



## Planning a Successful Research Project

To ensure a successful research project, it is important to take the time to carefully plan the process from start to finish. However, it is interesting that this vital phase often receives only cursory attention, or is skipped completely, in an attempt to save time. Taking time up front to answer a few critical questions regarding the project not only improves the quality of the information obtained, but can actually save time.

Prior to beginning any research project there are three critical questions, which should always be addressed:

1. What is the purpose of the research (i.e., why is this research being conducted)?
2. What is the decision that the results will be used to help make?
3. What are the criteria that will be used to make the decision?

After these questions have been answered, the most difficult part of the planning process has been completed. It is then appropriate to begin work on the specifics of the project itself. Among the questions that need to be answered in this phase are:

- What is the most appropriate data collection method?
- Who will be surveyed?
- What will be the source of the sample of potential respondents?
- How much sample will be required to successfully fulfill the objectives?
- What questions will be asked?
- When and where will data be collected?
- What statistical analysis will be performed?
- When does management need the information to make a timely decision?
- How will the results be communicated to the organization?

Taking the time up front to discuss these questions with your research team and agree on the answers during the planning phase will ultimately save time, effort, and significantly improve the quality of your research in the long run.