



Insight community recruitment:

9 channels to find and recruit
participants for market research



There's a time and place for mystery.

Recruitment isn't one of them.

High-quality insights starts with recruitment. In fact, it's downright dangerous to skim over it.

You can't trust survey data unless you're confident you're talking to the right people. Real people. People who fit your research needs.

Companies like Dell, Land O'Lakes, Carnival Cruise, and REVOLT TV have built some of

the most vibrant insight communities today. Their secret? They've combined the power of mobile-first tech, a member-first research experience and industry know-how to recruit members from modern channels.

In this guide, we give you our CliffNotes on all the different sample sources available to you (spoiler alert: market panels is just one of them). Their pros, cons, and best practices are right here at your fingertips.

9 modern recruitment sources to build your community

There's more to recruitment than tapping into a market panel. In fact, we know from experience that using more than one source is faster and more cost-effective in the long term.

The trick is understanding the strengths of different sources and using proven best practices to maximize each channel.

In this guide, we cover 9 recruitment channels, bucketed under three major categories.



**Use mixed sources
to get better results**

1. Internal

Recruitment sources you most likely already have access to.

- Email databases
- Organic social media followers
- Automated recruitment with Rival APIs

2. Intercepts

The moments that customers are in the process of experiencing your brand.

- QR codes
- On your app
- On your website

3. External

Support from people or organizations outside your brand.

- Market panels/river sampling
- Paid social media ads
- Influencers

SOURCE 1 Internal

Start with what you've got

Considered the “OG” recruiting source from the 2000s, your database is a solid starting point. This list could be blog subscribers, loyalty program members, or even people who signed up for a recent contest.

Best practices:

Offer an appealing incentive, and make it obvious—everyone should know what you're offering, and how to get it. Include an obvious call to action (CTA) that tells people exactly what you want them to do.

Pros

- There's an existing relationship
- Doesn't cost extra

Cons

- People ignore or miss emails
- Your marketing team might be protective of this list

Trigger recruitment chats straight from your CRM

Pros

- Automation reduces your workload
- Easy to update triggers as your research goals evolve
- Constantly adds new people to your community

Cons

- Requires one-time access to your CRM for setup
- Can be slower than established channels—CRM integrations provide a trickle of members over time rather than a big batch of new members



APIs (including Rival's) allow you to trigger recruitment chats based on key engagement touchpoints or behaviors in your CRM or system of record. For example, if a customer joins your company's loyalty program, you can set an automated workflow that invites them to join your community.

Best practices:

Think carefully about your trigger criteria—they directly impact the kind of insight community you'll build! Also, work closely with your community vendor to make sure the API is working correctly.

Engage on social media

If your brand is on Instagram, Facebook, TikTok (or another major social network), why not activate your existing community in these channels? Your followers are already interested. Chances are they'll be open to sharing their feedback.

Best practices:

Offer a clear incentive—make it the first line of your post or prominent in your image. Talk to your social media team as early as possible to make sure they understand what you're aiming to do. Also, it doesn't hurt to pay and boost posts for additional exposure!

Pros

- Tap into an already engaged community
- Access “real” people who might not normally do research
- Doesn't have to cost extra \$\$\$

Cons

- Requires a vibrant social presence
- Need permission from your social media team

SOURCE 2 Intercepts

Consumers use QR codes. You should too

Pros

- Everyone knows how to use QR codes
- Great for recruiting foot traffic at events



Con

- Might encourage passive participation

Since COVID, QR codes are everywhere. Use it as an opportunity to recruit people to your insight community. Menu tastings, live events, and unboxings are great ways to gather authentic, in-the-moment feedback from real people.

Best practices:

Consider the context. Where will people be taking your chat? Attending a live event is a very different vibe from unboxing their order.

Keep your signage or handouts simple with a clear message.



Hiring brand ambassadors at a live event? Make sure they're outgoing and can comfortably answer questions about your chat and community.

Recruit through your brand's website

People visiting your website are already interested in your brand. So why not invite them to join your community? A landing page, banner, or (better yet) a video with a strong CTA are all fun ways to get people excited to join your community.

Best practices:

Consider the context of where your invite appears. Does it naturally blend into the user's experience, or is it just obnoxious? Align your creative and copy (keywords, tone, and color palette) with your brand's tone and voice.

Pros

- Recruit people passionate about your brand
- Naturally incorporates recruitment into the customer journey

Con

- Can turn people off if not done tactfully

Have an app? Recruit there too

Pros

- Perfect for age groups that are smartphone-savvy
- Good environment for chat-based surveys

Con

- Requires having an app with a decent number of users

Just like with your website, people who are interested in your brand will gravitate to your app. Set up touch points within your app to naturally blend recruitment into the user's journey.

Best practices:

If someone downloaded your app, that means they expect a mobile-first experience. That means no small buttons, unresponsive pages, or awkward side-scrolling. And don't even think about grids!

SOURCE **3****External****Market panels and river sampling**

A tried-and-true method. Another go-to source for gathering reliable baseline data. But be careful—market panels and river sampling have notorious churn rates.

Best practices:

Offer long-term incentives to help deter participants from signing up to earn a quick prize. Also, don't underestimate churn rates—be prepared to over-recruit!

Pros

- Connects you with people willing to participate
- Predictable and quick

Cons

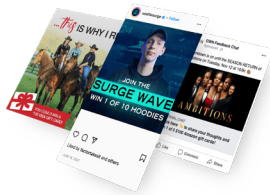
- Attracts incentive-driven participants
- High churn rates

Use social ads for laser-focused precision**Pros**

- As targeted as you need
- Connect with “real” people (not professional survey takers)

Con

- Need to know how to (successfully) run social ads



A double-edged source that lets you target your audience with total precision—but only if you know who they are. That means understanding their interests, habits, and the social media channels they use most.

Best practices:

Be crystal clear on who you want to see your ad, and what you want them to do. Set up your campaign objective as conversations or traffic; the goal is for people to click the ad and bring them to the chat.



Use A/B testing to see which creative concepts resonate most with your audience.

Social vs. river: what's better?

No one had a straight answer. That's why we conducted longitudinal research-on research to understand the actual costs of each approach, how likely people are to stay engaged in the community, and ultimately figure out the perfect balance of each source.

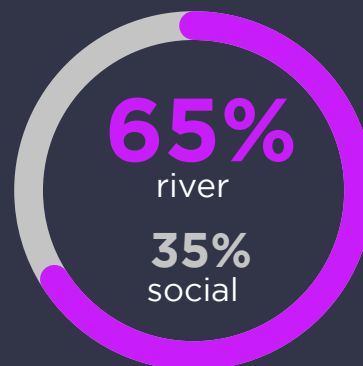
The methodology:

We tracked social and river recruits for a customer over one year and calculated the relative costs of recruiting a participant based on how likely they are to stick around.

Findings:

River recruits=more cost-effective but higher drop-offs.
Social recruits = stickier and adds diversity.

Best practice:



Work with influencers

Influencers are great at being, well, influential! They already have a massive following, and are excellent for building trust with your insight community. By choosing the right influencer, you can add an authentic voice to your brand.

Best practices:

Find influencers who have the audience size, reach, and vibe that complement your brand, and ALWAYS follow partnership guidelines.

Pros

- Piggyback off an existing community
- Build consumer trust

Cons

- Can be expensive
- Takes time to find the right influencer
- Often tricky to leverage properly



Want to work with an influencer without breaking the bank? Consider a micro-influencer (those with less than 100,000 followers). They're usually more affordable, but still offer lots of perks that come with their more well-known counterparts.

**RIVAL**

Insight Community 2.0

Maximize your agility, budget and impact on a community platform that delivers quant capabilities, self-guided qual studies, and video. All of this with the ongoing support of the best customer success team in market research.

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