1500 employee benefits brokers and over 800 benefits leaders.

### Results

This panel provides a forum for consortium members to test product concepts, identify unmet customer needs, improve marketing effectiveness, drive innovation, gather insight, and provide information for a broad range of purposes. Surveys are conducted regularly, at least quarterly, and CSR issues a series of reports on the results for consortium and panel members. In addition, to maintain interest and enthusiasm among members, CSR has created White Papers for them on a broad variety of topics based on member interactions:

- Implications of health care reform on employee benefits

- Employee benefits purchasing processes and behaviors
- Trends in voluntary benefits
- Involvement of C-Level executives in employee benefits purchase decision-making
- An overview of workplace wellness programs
- Pros and cons associated with CDHPs, HSAs and HRAs

While the panel primarily interacts online, it has also been leveraged by consortium members to efficiently recruit participants for a large number of qualitative studies.