

# powerfeedback.com: A research revolutionary

Scott Gingold spent 20 years in corporate America, turning around floundering companies and nonprofits, and mentoring businesses on how to enhance customer service. While he was teaching his clients, he himself was learning valuable lessons about conducting market research.

“I noticed that clients were doing research in an antiquated, expensive and inefficient manner—some with basic pen and paper,” Gingold recalled. “I thought that there had to be a better way to gain feedback that was less costly and more effective.”

His solution? Online marketing-data collection. In 1995, he and his wife, Denise, started powerfeedback.com and set about using the Internet to solicit, accrue and analyze marketing information. powerfeedback.com established itself as a pioneer in online surveys and since its inception has grown to become a successful full-service marketing-research company amidst bigger, more well-known competitors.

“Once people caught on and saw how the technology worked, there was a high level of excitement,” said CEO Gingold (Denise serves as President). “Over the years, we’ve developed a library of tools, building blocks if you will, that makes our customary approach quick, comprehensive and cost-effective.”

## Putting processes in place

As with all startups, Gingold faced challenges—primarily how to convey what powerfeedback.com did and the breadth of its services. Good work ultimately helped and referrals started multiplying.

“What we do is not rocket science,” Gingold admitted, “but the end results do lead to critical business decisions. In some cases, as with medical clients, they may even save a life.”

powerfeedback.com’s extensive menu of services includes custom online surveys, custom web applications such as online balloting, custom software development, economic surveys, online focus groups, call center and customer service department checks, and virtually any other application involving feedback and/or data-collection activity. Gingold and his team typically deploy surveys within 72 hours, recording results in real time and making them available to clients 24/7. Data is backed up nightly and kept safe and secure in a Class “A” rated facility. All servers have redundant back-ups, which are monitored 24/7 and are HIPPA compliant. Customer-service representatives man phones around the clock to avoid email or voicemail queues from forming. powerfeedback.com also provides branding, incorporating a client’s logo and color



scheme into surveys and other online documents, as well as report generation, offering executive summaries, data interpretation, cross-tab analyses and formal presentation to relevant stakeholders.

“Prior to deployment, we test all surveys in various operating systems and web browsers to ensure that participants have a positive visual and operational experience,” noted Gingold. “We take great pride in being able to drive people to take surveys and then get our clients high response and completion rates.”



Scott Gingold

## Clients are the focal point

powerfeedback.com’s business philosophy is simple: serve the client.

“We live and die by it,” stressed Gingold, who gives out his cell phone and personal email address to every client. “We’re goal and task-oriented, usually responding to all information requests within 60 minutes and submitting bids within 24 hours. When we call clients back, we’re often told that they never expected to hear from us so soon.”

powerfeedback.com’s individualized attention, spectrum of services and soft sell of long-term commitments and package deals have kept clients coming back time and time again. Its client retention rate is, in fact, 98.7 percent.

Early on, Gingold chose to vary his clientele rather than specialize.

“We’ve always wanted to be a ‘general practitioner.’ It keeps us fresh. We learn from every project we undertake and bring that knowledge to the next one without violating confidentiality agreements or sharing proprietary information,” he said.

The company’s client roster is both national and international and runs the gamut from nonprofit agencies to membership associations to Fortune 100 and above

companies. In Pennsylvania, powerfeedback.com has worked with clients such as the Greater Lehigh Valley Chamber of Commerce, Lehigh Valley International Airport, Hodges Technologies and Air Products and Chemicals.

**Continuing success**

Today, powerfeedback.com is still privately held and realizes annual revenues of about \$5 million. It is a division of Successful Strategies (www.ssconsultantsinc.com), Gingold's business and management consulting service. Among its loyal staff of 23, which includes PhD-level market researchers, operational/computer scientists,

Looking toward the future, Gingold sees powerfeedback.com leading the way in the use of handheld computer devices like Palm Pilots, Tablet PCs and cell phones to conduct field interviews, surveys and intercepts. While kiosks traditionally have been employed at conferences to garner feedback from attendees, they've suffered from outdated technology, an impersonal approach and a high dropout rate due to long lines, and have not allowed favorable demographic segmentation. The new technology will enable powerfeedback.com clients to directly interact with people during an event and input data on the spot for instant impact and immediate report

generation. It also promises greater participation and more flexibility in surveying respondents.

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customer-service representatives and database administrators, there has been zero turnover. Even interns have stayed connected with the company in some way. And as for working side by side with his wife, Gingold confessed, “She is my most trusted advisor. She keeps me centered. And her skills, training and competence in the health-care realm are extremely beneficial for our health-care clients.”

“I'm blessed. I really love what I do. You practically have to pry my Blackberry and cell phone out of my hands,” Gingold laughed, and then adds on a serious note. “The business is constantly evolving, but it always comes back to providing outstanding service and giving clients credible information to make important business decisions.”

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**Discussion or distraction?**

*Twice as many employees as managers believe water cooler chats increase productivity, survey says*

The gift of gab can lead to improved work performance, according to employees, but managers may beg to differ. In recent surveys, 40 percent of workers said water cooler conversations increase productivity by providing opportunities for employee bonding; only 21 percent of executives polled agree, according to Office Team, a California firm specializing in administrative staffing.

“Informal discussions at the water cooler or in the lunchroom can often lead to new ideas, stronger work relationships and improved team camaraderie, which, in turn, can increase productivity,” said Diane Domeyer, executive director of Office Team.

Domeyer advises, however, that this is true up to a point.

“Conversations should not interfere with work that needs to be done. If talks steer away from business issues and continue for extended periods of time, it's distracting to others.”

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