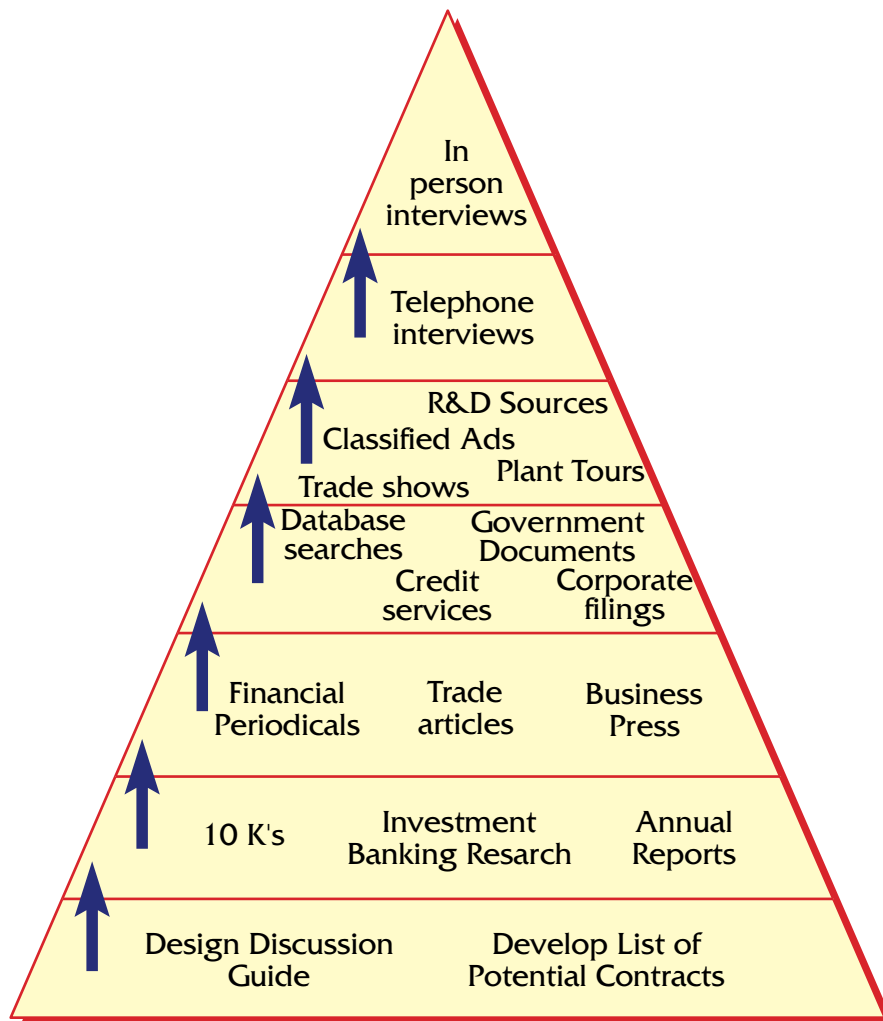


# Market Research



Key to writing a business plan, product plan, or marcom plan, is the information upon which they are based. There are two types of information, primary and secondary.

- **Primary** information is obtained first hand, and typically is very specific to a particular need or question.
- **Secondary** information is less current, typically several months to a few years in age; but usually costs much less than primary research.

## Primary Research

### Focus groups

Typically led by a moderator, with six to dozen people, who typically represent a cross-section of the people who will use the product, i.e. supermarket produce buyers. Good for determining product features (color, size), which market, which reseller. Not good for obtaining pricing information.

## Round table

Typically less focused, but all of the participants are very much the same, e.g. all are vegetarians. Good for obtaining detailed feedback on specific product features, i.e. what problems occur in buying vegetables, what things could be improved.

## Interviews

One on one, with different classes of users, typically framed by a discussion guide, but open ended. Requires knowledgeable interviewer. Excellent at identifying unexpected information, new vendors, defining range of desired product features. Results while not statistically valid, of tremendous value in defining leading edge products and services.

## Seminars

Question and answer forums. Typically these seminars are pitched as being “educational” or “informative.” For example, you might advertise a seminar on “Dietary Supplements for Vegetarians - How to Choose.” At the seminar, knowledgeable dietitians and vegetarians might speak. Careful note would be taken on the people attending, and the questions asked.

## Questionnaire / poll

Either by mail or telephone. Provides statistically valid results if done on large enough, and diverse enough sample. Mail surveys often suffer from low response rates, but provide valid pricing information. Telephone surveys are limited in length. Often difficult to obtain responses from “busy” individuals, skewing results. Selection of the list is of primary importance.

## Secondary Research

### Market Research Firms

There are a wide range of firms providing market research. Some like In-Stat, focus on a particular industry. Others such as Dun & Bradstreet and Gallup, provide research on a wide variety of markets. Often portions of their research will be “published” as a teaser to purchase / subscribe to a particular service.

### Trade Associations

There are ten of thousands of trade associations, many of which collect information and statistics specific to their industry. Often this information is available for a nominal fee.

### Publications

For almost any profession, industry, or hobby, there exists either magazines or periodicals that focus on it. Newsletters often exist on topics too narrow to be covered in depth by magazines or newspapers.

### Government

The United States Government collects and produces a wide variety of information, from Census information, to maps, to patents. Increasingly, a large amount of this information is being made

available on CD-ROM. There are also many commercial organizations who organize this information in more useful forms, and resell it.