

A Guide to Business Research

Reviewed by

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This book contains a good introductory chapter which defines "research", identifies the characteristics of creditable research, and applies the "scientific method" to conducting business research. Problem selection with several good suggestions for developing research problems are included. It is unclear, however, why Smith insists that the problem statement must be in the form of a question. Other techniques are just as meaningful. Although the author does a good job of explaining how to evaluate the quality of secondary sources and provides a comprehensive listing of documentary sources, he neglects to demonstrate or to recommend a formal procedure for documenting secondary material. This is a major weakness of the information on secondary sources.

The definitions in the "Collecting Survey Data" chapters are a bit too brief. For example, "sequential analysis sampling" needs more explanation and/or an example. "Sample size" also needs an example to give the reader a reasonable idea of what an adequate sample size is.

The section on "Ethics in Research" needs to be expanded with more complete discussions and explanations of the most frequently mentioned ethical concerns. The author did a good job of stressing the importance of the development of an outline and how an outline contributes to good report organization. The relationship between the outline and appropriate degrees of subheadings is well demonstrated. Good, logical explanations on how to plan and write the introduction, the content sections, and the final (termi-

nal) section of the report are included. The chapter on "Achieving A Scholarly Writing Style" was adequate, but could be improved by adding a section on readability and its importance in developing a person's writing style. One significant weakness of the book is that it contains no information on how to analyze or interpret the data collected through the survey technique. A meaningful discussion, with examples, of how to make sense out of the primary data collected is a must.

Three appendixes to the book which include lists of professional organizations and respected periodicals by business discipline, how to construct an abstract and title page, and how to evaluate a research report are excellent and worth while. The final appended section of suggested research topics, however, lists topics that are far too broad. These topics must be sufficiently narrowed in scope to be worthy research ideas. A list of more narrow research topics by specific business disciplines would be much more useful.

Overall, for its paperback format, its abbreviated length of 204 pages, and its nominal \$16.95 price; the book is a good, basic reference guide for a business person. Undergraduate students in business also could benefit from the study of this business research guide.

A Guide to Business Research, Second Edition, 1991 was written by Professor Charles B. Smith and is available from Nelson-Hall Publishers, Chicago.