

Qualitative and Quantitative Research

Proposed merger of two industry associations Member feedback

Project outline

Two industry associations that shared, in part, a common membership base wanted to investigate the feasibility of merging.

Research Strategy

The study comprised a due diligence process, income modelling and member feedback. ASR was engaged to collect member feedback through focus groups, depth interviews and a short telephone questionnaire. The feedback was designed to identify the value of each association to its members, and their views on the proposed merger.

Focus groups were conducted in Melbourne and Sydney and approximately 20 interviews were conducted either face-to-face or by telephone in all states. In addition, more than 80 members were contacted by telephone to answer a 10-minute questionnaire.

Early feedback indicated that members had limited information about the merger, so an extensive communication program was initiated by senior executives from each association during the course of our research project.

Outcomes

Separate reports were prepared for each association; they included the value proposition for each set of members, and the wide range of views about the merger from each perspective. The study revealed that the cultures of the two organisations were quite different. Members liked the structures and services that each association provided and did not support a merger because it would mean that 'their association' would be swamped by members who did not share their values. The minority who were members of both associations maintained their dual membership because each association represented specific aspects of their business.

While not the only deciding factor, member feedback indicated that the proposed merger was not workable. Each association decided to continue separately, but to remain friendly to each other. Member feedback also generated some good ideas for new member services and ways of offering these.

Even though the merger did not go ahead, the exercise identified areas for improvement for both organisations.

“ Ask your members first before making big changes ”