

How to...

Carry out Market Research



Why research your market? What will it help you to identify?

Market research is the foundation to starting up and maintaining a successful business or enterprise. The information gathered during your market research will help you to clearly identify and understand:

- Whether there is a demand for your product.
- Potential customers and essential information about them, such as their location, gender, age and interests.
- Your competitors and their strengths and weaknesses.
- Your own strengths and weaknesses.
- And therefore whether your idea will work!

Armed with this information you can refine your ideas and get your business up and running.

How to get started

Good market research is usually made up of a few different types of information that can be found in several places:

- **Online research:** There are many websites providing advice and information for market research and directing you to the best sources of research that other people have carried out and used. You can also find out first hand how other small businesses have progressed and the challenges they have faced. We've collected some links on the next page to get you started.
- **Visit the library:** Most libraries will have a large reference section where you can look up lots of up-to-date and detailed information about all aspects of running a business. The library will also stock a range of professional trade magazines so you can read up about trends in your sector.
- **Primary research:** There is no better way to understand your customers than by talking to them! A simple, well thought-out questionnaire is a powerful tool that will provide you with information unique to your business. You can do this face-to-face, over the phone, by email, online or using a combination of methods.





How to... Carry out Market Research



Researching your market

The research you carry out should tell you about:

- **Supply and demand:** Is your idea already out there and if so, is it any good? Alternatively, do you have to generate a demand for your idea before you can supply it? How will you spread the word?
- **Current trends and fashions:** It's important to know what's trendy with customers, but you also need to understand the trends that could affect the running of your business, such as changes in technology, laws or regulations. Trade magazines and newspapers are packed with this kind of information.
- **Financial information:** Money is central to successful business. Your research should involve reading some specialist marketing reports - usually stocked in libraries - that build a financial picture of your industry, such as whether it is growing or declining, and any financial regulations you need to be aware of. You can also find out about any financial advice and assistance available to you as an entrepreneur - the links on the right should get you started.

Researching your competition

If you know who your competitors are and how they work, you can learn from their strengths and weaknesses and notice if they've left any gaps in the market for you to occupy. You might even find a potential future business partner! Use the range of sources available to find out:

- Who they are and where they are
- Exactly what they do
- How much they charge
- How successful they are

Don't stop once you've started!

The market is something that's constantly changing, so if you want to keep ahead of the competition, and keep your customers happy, you should keep tabs on your market research!

Your first point of contact should be your School Enterprise Champion, who will offer advice and support to point you in the right direction.

Resources to help you with market research

www.bl.uk

The British Library online can point you to lots of useful sources of information. You can search the online database and order books at your local library too.

www.ukbusinessforums.co.uk

A whole collection of forums for businesses to share information and advice.

www.tradepub.com

A comprehensive list of trade publications.

www.enterprisequest.com

A website full of practical hints and tips for small businesses.

www.startups.co.uk

Articles and on-line advice for new businesses.

www.businesslink.gov.uk

All you need to know about running a business.

www.sheffield.gov.uk/solutionsforbusiness

A source of business advice in Sheffield.

See the Resources section of your folder for more information on setting up an independent school business.

For more information contact your BiG School/College Enterprise Champion



**Project Part-Financed
by the European Union
European Regional
Development Fund**