

CASE STUDY - SURVEY DIGITIZATION

Oregon Health Study

Digital Divide Data captures data from thousands of surveys to support landmark, randomized evaluation study of health insurance outcomes for researchers at MIT, Harvard and Providence Health and Services.

Background

In 2008, the State of Oregon opened a waiting list for enrollment in the Oregon Health Plan, Oregon's public health insurance program for low-income adults. Over 85,000 people put their names on the list – many more than the state could afford to insure at the time. In these circumstances, the state decided that the fairest procedure was a random one: 35,000 individuals were randomly selected from the list to receive applications for the health plan.

Several researchers around the country, including Amy Finkelstein (MIT), Katherine Baicker (Harvard School of Public Health), and Bill Wright (Providence Health & Services in Portland, OR) realized that Oregon's random selection procedure could serve as the basis for a randomized, controlled study of the effects of health insurance on a variety of outcomes – health, access to health care, financial status, etc. Randomized, controlled experiments are considered the “gold standard” in medicine and the physical sciences, but are generally difficult to arrange in the social sciences. The events in Oregon were an unprecedented chance to apply these rigorous methods to the study of health insurance.

Together with Oregon's Department of Human Services, the researchers formed the Oregon Health Study (OHS), <http://www.oregonhealthstudy.org>, a multimillion-dollar effort to capitalize on this unique research opportunity. To begin with, the researchers sent out surveys to 70,000 people who had signed up for waiting list – 35,000 who were selected by the state and 35,000 who were not. Time was of the essence: it was important to survey these individuals as close to the beginning of the “randomized experiment” as possible.

But it wasn't long before something simple threatened the entire project with delays, cost overruns, and errors. The company that OHS had hired to enter the survey information into the study database simply couldn't handle the volume. Surveys were backing up, and when the company tried to increase productivity, the error rate became too high. Eventually, it became clear that all their work had to be discarded and a new company brought in on the project.

That new company was Digital Divide Data.

Digital Divide Data powers the data entry, XML conversion and digital preservation needs of publishers, libraries, content hosts, academic researchers and businesses world-wide. We deliver these services on the foundation of a socially responsible model that creates opportunity for the world's poorest citizens to earn competitive wages, complete their education, and achieve upward mobility through working in our business.

DIGITAL DIVIDE DATA

WEB www.digitaldividedata.org
EMAIL sales@digitaldividedata.org
PHONE +1.212.461.3700



Business Challenge

The challenge for DDD was significant requiring us to:

- Get up to speed immediately on the scope and nature of the task and create a new workflow.
- Get the project back on schedule. The goal was not just to do a better job handling the load, but to get rid of the backlog of nearly 10,000 survey forms to bring the project back on schedule.
- Staff and train a team consisting of a project manager, data entry and quality assurance personnel.
- Establish effective communications and project management. The people involved in the project were geographically far-flung, and it was up to DDD to ensure we provided full transparency to all stakeholders.

DDD Solution

- DDD instantly assembled an experienced team and coordinated with the project stakeholders in the US.
- DDD configured our Survey Manager technology to process the forms consistently, quickly and at very high quality.
- DDD scaled up resources at first to meet the backlog, and then scaled them back down when the project was back on track with a more regular delivery schedule.
- DDD's established communications linking all contributors, managers and stakeholders together to ensure smooth delivery.
- DDD assumed responsibility for additional vendors to create a turnkey offering for OHS.

Impact

The impact of bringing DDD into the project was significant. It not only brought the study back on track, but created a mutually satisfying, ongoing relationship.

- The 10,000 form backlog was completed in 30 days, eliminating any negative impact the first vendor's problems had on the study schedule.
- The cost, despite the "crisis-mode" of the engagement, was significantly less than it would have been with the original vendor.
- DDD became the ongoing vendor on the project, and has worked on all survey phases, to date entering over 40,000 forms into the program's database.
- DDD's social mission was an added benefit – making the research team feel that outsourcing could still meet their broader vision of improving the health and welfare for disadvantaged people. DDD's social mission underlies everything we do. Young people, born into disadvantage in developing countries, come to us for training, work with us to grow professionally and personally while pursuing a degree with DDD's assistance, and then move on after graduation to earn six-times the average local wages.

Find more about our services here: <http://www.digitaldividedata.org/services/>

DIGITAL DIVIDE DATA

WEB www.digitaldividedata.org
EMAIL sales@digitaldividedata.org
PHONE +1.212.461.3700

© 2010, Digital Divide Data. All rights reserved. All trademarks and registered trademarks are the property of their respective owners.