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Segment: **Consider The Consumer Creating A Better Member Experience To Increase Qualitative Community Health**

Kelli Hammock: Hi, everybody. I'm Kelli Hammock, Strategic Communications Director at L&E Research. And we are so happy you could join us today. Welcome. So before I get started, I want to mention that we are recording today's webinar and that will be made available via our on-demand webinar page at leresearch.com. We'll be taking questions and answering them at the end of our discussion. Please use the Q&A function on this platform to post your questions. We'll be collecting and posing those to our panel at the end of the discussion today. And if we can't get to all the questions, we'll answer those in email afterwards. If you would like to say hello, please use the chat function to do that. Remember, you can chat to only the presenters or to all presenters and attendees by making that selection in the chat window. So today, we're going to be talking about participating in qualitative research, from the perspective of a participant. We wanted to know what motivates people to not only sign up, but to continue to engage in research. We also wanted to know what pain points drive them from continuing to stay engaged in the research process. So let's get started with some introductions. First, quick shout out to our behind-the-scenes tech support. Josh, thank you as usual for supporting our webinars. And Angela, please share a little about yourself and why this is a topic about which you are passionate.

Angela Steed: Hi. I'm Angela Steed, and my official title at L&E is Director of Community Engagement. This means I oversee our recruiting, screener program, and of course what I'm passionate about, the panel development. Just to give you a little background, I've been with L&E for over 10 years. I started as a recruiter, then worked as a project manager. I was also the recruiting manager, and then I've been in my current role for the past four years or so. And just to put 10 years into perspective for me. When I started with L&E, my oldest child was six years old. Now he's 16 with a car. I used to stress over math and the alphabet, now I stress over driving skills in college applications, although I still stress over his math.

Kelli Hammock: Thank you, Angela. And myself, I'm Kelli, the Strategic Communications Director here at L&E Research. You might know me from my previous webinar films, such as Stop Sabotaging Your Research, How to Gain Big Insights from Little Influencers, and a Prescription to Better Research. But I get recognized most for my work in L&E's Annual Future Trends webinars. But on a more serious note, I've been in research for almost 20 years, starting out in recruitment, moving into project management, then screener programming and database management, finally landing in sales and marketing with L&E Research. Given my extensive operational background, the participant experience research was right at my alley as I've spent my career in various stages of participant recruitment. So I truly understand how our industry processes can cause a negative overall experience. My mission is to share their voice within our industry to hopefully trigger some change. So we're going to get started with our presentation today. Gimme just a second to get my screen shared for you. Can you see my screen?

Angela Steed: Yep. Can see it.

Kelli Hammock: Fantastic. Thank you. So we want to thank our research collaborators who gave their time so generously, their time and expertise really, to support our project. You've already met Angela and I. So research support was provided by David Harris with insight and measurement and moderation support was provided by researchers at RIVA and UGA. And I believe a few of our generous volunteers may be with us today. So feel free to give them a shout out in the chat. I want to begin with sharing why L&E conducted this research. What's the purpose? Why did we feel it was so important to explore a participant's experience and perspective? Because research participants are the lifeblood of qualitative research, and researchers cannot obtain insights without the support of real people. The purpose of our research was to explore strategies to increase retention and reduce attrition by creating a better member experience within qualitative panels. Our hypothesis is that a better member experience increases engagement and retention leading to higher data quality. So essentially, engage and reward honest participants and identify and deter fraudulent participants. This project was intended as a pulse check to find out how research participants view our industry. While you'll hear lots of references to their experience with L&E specifically, much of their feedback is applicable to the industry. We're sharing our findings with the industry as creating a better participant experience is a collaborative effort. Suppliers and brands cannot do this without supporting one another. At L&E Research, we take care of our members, so they'll take care in your research. In fact, we have an entire department whose responsibilities include member satisfaction and quality assurance in addition to panel growth. That

department is led by our co-presenter, Angela, who's going to share a little about participant engagement, response rates, and L&E's journey. So Angela.

Angela Steed: Thank you, Kelli. So we're going to talk about the research we conducted in a few minutes, but first, we felt it important to talk about the relationship between panel size, incidence rate, and response or engagement rates. First, let's define how we refer to the terms response and engagement. The engagement rate is measured in aggregate. We look at overarching statistics to determine how engaged our panel is, for example, by month or by year. Response rate would be measured at the individual project level and is driven by project specific details. Incidence is the proportion of respondents who meet the criteria for a given study. A large member base is a critical component in providing a broad diverse population who can meet the needs of a wide variety of audience types. It allows you to access niche segments that are otherwise hard to reach, like high income earners, frequent travelers, or early adopters. But these segments might represent only a small fraction of the general population. So it might require a large pool of candidates to screen for eligibility, meaning sample providers will need to invite a higher number of potential respondents to complete the screeners. Currently, the proportion of invited respondents who complete screeners is declining. Response rates are affected by various factors, such as survey length, design, incentive, and timing, but also by the level of engagement and trust of the respondent. As the number of available screeners and invitations increases, respondents might experience survey fatigue and become less willing to participate or provide honest answers. What do you do when you get too many emails? You start ignoring them, you become selective, or worse you just unsubscribe. This creates a vicious cycle. Low incidence rates lead to more invitations, which lead to lower response rates, which lead to even lower incidence rates and so on. The cycle is going to not only affect the efficiency and cost effectiveness of market research, but also the quality and validity of the data. Researchers may end up with biased or inaccurate results if they rely on a sample that doesn't reflect the target population or if they encounter high dropout rates among the respondents. We expect difficulty with certain low incidence audiences, for example, high net worth audiences are going to be lower incidents within the population. And monetary incentives may not be as enticing, so their natural rate of response is going to be lower. But when having challenges reaching higher incidence populations, response is likely the culprit, so you may need to rethink your panel engagement strategies. Speaking of surveys, we've got one for you. Josh, go ahead and share our poll, please. Going to give Josh just a second to pull poll. There it is. So what is considered a good response rate? The response rate is always going to vary and there's always response rate inconsistency with screeners, survey with screeners, and surveys both quant

and qual. Therefore, please take our poll with a grain of salt and only for fun. I will say that the figure we found in our research aligns with our experience at L&E and what we know from our industry friends. So your options are going to be less than 5%, between five and 30, 30 to 50, 50 to 80, higher than 80. So I'll give you just a second to input what your thoughts are. And then we'll go ahead and close the poll out. And Josh, do you want to share the results of the poll with our audience?

Research Participant: Absolutely. It looks like we're at 85 right now. Looks like that is leveled off. So I'll go ahead and share here if you're ready.

Angela Steed: Sure thing. It looks like the audience agrees with 5% to 30% is going to be our biggest option. Thanks for sharing your feedback. We were curious if our audience is aware of what we realistically see when working to find the perfect audience for your research. So let's talk about the results. You were all actually right on point, by the way. So what should an average response rate be? This was actually an interesting question to research when looking for statistics on qualitative research. We located this article from Delighted that mentions a good survey response rate ranges from 5% to 30%. So you all were right on target. However, that 5% to 30% spread is going to be very broad. This could be true for qual or quant, but let's take a look at how our L&E engagement has trended. Now, I'd like to walk you through L&E's engagement rate journey. When we refer to engagement rates, we define that by how often our members interact with the L&E opinion site, completing screeners to qualify for studies. So in 2018, our engagement rates ran about 16%. We conducted some in-house research with our panel on what was important to them to stay engaged with L&E. Upon implementing some of their feedback, our engagement rates actually began to climb to about 23% in 2019. And then COVID happened. With various businesses closing and members looking for creative ways to bring in income, our engagement rates climbed disproportionately high with a few spikes nearing 50%, but settling around 34% for 2020. Post-COVID as life began returning to normal, our engagement rates readjusted to about 17% in 2022. In 2023, our engagement rates ran about 15%. We realized culture and other factors had changed, and the upward trajectory we experienced in 2019, it just needed a new strategy. The tactics we implemented back then, they were effective without a doubt. But in a post COVID world, our tactics needed a refresher. First, let's talk about some factors that affect engagement and project rate responses. So what variables cause response rates to be lower? If the incentive is too low, this is especially true for in-person research where respondents have to travel. The incentives sometimes may not be high enough to cover time spent in traffic or gas. Activities, homework, pre-work, product testing surveys, the activities can

become laborious. We try to provide transparency when sharing the obligations of a research project, and some people simply aren't as willing to allocate time to independent research activities. The topic is too vague. Sometimes when the request is that the study description be blind, the lack of information may cause the respondent not to take the survey. Basically, if they don't know what the study is about, they don't have buy-in. Other items may not really be on anyone's control, the topic is just too sensitive, so the respondent just isn't comfortable discussing it. Or the topic isn't of interest, or they know they aren't the target audience. For example, a vegan likely wouldn't complete a screener for a project about dairy products. Scheduling conflicts, as we all know, sometimes other life events just take higher priority. And then we have screener fatigue. If they've attempted a lot of screeners and not qualified, they may need a break from engaging with market research. So next we're going to dive into the research we conducted with our panel to find out more about why they do or don't engage with market research studies. So Kelli, would you like to share a little bit more about that?

Kelli Hammock: Thank you, Angela. I would. Let's talk about the research. What did we do? So we started out by deploying a quick five-minute survey to a selected panel of participants to get a preliminary gauge on the common pain points to build the discussion guide. After that, we conducted eight 90-minute virtual focus groups. We included a broad mix of adults age 18 to 68 with a diverse mix of demographics, markets, and last participation. Each group included at least one to two new members. Those who have signed up with L&E within the past one year, frequent screeners, or those who complete screeners pretty frequently, at least weekly, or more. And a few among the groups who are disengaged, meaning they've ceased filling out screeners in the past year and finding those took quite a bit more effort as you can imagine. The discussion points we covered in our conversation included motivations, credibility, screener qualification, and research participation. So I want to actually start with some disclosures. The discussion was focused on their experience with L&E. However, we did open the discussion to their experience with market research, which includes their experience with other recruitment suppliers. Specific mentions of other suppliers, positive or negative, have been redacted. L&E is primarily focused on qualitative research recruitment. So while techniques can be shared across qual and quant, our discussion and experience live within qualitative. Our presentation includes videos from research participants. We wanted to share their perceptions of research in their own words. We protected the identity of moderators and other participants who were not directly quoted by blurring those sections and quotes have been edited for length and clarity. So let's talk about the executive summary. These points were shared by most participants during the focus groups. So

participants really enjoy taking part in research and sharing their opinions, and they have an overall positive experience when selected. They want to feel valued for their contributions beyond monetary compensation., but the primary motivation to participate in research is compensation. The most common frustration is filling out lots of screeners and not being accepted and presented with possible solutions to enhance their experience. There were two clear winners, compensation for screeners attempted via gamification and opportunities to participate in paid surveys without needing to qualify in advance. So we started by asking our panelists what motivated them to participate in research. Not surprising that the biggest motivator is the compensation or side hustle as was dubbed by a few to supplement their income. Participating is fun and interesting. They like to contribute and feel like they're part of it. They hope to positively impact product development, and they take pride in their contributions. I'd like to now let our members share why they participate in research.

Research Participant: I don't think it should surprise anybody, the main reason would be for the remuneration, the compensation that you receive. That being said, I have had the opportunity to be part of just stuff that was interesting on its own merit.

Research Participant: I signed up because I'm in medical school, so I'm not making money for a couple years. So I was trying to find things I could do on the side to make extra money, and I found L&E with the Google search and had to like, I also searched on Reddit to make sure like it was legit and enough compensation for the time I was giving.

Research Participant: During the pandemic, I was working in the hospital and everybody was getting sick. And at the same time, my husband, he's a personal trainer, gym's shut down. So his sister told me about it. And at first I didn't believe it because I'm like it's a scam. And I didn't actually start doing this until 2022 because money was tight. And they kept telling me that, hey, this is actually fun and it's something that they were using to also help save money for Christmas. And I'm like, I'll try it out. So I finally jumped on board last year.

Research Participant: I think I might have mentioned something similar at the beginning of the call, but I enjoy like being part of the development process of the things that we're looking at and talking about and testing. And so that is. And I feel like hopefully some of the things that we all talk about do provide some value. So it's good to know that the things we're talking about do get taken into account and that products may get modified or something as needed based upon some of the feedback that they get from the group as a whole.

Research Participant: I'll admit, sometimes I feel cool. Like my friends, they ask me, "Well, what did you recently do?" So a while back ago when I was able to talk about it, I said, "Oh, I tried on new diapers." I actually get to say if it worked or not worked for my daughter. And it makes me feel set apart from other people. There was another research that I did and it was for strollers, and I get to talk about what the strollers look like. And so I guess there's a little bit of pride in there, I get to help the design.

Kelli Hammock: So the topic of credibility, admittedly, was not in our discussion guide. We plan to cover motivations, qualification, and participation. But credibility came up without prompting during separate focus groups, so we felt it prudent to include the thoughts of our participants. So let's talk about why credibility is key to creating a positive research experience. Legitimacy ease is apprehension that research is a scam. Participants who trust their recruiting firm are more likely to refer other people to participate in research. And how to research participants find recruiting firms through referrals and word of mouth, online presence, and search engines. So why is this relevant? Because if your organization isn't known for its credibility, then you won't get quality referrals. Your online presence may attract the wrong audience and search engine results may skew negative. I'd like to let you hear about this in their words.

Research Participant: Credibility, there's just so many scams these days and so you want to be careful with that. So I looked for people who said, this is legit. I've done it. They work with real companies and they really have incentives that are worthwhile.

Research Participant: I would say trustworthy. And I think I would only say that, which sounds a little like overkill, but only because I had such an untrustworthy experience initially that I'm so glad that I didn't give up because I just thought, you know, this is just a scam. So I'm glad that I went. And so now as I'm sharing with some other friends and family, I can tell they have that same hesitation. Is this a scam? So I think coming directly from someone they trust, I don't want to refer someone to something that I don't trust. I never told anyone about the first one. Also, I appreciate the fact that I don't have to wonder, am I really going to get paid for this? So now I'm comfortable that it's consistent and it's legitimate, and I feel very comfortable in saying, I know I can count because I'm a stay at home mom, so now I see, wow, this is my little spending money. And so I enjoy that.

Research Participant: I think because I was able to participate with L&E, I was able to find out what - I don't know. There are a lot of scammier research participant ones where they pay you in points. And I feel like through L&E I was able to figure out what I should be looking out for in other databases. So because of that, I was able to look through other websites and figure out which ones were a good fit.

Kelli Hammock: So then we moved on to qualifying for research. The most common frustration of engaging with market research is filling out lots of screeners and not being accepted. While we're going to need to share the negative side of that process, let's start with the positives. What are some things that we're doing right? What tactics ease the frustration of being screened and not being accepted. What do participants like about the screening process? They like screeners that disqualify them early. If they aren't the right fit, move on. Transparent study invitations. If you're looking for cat owners, then say you're looking for cat owners. If that level of transparency causes concerns with respondent validity, ask your recruitment partner for creative strategies you can implement to verify a candidate's legitimacy. A member portal provides a hub that will track potential screeners for which they are demographic match. The status if they pre-qualify in a landing page where they can check their appointment date and time. If an assignment is part of the research or documents needed to be signed or uploaded, a portal is a safe and secure location to track those activities. Clarity and transparency on the qualification process. A variety of outreach methods, clear communications about what to expect, screening questions that are direct and to the point. And now let's hear thoughts on qualifying from our focus group panelists.

Research Participant: So I get pretty happy when I'm accepted to a focus group because that means I'm just going to make a little extra money, and that my hard work paid off filling out those really long screeners. So it's a pretty good feeling when I get accepted into one.

Research Participant: So I agree. I like the tactics, whatever you can do to save time. So I do like the screeners that once you're screened out, you know, it stops the survey versus continuing answering questions when I'm not the person that the company is looking for.

Research Participant: So typically I kind of do an overall scan of all of the screeners available, and then go ahead and hide the ones that are not local, or are not relevant to me or anybody else that I know that would potentially be interested. And then usually I just kind of go in spurts maybe like once a week or once every two weeks and just fill out all the ones that are relevant.

Research Participant: I'll say your screeners are pretty easy, and honestly, it goes great with your whole entire setup. Like you being in, you answer a few questions, you can automatically tell if you're chosen or not because if you put one wrong answer, boop. It goes, thank you, and just sends you on your way.

Research Participant: It's more reliable. And like Jarvis said, I go through them and then I go back to my activities and it's already told me that I haven't qualified, and that lets me know that I don't have to sit around and wait for a email hoping that I would get it. I just know immediately I didn't get into eight different focus groups, so don't sit around waiting on L&E.

Research Participant: They're very communicative. You get emails, you get text messages, you get the occasional phone call with the reminder. I think the communication is excellent. I don't really - I've never felt like I was left in limbo with an upcoming L&E study.

Research Participant: When I go through a screener that I like, it's because they didn't ask very much, and I like the ones where it is just multiple choice, where I don't have to enter information, but I just have to click through it. That makes the experience a lot better.

Research Participant: I like when it's just like one study specific email and maybe other people disagree. I can't remember if it's L&E, it might be [redacted], but they send you every two days, they send you 20 studies and you click on each link and the link, you get to click on another link to take the pre screeners. And then once you get to three links, it might show you they want someone only up to age 25 in Chicago area. And you're like - And so when I get those, I will tell you, sometimes I just don't - It's just shut down because I'm like, I need three hours to go through an email that contains links to 20 different studies that they're doing that week. I'd rather it be individually targeted, like maybe one at a time. It's easier for me to digest and say, it's going to take me five minutes to fill out a pre screener from L&E for that study. And then like everyone said, you can see if you were accepted or where you are in the process, versus when it's a blanket email with multiple studies for the whole week that are just a shot in the dark, they're throwing it out to everyone in their database. It is a very time consuming process to go through every single one of those and see even if you would qualify at all. And then you don't know where you stand in their process of qualification. So L&E makes it, again, efficiency is a big thing with you guys, making it very user friendly to go from the email process to getting booked.

Kelli Hammock: So unfortunately, the biggest pain point when participating in research almost exclusively is the process by which we select candidates. They spend a lot of time answering survey questions only to repeatedly not meet qualifications or simply fall into demographic buckets that fill quickly. So what do participants dislike about the screening process? Well, the low rate of qualification or that they're infrequently selected to participate. The feeling of being excluded or rejected. Lengthy multi-page screeners, specifically those that bury the lead and leave them feeling like they're being data mined. Repetitive and multi-grid questions are frustrating and make them feel as if their time is being wasted and not valued. They don't understand why they're turned away for past participation and often don't understand why they don't qualify when they've answered a series of specific questions about products they do use or interact with. And finally, unexpected screeners submissions catch them off guard. For example, if we're asking them to validate their eating habits by uploading a photo of their pantry, but if they're at work, the dentist, picking up the kids, et cetera, they're going to have to pause the screener until they're home to take and upload that photo. So let's hear from some members who have experience with the process of attempting to qualify for research.

Research Participant: So I've been filling out a lot of screeners lately, and it's honestly just a hit or miss because companies are looking for very specific people for different kinds of focus groups. So you might not be what they're looking for. So then it can be pretty hard to get accepted into one. But I guess the more that you fill out, the more likely you can get accepted into one

Research Participant: Persons in my demographic are actually more than a compendium of chronic diseases and questions about Medicare. It seems like those are pretty much the only things that come up. Anything that is about shopping, fashion, TV, movies will cut off maybe at 54, 65 if you're lucky. There seems to be an assumption that we're all sitting around nursing our illnesses and watching Matlock.

Research Participant: I understand too why they want to find people who elaborate on answers and get more detail and more specific, but at the same time, if you have to write a lot in there, it's a little frustrating, especially, you know, you're trying to be concise, but put as much information as you can. And for someone like me, sometimes I can't articulate my thoughts very well under writing, so it'll take me a while to fill out those kind of surveys.

Research Participant: It just seemed like it was just going on and on, but I felt like I was too far in to quit.

Research Participant: I am not a fan of a screening process that buries the pivotal question on the third or fourth page. You begin to feel a little data mined when you've produced four or five pages of demographic material and then you hit the one page, but we don't want you.

Research Moderator: So how do you feel when you hit that page that's a little bit buried in the questionnaire?

Research Participant: I feel like it should have been the first question, because one of the things I had intended to say that I like about L&E is that it shows respect for the participants' time. But that's L&E as the host platform. The actual surveyor may be showing no respect for the person's time, saying, well, we are going to make you go through five pages and then ask you the one thing that kicks you in or kicks you out. Because we can.

Research Participant: Sometimes the alcoholic beverage screeners, you are on question 50 and it is just, it is nonstop. You know, they want to know everything you've drank in the past three months, the past six months, the past month, and a half. And then they start going into different types of drinks, and it gets to the point to where it's like, it's not worth it. Now I've bailed on a few of those.

Research Participant: Like Jason was saying, you don't know what you are into until you're into it, and some of them are very, very lengthy. And then a lot of them have like those little, it's like a little chart type of ordeal where it's like, likely, not likely, and so on and so forth. And the dots are like super-duper small. So it's like you go to click one and then if you slide your finger wrong across your keyboard or something, then you have unchecked a box you've already checked. So then you have to like kind of go back and reread just to make sure you put in the right thing. And it sometimes it's a lot to not qualify.

Research Participant: Oh, you can go. Sorry.

Research Participant: I was thinking that I agree with what Michelle said. I think if you had, before filling it out, if it lets you know how long it will take, like maybe up to four minutes or five minutes and you'll say, oh, I won't do this right now. I'll do this maybe later or something. Because sometimes it is somewhat tedious and then you're like, can't really read this on the cell phone or on a tablet or something, you have to be on a computer because it has charts and different things and the questions are quite lengthy. But I think if you kind of give us an indication of how long it will be, then that would predetermine if we can do it right away or later at a different time.

Research Participant: And sometimes the questions are somewhat repetitive. I mean, I think that's probably how data has to be, but like, didn't I just answer this question before? That's how I feel. Sometimes I'm like, did I answer this question before? Because when you go, like you were saying, Jason, when you go to the second or third page, you're like, this is repetitive. Sometimes it becomes just very tedious.

Research Participant: They ask it in a different direction but it's the same question.

Research Participant: But it's like the same question. I'm like, my answer's still going to be the same thing.

Research Participant: I noticed in the screener a lot of the times the thing that kicks me out, is the part, the question where it says, when was the last time you participated in a focus group? And sometimes it will be three months, sometimes it'll be six months. And I click that and it, you know, immediately says, thanks, we're done with the questionnaire. And I wonder why sometimes they want people who haven't participated in a focus group in a long time. I mean, if what I'm doing and what I'm giving my opinion on has absolutely nothing to do with any other focus groups I've ever done before, why would the fact that I've participated in a focus group recently not make me eligible So the fact that I make it through that one, because that's the one I get rejected on the most often.

Research Participant: The other thing I would add is there's been a couple where I've had to upload a picture of something that they were referencing. And thankfully I was at home so I was able to do that. But had I not been, I would've been stuck in the middle of the survey, maybe on my cell phone, who knows where and would've had to wait and fill that out later. So I think maybe that's another example of in the front end telling us, you know, here's some expectations that are going to be involved when you fill this survey out.

Research Participant: There's one aspect that I don't like, I don't think it was L&E, I think it was with another company. And you get through this survey and at the end they'll ask you to, like a video record. And again, it'll be like just a broad question, where do you like to vacation? Or if you won a lottery, what would you do? Something like that. And they'll ask you to record the answer on your phone. And I just get kind of annoyed with that. Sometimes it's easier to communicate talking versus writing it out. But sometimes too, I'll just, I don't know, I'll be up early. I'll be looking at, I didn't know that was happening, but I wasn't prepared visually to be on camera. And so then sometimes, I don't know, maybe it's just a female thing. I'm just not prepared to be on camera and I didn't know that was happening. So that can be frustrating because I feel like I have to stop and kind of beautify myself.

Kelli Hammock: A lot of emotion in that last slide. They're very engaged. So as Angela touched on earlier, when the world changed and our engagement tactics needed a refresher, naturally we felt it was important to get a participant's perceptions on in-person versus virtual research. So to summarize, when thinking about in-person opportunities, members like sample and prototype use testing. They like tasting and they like testing, friendly, and welcoming staff. Let me brag. We've got really great onsite teams across our eight locations. Lobby refreshments. We all probably should have expected that snacks is going to make the list. No distractions, no spouses, children, animals, et cetera, happening in the background. They enjoy the escape of an in-person session. And it provides a controlled space where they can focus on sharing their opinions. Of course, on the dislike side, it does require travel. So when thinking about virtual opportunities, members like the convenience, they can participate from anywhere and in some cases at any time. Virtual sessions are easier to fit into a busy lifestyle. They could participate in a brief IDI during their lunch break. Of course, some of their dislikes include, it feels impersonal. There can be a lack of social connection that may drive a stronger conversation. And it can be difficult to read people on the screen due to the inherent delay in video conferencing. There's always that awkward moment when two people start to talk and then pause and then talk again and pause. And we've all been there, and in fact, I intentionally left an example of this occurring in the last slide as a sneaky demonstration, and now you'll have to revisit the recording after the fact. And finally, our last one is technological challenges. Power goes out or internet drops the meaning just to name a couple. So we wanted to know what people enjoy about participating in research after they've been selected. Why is it fun? What makes it fulfilling? They like hearing about new products. They like to learn new things. They like sharing their opinions and they like hearing other people's opinions. Research provides a safe and open environment for sharing,

even when opinions vary within sessions. Participation gives them a sense of pride as contributors, and they have fun in engaging in interactive sessions. So let's go ahead and hear from our focus group participants one more time on why they enjoy participating in research. And by the way, can we all give a little shout out to this wonderful panel who've done such a great job of articulating their thoughts and honestly illuminating and informing us of ways we can improve their interactions. Our members are making us look really good today.

Research Participant: We've also had a positive experience. As has been mentioned, communication leading up to the study is really good. The topics are, they stay on topic and everything is relevant. And you feel comfortable in the studies, you don't feel like you're out of place or that you are pressured or anything like that. And then even after the study, communication is still good up to receiving payment. And so the entire process, you know what's going on, you know, what's expected of you.

Research Participant: I was just going to chime in. I agree with the previous two folks. I can't say anything negative. I have also been on ones that have been one-on-one. I've been on in ones that are like, even kind of awkward. Like I had a one-on-one, I had to pretend to give a syringe injection to this fake mannequin. So that was weird, but it was cool. And there were cameras all around the room. It was weird, but it's fine. I mean, you sign up knowing that that's what it's going to be. And that's another thing, is the folks on the phone or in the descriptions, they do a good job of letting you know what you're coming in for so you're not caught off guard. So I think it's good. The group ones are always fun to hear what people are thinking. Hearing the folks on this call, I can tell there's a lot of smart people here.

Research Participant: Actually the last one I did, I did with Hillary. It was -

Research Participant: We had a homework assignment first of watching a news program, and then we got on the focus group and we're talking about it. I honestly enjoyed that one, because there were a lot of different opinions. Everybody wasn't agreeing, but nobody was arguing. That's the other thing that I really like about it as well. You can really kind of feel free to like, you can be honest, and it doesn't offend anyone and that's what I really like about it.

Research Participant: What do you like about participating with L&E?

Research Participant: I get to talk and get paid for.

Research Participant: Who doesn't love to get paid for talking.

Research Participant: Yeah, agreed.

Research Participant: That's straightforward.

Kelli Hammock: All right, so we presented our focus groups with some possible solutions that may enhance their experience. Angela, can you share more about that please?

Angela Steed: I sure can. Thank you, Kelli. OK, solutions. Now, prior to the respondent interviews you just watched the first phase of research we conducted consisted of a five-minute survey with a mix of multiple choice and open ended questions. The purpose was to really get a gauge on what specific discussion points we'd be addressing. So using the survey results and specifically the open-ended responses we collected prior to going into the focus groups. Our research team determined a list of solutions we wanted to present to the groups and asked our panelists to rank the options they liked best. As you might have imagined, and as Kelli's already kind of touched on, the top two solutions were based around compensation. The first was accumulated rewards for screeners completed. And the second was more opportunities for short compensated questionnaires. Accumulated rewards would be a program where panelists are given points for completing surveys, also known as gamification. When a set threshold of points have been collected, they can redeem the points for a gift card. The next option short compensated questionnaires would be questionnaires they could complete that wouldn't require screening to qualify. While the compensation would be lower, it would still allow them to an opportunity to earn an incentive for the time spent engaging with market research. We offered other suggestions. They weren't quite as highly ranked as those two, but some of the other alternative solutions were newsletters. To show how the members opinions help brands make decisions. Also newsletters that shared information on how member information is stored securely. Interestingly, the newsletters were less popular because honestly, they don't want more emails clocking up their inboxes. Furthermore, a few shared they trust L&E, so they're actually not too worried about how their information is stored. We also discussed status updates on completed screeners and shorter screeners overall. The L&E member portal provides status updates on screeners they've completed. However, if they didn't fully qualify or fulfill a quota that's already been filled, the status might say pending. So they're really looking for a firm decision as to if they would be included or not, as you heard in the interviews. Shorter screeners to

determine qualifications was very popular, but ultimately the link, making an assumption that it's of a reasonable length, wasn't as important as getting compensation for doing screeners to begin with. Finally, the mobile app was a popular option, and we're going to talk more about that in the next slide. From the L&E perspective, what can we do to address these suggestions and improve our member engagement? We have a lot of items in development this year. First, we're optimizing our L&E opinions member portal with our main focus being improving the user experience. This includes how can we make screeners and activities more easily accessible? How can we improve the survey experience? Implementing options to make the sign-in process easier? We're developing that mobile app that will improve communication with members, send them notifications about a study versus email, because we know Gen Zs don't check emails. My children are Gen Zs. They don't check emails. Among other things, members can earn badges and points for completing various activities, which will translate to money, gamification, and make interacting on the app a fun experience. Communication. We're doing better at setting screener expectations. For instance, letting the respondent know before they begin the survey. This survey will require you to upload a photo or a video, just as in the interview that you heard. Rewards. In beta testing specific markets, our reward system for taking surveys or interacting with our L&E site has seen a 5% increase in member engagement in those markets. And finally, our software developers are building better technology that will enable us to better target specific audiences to help reduce email and outreach fatigue. These are just a few items in the pipeline. So to wrap up our presentation, Kelli, I'm going to pass it back to you.

Kelli Hammock: All right. Thanks again, Angela, for sharing some of the really exciting things we have in the pipeline for our members. I'm optimistic we're going to continue to see our engagement rates increase in the coming years. So we've heard the feedback. We know what to do, so let's summarize the best practices we can all implement to increase participation satisfaction. So let's start with recruitment suppliers. Improve acceptance rates and reduce rejection using smart techniques and dynamic technologies. Target participants using demographic data point tracking. Streamline available opportunities in one central location, such as a member portal. Communicate research expectations clearly and frequently using a variety of contact methods. Or, as Angela just mentioned, I guess not email for Gen Z, so we'll try the text method. And then offer rewards for screeners attempted. And then finally, incentivize referrals to grow your member base. And on the research side, for researchers, when planning your research, we recommend trying to implement the following practices. Respect participants' time by making screeners short and as simple as possible. Screen candidates out as soon as

possible. Only ask for information you need to disqualify, qualify, or segment audiences. Collect information only or profiling data in a pre-task activity, as a check-in activity, or during the session. Don't do that in the screener. Once research obligations have been set, avoid changing details that would affect participants. Share research results when possible. And implement tactics to keep discussions lively and activities engaging. So, with that, we are going to move on to our Q&A section. We are going to take some questions. But first, I'd like to take a brief moment to thank Focus Forward, our transcription partner, who so graciously volunteers to transcribe our webinars for free. Focus Forward is just one of our tech partners that we partnered with to bring complete qualitative and quantitative solutions to our clients. We'll be emailing a link to the recording of this webinar, or you can download a copy of the free transcript. All of which is going to be found at our website, leresearch.com/resources, probably in about a week or so. You can also learn more about our partners, such as Focus Forward and a host of other solutions we offer at our website. I'll aim to provide you with some one-stop shopping research solutions. That's a mouthful, you guys. So, let's go ahead and get started with some questions. I'm going to stop sharing my screen for a moment, so I can see the question pod here. It looks like we just got one. So, if anybody else has anything coming, go ahead and pop those in. So, our first question is, if the topic of the study is sensitive and the client wants to keep the topic anonymous, how do you recommend we advertise the study to get buy-in with the transparency of the topic is not an option? So, Angela, you want to start with that one?

Angela Steed: That's a great point, and I appreciate that you take that into consideration. Because every project is so specific, we actually have a lot of, and my team specifically, we have database development consultants who work in advertising, who are very knowledgeable about social media within the platforms, what we're allowed to advertise and what we're not allowed to advertise. We have basically consultants over here at L&E Research that can help advise you on really project-specific wording, what you can, what you can't say, what we can and can't say, even within text messages that we send. There's companies that are going to have word-restrictive use. Let us know your questions, and we can work with you on a project-by-project basis. That's kind of a broad answer.

Kelli Hammock: Great. I'm actually looking at the chat, and it looks like we've got another couple in here. If it's possible, how would you recommend we share research results? Would it be facilitated through L&E? And yes, absolutely. If your client, if you do research on whatever the topic is, and your client makes a big decision, maybe it's based on a whole group, maybe it's

based on one person. But whatever the case may be, people really care what happens on the other side of these things. So, go ahead and just send your email to the project manager, and we can delineate that information back to our panel. It's never going to be a necessity or anything we're going to expect to be frequent, but it's the little things that are going to go a long way in this scenario. So, yeah, absolutely share it back with us, and we'd be happy to share it with the participants who helped your client make those decisions. What is typical cash rewards? Angela, can you talk a little bit about that? Before you start, we are still in beta testing. I want to say that again. This is a new program for us. So, Angela, can you talk any on that or what we're kind of thinking of doing?

Angela Steed: The cash? I'm not sure if the question is referring to the cash rewards as far as the point system or just incentive in general. If the question is the reward system, so we are advertising- when we advertise or send some kind of notification regarding a study, each study, again, this is based off of the screener length. We'll assign certain points. So, maybe if the screener is five minutes, we can assign five points to it. If the screener can take longer, 10 or 15 minutes, we'll give it 20 points. As each member will complete a survey that is applicable to them. Obviously, if they're a male, we don't want them filling out a body wash study for females. Then they will receive accumulated points for taking each survey. We also are rewarding them for just keeping their data points updated. I think that's also a challenge of making sure that we're targeting the correct people. If they've had a child and that hasn't been updated, we want to encourage them to let us know, especially for any kind of childcare studies. Right now in our beta testing mode, as they accumulate 500 points is what our line is, then we will convert that automatically to an incentive for them. Also, to keep this very seamless because, again, the challenge or the focus is really on the member experience. And so, we don't want them to have to go in and actively cash in something. Once they hit that 500 threshold, we are automatically sending them their incentive. I hope that's answering the question you're looking for, for the cash rewards.

Kelli Hammock: We're going to assume so. I'm going to go on to the next one. Question, what are the participant experiences of in-home research? I think this is Brandon. Very good question. It did not come up in our focus groups. We might actually repeat this research at a different time. I'll make sure to add some different methodologies, but it wasn't specifically mentioned one way or the other. We also have another one. What technologies and/or practices are you using to catch fraudsters, scammers from getting into your database and getting into studies? I'll start with this, and then, Angela, I'll let you kind of fill in behind me what I'm forgetting here. But one of the things we are doing,

we're actually fairly lucky in being a U. S.-based recruiter, because we only are recruiting from the United States. We can actually set up some blocks on IP addresses to prevent fraud that would be coming from overseas, specifically bot fraud. I know that's a big one that catches a ton of potential scammers. But I think that we have spent a lot of years working on our quality control processes, and we start with a prescreener to narrow the funnel. We get everybody on the phone and talking. When you need validation, we can customize that. Not every study is going to look the same. Some things you can validate pretty easily, like what kind of credit card do you have. It's pretty easy to validate that you have a Visa card. It's a little less easy to validate that you eat a certain brand of yogurt. So, again, it's going to be a custom, play it by ear, have a conversation with your recruiter, because we've seen all kinds of studies. While I just tried to rattle off a couple off the top of my head, we can really dig down into what can we do to validate this? What would you expect your participants to be able to show on the fly to prove that they have the product or service that is applicable? Angela, do you have anything to add?

Angela Steed: Yes, that was a pretty comprehensive response. The only other thing I would add is I think I see a lot of clients implement the pantry check photos as part of the screener or homework pre-work assignment. The other piece, as far as identification, and I appreciate that you brought this up as a question because it is valid, and it is panel quality is a topic that we need to be transparent about and discuss with the onset of COVID. Historically, for qualitative research, at least for L&E Research, panel quality or validation had not been as much of an issue because most of the study was in person. Obviously, with the onset of COVID and then people looking to get more creative to find ways to bring in income and then a lot of studies switching to virtual, that's where we've seen an influx of even L&E Research. We've had to confront the issue of panel validation. When L&E is hosting virtual facilities, our host asks to see photo ID online, even on the computer screen. One of the things we really encourage clients when you're doing your own moderation is that you ask for photo identification. We also prep our panelists. We advertise it on our website. We put it in the prescreeners, and we give them a heads up and let them know you're going to be asked for photo identification, so it's not something that's going to be surprising to them. Again, a couple of different ways, broad and also specific on things we can do to help make sure that the panel and your participants are who they say they are.

Kelli Hammock: Great. Thanks, Angela. We've got two questions that are a little bit aligned. I'm going to read both questions because I think I can answer these kind of concurrently. There's how do we avoid professional participants? Is that even possible? And then there's also, do you recommend explaining

their past participation limits for the study if there are any? I think professional respondents and past PAR kind of go hand in hand, but they're also two different audiences. So early in the presentation, we heard from the lady who talked about doing the mommy research. So she's probably done a couple of projects with us. That doesn't make her a professional. Some of the video footage that I didn't share in the presentation, she specifically mentioned that she loved doing mommy research. So anything that has to do with testing products for her baby, that was her passion. That's what she wanted to look at. So you kind of look at the other guy who was very confused about, well, if I'm talking about this thing, it has nothing to do with that thing. Why do you do this? The point of showing that is that they don't understand why they can't do this more frequently than they do. So it is our job as your recruiters to make sure we're restricting that on the front end. We want to make sure that we're not, and this won't always be 100% preventable, but you try to restrict what panelists can see if they have recent participation. So maybe you hide studies. Not all studies require a past participation restriction, and that is going to be a screener-by-screener basis. So I hope I answered both those questions because they are kind of concurrent. Angela?

Angela Steed: Just to add to the question was how do we avoid professional participants, and is that even possible? Within our proprietary software system at L&E, if they've participated with us, we track their participation. We're pulling sample or trying to target who we're going to request take the prescreener or contact, we will check their past participation history. And so as a client, you may want to dictate, OK, we don't want someone who's participated more than 10 times in totality in a project. You can also specify if you don't want someone who's participated in a specific topic or with your company specifically. We actually have ways of tracking that within our software system.

Kelli Hammock: Thank you very much for that elaboration. Guys, this is why I brought our Director of Community Engagement on the call because she knows all the good answers. I've got another question I'm going to throw out here. So how do we get our clients to only ask the crucial questions in their screeners to limit the length of their prescreeners? Clearly, respondents think they are too long in most cases. And yes, if you remember, there was one lady who was like maybe four minutes, five minutes. And I kind of laughed at that because most screeners are at minimum four or five minutes. And she's kind of thinking that's on the longer end of it. So that was a little bit enlightening. So how do we get our clients to only ask the crucial questions? You just have to keep having a difficult conversation with them. Keep pushing back. Look at your response rates on the survey. If you're seeing a lot of drop-off, the alcohol

beverage guy said it best when he's like, yeah, bailed on a few of those. Because if your screener is too lengthy, you might have somebody who is your ideal number one target. But you've just lost that person because they're on question 50 and we have asked about what alcohol they drink in six months, three months and a month and a half. We want to start having these conversations. It's not something that is going to happen overnight. But I think if we start planting the seed that we need to be more respectful of our participants' time. And really make sure that we're getting at the crux of the study. And honestly, most screeners of let's say 20 questions, that's fairly average. That gives you a few demographics. It gives you a few questions to get to the target audience. What we've seen traditionally and given my tenure in the industry, I don't see this as much as I used to. But we used to just see like 20 profiling questions. It's excessive. It's a drain on their resources. And we should, hey, let's ask those questions. Let's just make sure we're doing it in a way that we're paying them for it. Once they qualify, we give them $25 to answer a slew of profiling questions. So there's just some different strategies you can implement. Every project's different. Every client's different. It's just going to be a play it by ear. Keep trying and do the best you can. We have a few more questions. We're going to have to answer by e-mail because it is two o'clock, you guys. This hour completely flew by. So just quick reminder, we will be e-mailing out the presentation after the fact. We'll post the webinar on our webpage. And, yeah, thank you very much for joining us today. Josh, before we sign off real quick, we have a quick exit poll. So if you don't mind sharing that. And before you leave us, just give us a quick little ranking of how you think we did today. But, again, big thank you to Angela for joining us. Thank you for the great questions and thank you to our audience.