

THE TOP 100

LOOKING FOR A GUIDE TO THE SCALE AND SCOPE OF THE RESEARCH BUSINESS? WE PRESENT YOU WITH OUR FIRST-EVER UK RESEARCH INDUSTRY LEAGUE TABLE, INCLUDING 100 OF THE UK'S TURNOVER KINGS

1-20		turnover (£'000)		
COMPANY NAME		2006	2005	2004
1	TNS	147,824	153,338	161,437
2	Millward Brown Group	N/A	115,428	105,356
3	Ipsos MORI	110,011	103,500	N/A
4	GfK NOP	90,692	85,010	82,508
5	Datamonitor	70,392	55,645	41,205
6	ACNielsen	N/A	70,304	73,774
7	Synovate	64,296	54,700	51,900
8	Research International	N/A	62,148	68,989
9	BMRB	N/A	47,826	45,430
10	Mintel International Group	39,741	35,986	29,420
11	IRI Infoscan	34,161	34,497	32,762
12	Cello Research & Consultancy	30,965	16,105	N/A
13	IMS Health	N/A	28,808	30,722
14	NATCEN	30,031	32,459	27,766
15	MVA Consulting Group	29,452	24,016	22,245
16	Harris Interactive	22,679	19,886	14,352
17	Euromonitor	22,517	17,522	15,212
18	GfK Marketing Services	18,863	17,860	15,429
19	ICM Group	17,464	14,802	N/A
20	Illuminas	15,685	15,792	15,561

* ESTIMATED

People power works. The following article has been produced as a direct result of the countless requests *Research* has received over the past few years from readers desperately seeking a credible, dependable and extensive list of the UK's turnover kings.

Before we get to the league table itself, it's worth taking a quick snapshot of the health of general research market. It's not an entirely rosy picture. As most readers will be all too painfully aware, the research business is not enjoying one of its golden financial periods. Double-digit growth is no longer the norm. So, growth is slow and margins are being ever squeezed for a whole host of reasons; clients' tightened purse

strings and the preponderance of online research to name but two. The forthcoming year gives little sense of a silver lining. In a recent news report on research-live.com, MRS director general David Barr cautioned the UK research industry to expect another flat year in 2007, after a survey revealed 2006 turnover grew just 2.4%. As far as the research business is considered the champagne is not so much on ice, as not purchased in the first place.

However despite this generally gloomy picture, a number of organisations have bucked the trend and proved that a combination of innovative solutions, canny partnerships and good fortune go some way to remedy a sluggish trend.

In past issues of *Research*, we have

made much of the growing importance of business skills and financial acumen within the client-side operation. The importance of mastering these skills is not only a prerequisite in satisfying today's client, but it is also a necessity for any agency that wants to compete efficiently with the slew of non-traditional research providers who, quite rightly, now count themselves part of the insight industry.

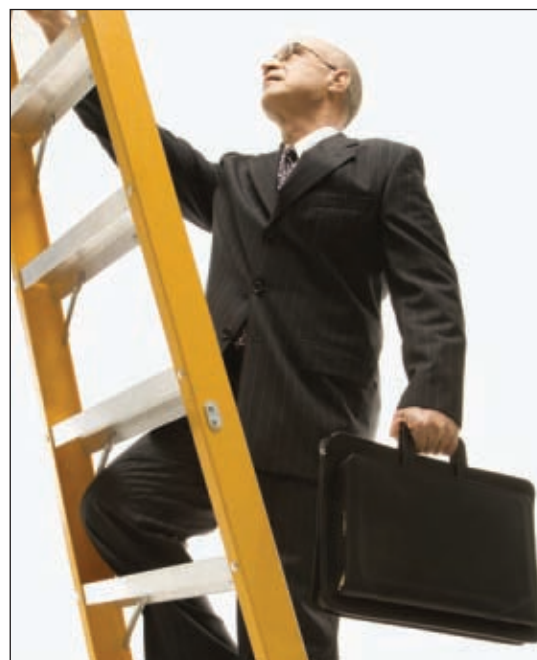
TABLING THE CHANGES

So to the tables. This league table will be published by *Research* on an annual basis, with notable updates carried on research-live.com. We are also planning a number of 'slice and dice' exercises throughout the

league tables

21-40		turnover (£'000)		
COMPANY NAME	2006	2005	2004	
21 Hall & Partners (Europe)	12,176	10,190	8,562	
22 Adelphi International Research	15,432	14,667	6,311	
23 Hay Group Insight	*15,000	N/A	N/A	
24 Frost & Sullivan	N/A	14,598	12,315	
25 Added Value	N/A	13,692	12,153	
26 ICC Information	N/A	13,474	13,790	
27 Campden & Chorleywood Food Research Assn	13,379	12,601	12,618	
28 ORC International	12,742	12,812	12,520	
29 Maritz Research	11,500	10,242	23,661	
30 mmr Group	11,060	8,124	9,162	
31 AGB Nielsen Media Research	10,798	9,534	9,324	
32 Leatherhead Food International	10,200	N/A	N/A	
33 Research Now	9,613	3,639	0,701	
34 YouGov	9,470	2,942	1,992	
35 Gallup Organisation	8,700	8,481	8,637	
36 Flamingo International	8,516	7,441	6,257	
37 Lightspeed Research	N/A	8,195	5,358	
38 HPI Research	8,023	9,579	9,451	
39 PriceWaterhouseCoopers	*8,700	N/A	N/A	
40 BASES	*7,800	N/A	N/A	

* ESTIMATED



IT INCLUDES COMPANIES WHOSE ORIGINS ARE NOT IN CONVENTIONAL SURVEY RESEARCH, BUT WITH THE EVER-BROADENING FOOTPRINT OF RESEARCH, IT WOULD BE RECKLESS TO LEAVE THESE COMPANIES OUT OF THE EQUATION

forthcoming year where the updated data will be presented in a variety of different ways, allowing market watchers to get a real sense of the industry's real performers.

The purpose of researching and publishing an industry league table has been to identify the principal players in the sector, and to place their scale of activity in the wider industry context.

It's important to make clear that no 'quality judgements' were made on companies' performance in the compilation of this table. Ranking turnover in this way sheds no light on the quality of performance in either research itself or profitability. There are also many successful and reputable enterprises whose turnover is below the threshold for inclusion in this table. But a judgement has been made to cap the companies

featured at 100. Plans for a more extensive list are being considered and we'll be announcing further details on this soon.

As you would expect, a compelling commercial story lies behind each of the companies listed in our table. Unfortunately space does not allow us to give these stories their full due within this article. However, we encourage you towards research-live.com where you will find the latest commercial and financial stories and developments behind each of these high-achievers.

THE SURVEY DIMENSIONS

Our league table records turnover by UK-based organisations, regardless of the location of their ownership or of their clients. It includes those whose origins are not in conventional survey research, companies

sometimes perceived as being with the consulting or business publishing sectors. However, with the ever-broadening footprint of research, it would be reckless to leave these companies out of the equation. It is clear that they are engaged in providing decision-support information and insight on markets, companies, customers, citizens, products, services, employees, and operations, etc.

Recently MRS chairman Simon Lidington told *Research* that he suspected growth might be occurring away from "established mainstream research suppliers".

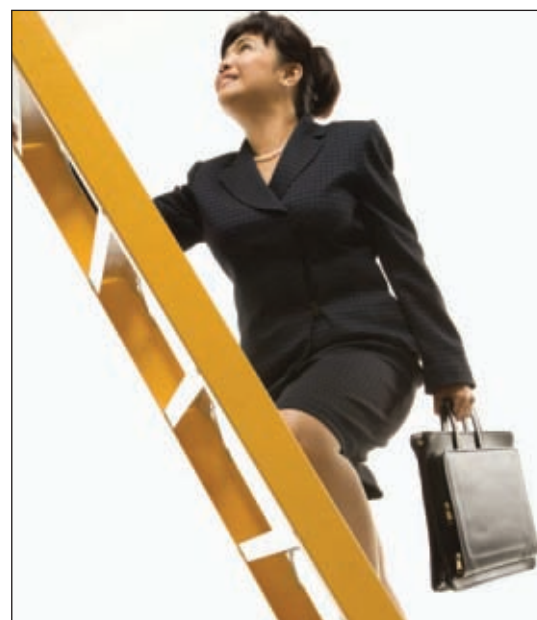
He said there was anecdotal evidence that some large international clients were spending parts of their MR budgets with "adjacent businesses" – those that undertake various kinds of

league tables

41-60		turnover (£'000)		
COMPANY NAME	2006	2005	2004	
41 BMG Research	N/A	7,660	7,078	
42 Nunwood	7,635	6,400	4,500	
43 The Oxford Research Agency	*7,580	N/A	N/A	
44 The Research Partnership	7,571	5,296	3,061	
45 Lorien Research	7,500	N/A	N/A	
46 Holden Pearmain Research	7,100	5,700	4,600	
47 Double Helix Development	7,000	5,000	4,000	
48 BDRC	6,924	4,798	3,975	
49 Marketing Sciences	6,796	7,246	7,646	
50 Simpson Carpenter	6,775	7,398	5,811	
51 Quaestor	6,702	6,968	6,569	
52 KRC Research	*6,500	N/A	N/A	
53 The Planning Shop International	N/A	6,296	3,071	
54 RSM	N/A	6,264	2,534	
55 RONIN Corporation	N/A	6,218	5,550	
56 FDS	6,057	5,871	5,951	
57 SPA	6,017	5,599	4,822	
58 ISR: International Survey Research	*6,000	N/A	N/A	
59 2CV Research	5,969	5,547	4,706	
60 ESA Market Research	5,882	6,534	6,447	

* ESTIMATED

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behavioural studies, or who provide data management, business intelligence, analysis and forecasting services.

The table therefore includes a wide range of types of organisation, from those who specialise exclusively in data collection through to those who concentrate on the provision of analysis, interpretation and evidence-based advice. It includes public companies, private businesses, and not-for-profit providers of research services.

A HEALTH WARNING

Any league table of this kind needs to be accompanied by a health warning. Because the data comes from many sources (see *Methodology*, page 41), it is undoubtedly prone to a degree of inconsistency. Compilation of the

table is not an exact science. The league tables above are no more than an indicator of which organisations are the largest suppliers in the sector and their scale of operation in relation to one another.

Distortions occur for many reasons which can cause difficulty in making 'like with like' comparisons, including differences in reporting dates for those whose financial year is not the calendar year. Some businesses conceal turnover when they become divisions of larger groups, or by filing modified accounts. Some turnover figures are distorted by inter-company transactions within groups. Some reflect a 'purer' definition of market research than others. Some have apparently erratic turnover patterns because of dependency on a few key clients and the scheduling of billings.

A BROADER FOOTPRINT

As we mentioned earlier, the boundaries of market research are becoming progressively more hazy and difficult to define. As some players in the traditional mainstream industry have tried to reposition themselves further up the value chain to engage in higher-margin activity relating to insight and consultancy, other players with origins outside research have encroached from the other direction. They may not yet have met in No Man's Land, but they are certainly within waving distance.

In a mature market some 'traditionalists' bemoan outward 'leakage' of 'their' business to non-research companies. Equally the 'porous borders' of research are enabling others to enter the market with offerings profiled principally as

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business problem-solving rather than provision of information.

THE CONSOLIDATION GAME

At the 'top' of the industry, consolidation has been well-documented. Some argue that the true definition of consolidation is when big companies stop acquiring smaller businesses to concentrate on buying up one another. Despite the current pause in such strategic activity, it is unlikely that top-end consolidation has run its course, particularly among those who are not just the biggest (e.g. some US companies in the Top 25) but who are also genuinely international businesses.

In the meantime, our news pages have been chock-full chronicling the middle-market activity with the arrival of new consolidators/

61-80		turnover (£'000)		
COMPANY NAME		2006	2005	2004
61	Continental Research	5,821	N/A	N/A
62	Opinion Leader	N/A	5,815	3,635
63	BPRI	5,701	6,269	7,941
64	All Global	N/A	5,605	3,055
65	Conquest Research	5,580	5,187	4,428
66	IFF Research	5,565	5,039	4,279
67	CSW Research	N/A	5,293	5,827
68	Business Research Group	5,104	4,636	4,420
69	RDSi	N/A	4,992	5,665
70	Promar International	N/A	4,835	5,808
71	Brainjuicer	4,610	2,936	2,614
72	MRUK Research	4,413	4,184	3,753
73	Leapfrog Research & Planning	4,322	2,674	3,318
74	Buckingham Research Associates	*4,250	N/A	N/A
75	Henley Centre Headlightvision	N/A	4,460	3,143
76	Network Research & Marketing	4,058	4,631	4,932
77	Field Facts Worldwide	N/A	4,006	3,084
78	Snap Surveys	4,000	3,065	2,684
79	Arnold & Bolingbroke	N/A	3,950	4,228
80	Grass Roots Group	3,920	3,362	3,653

* ESTIMATED

investors like Creston, Cello, Munro Global and Chime Communications. These organisations, along with others, are assembling influential and substantial groups of businesses. Size matters, but so too do many other variables.

There has been much comment in research and elsewhere that the UK is a large but very mature market, showing minimal real growth over the years of this decade, in stark contrast to regular double-digit annual revenue growth during the 1990s.

This league table tends to confirm that impression. Although turnover figures for only three years are published here, the same impression would have existed if we had published data for six years. Many well-known names have been flatlining for several years.

Equally, some readers may well be surprised that as many as 100 organisations have been identified with turnover above £3m, and that the threshold for the Top 50 is around £7m. Total turnover of the Top 100 is around £1.6bn, half of which is attributable to the ten largest businesses and three-quarters concentrated in the top thirty.

If measuring individual performances of research businesses proves a chewy affair, attempting to put a value on the market's overall turnover worth is trickier. However, with the figures held within our league table, one thing appears clear: the industry may well have been 'under-measured' in years past. Might the total UK industry turnover be close to the £2bn mark? A figure that stands somewhat higher than previous estimates.

81-100		turnover (£'000)		
COMPANY NAME	2006	2005	2004	
81 Accent Marketing & Research	3,893	3,735	3,219	
82 Firefish	3,775	3,032	2,302	
83 NTC Economics	3,750	N/A	N/A	
84 Independent Fieldwork Company	3,700	3,700	3,700	
85 Market Probe Europe	N/A	3,658	3,467	
86 Intrepid	*3,500	N/A	N/A	
87 Millward Brown Ulster	N/A	3,365	2,487	
88 ECHO Research	3,304	3,009	N/A	
89 National Readership Surveys	N/A	N/A	3,254	
90 Swift Research	3,163	2,929	N/A	
91 Link Consumer Strategies	3,145	2,654	3,669	
92 Northstar Research Partners	3,142	4,090	3,634	
93 MORPACE International	N/A	3,106	2,022	
94 New Fieldwork Company	3,118	3,799	4,318	
95 Steer Davies Gleave	3,057	2,395	2,390	
96 Infocorp	*3,050	2,561	2,318	
97 Jigsaw Research	N/A	3,015	3,519	
98 Kadence UK	3,007	2,483	1,457	
99 Facts International	N/A	3,004	2,836	
100 Maven Research	2,973	3,148	3,283	

* ESTIMATED



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TABLES FOR TOMORROW

We must offer our thanks to all those organisations that co-operated so freely in the compilation of these tables, as well as to Merlin Scott Associates for its help.

With the UK Research Industry League Tables now unveiled as an annual fixture within *Research*, we are keen to make sure that it develops to suit your needs. We want to gain feedback on the way in which the tables were compiled and presented.

All comments will go towards ensuring that the UK Research Industry League Table stands as the most authoritative, credible, and informative guide to the leading players in the insight market.

THE METHODOLOGY

Many information sources have been deployed in compiling this table. Statutory filings at Companies House have been the primary source of data already in the public domain (compiled with the invaluable assistance of Merlin Scott Associates). Business press reports, the MRS annual market survey (and its predecessors from BMRA), turnover ranges cited in the Research Buyer's Guide and company websites have all provided input. In addition, some companies have contributed information which was not previously in the public domain while others have declined to do so. For a few, estimating has therefore been necessary to fill the gaps, and estimated figures are marked with an asterisk.

SOME OF THE INFORMATION IN THIS TABLE WAS COMPILED USING DATA CONTAINED IN THE MARKET RESEARCH REPORT, WHICH IS PUBLISHED EACH MONTH BY MERLIN SCOTT ASSOCIATES AND IS AVAILABLE IN BOOK OR DATABASE FORMAT. FOR FURTHER INFORMATION: MERLINSOTTASSOCIATES.CO.UK