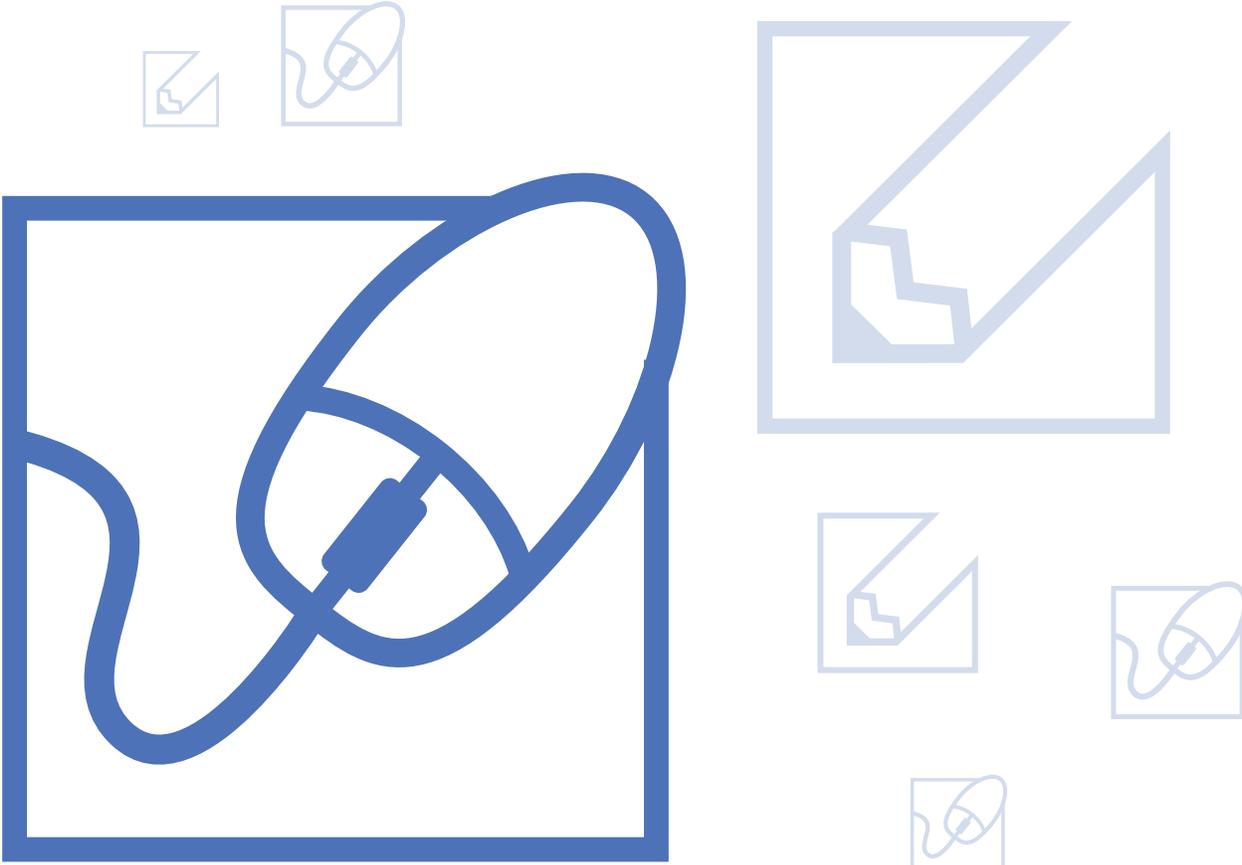


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Understanding the Digital Voter Experience

The Delvinia Report on Internet Voting
in the 2006 Town of Markham Municipal Election

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In November 2006, The Town of Markham offered Internet voting as an option for advanced poll voting for the second election in a row. Once again, the results were a success and provided further evidence that Internet voting is a viable addition to the electoral process that meets the changing needs of municipalities and voters.

Delvinia Interactive, a Toronto-based digital agency, worked with the Town of Markham in both the 2003 and 2006 elections to develop and implement an integrated offline/online voter outreach and awareness campaign to increase voter turnout. Delvinia focused on integrating a digital component into the total voter experience that gives eligible voters the option to cast their ballots online.

As part of its partnership with the Town of Markham, Delvinia and Markham continued the research they began in 2003 that tracks voter feedback and preferences. Research Strategy Group analyzed the online survey results of those that cast their ballot online in the 2006 election and compared them to the 2003 results.

The research found that Internet voting contributed to an increase in overall voter turnout, while the increase in online voters validated Internet voting as part of the digital voter experience. In fact, many of those who cast their ballot online want to continue using this method, and promote this new method to those close to them. Common criticisms of Internet voting – such as voter authentication and fraud, security of the technology, and attracting the ‘wrong’ crowd – are outweighed by the benefits of Internet voting. Benefits include:

- Internet voting has made it more convenient for long-time voters; those who voted online in 2003 and 2006 are engaged voters who cast ballots in previous elections.
- Internet voting is successful in engaging typically difficult-to-reach audiences (e.g. university students, disabled voters) and could level the playing field so all eligible members of society have an equal opportunity to engage in the electoral process.
- Two-step Internet voting – employed in the Markham election – significantly reduces the risks associated with voter authentication, and is in fact more reliable than other traditional methods such as mail-in ballots.

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- An integrated communications campaign that includes a digital voter experience to inform and educate citizens about online voting will increase voter awareness and may improve voter turnout.

Of those who voted online in the 2006 Markham election, a total of 4,633 responded to a survey about their experience. Following are the 2006 high-level results compared to those found in 2003:

Voting Experience

- One in five (21%) of those who voted online in 2006 said they did not vote at all in the 2003 municipal election.
- An overwhelming majority (88%) of those who voted online in 2006 cite “convenience” as their primary reason for doing so, a finding that is identical to 2003; 14% in 2006 said they voted online this time because they had done so in 2003.
- Online voters encourage others to vote: most online voters say at least one other person in their household also voted online in 2006 (79%).

Process Involved In Online Voting

- As was the case in 2003, the vast majority (86%) of those who voted online in 2006 did so from home, while one in ten (10%) voted from work.
- Most (79%) of those who voted online in 2006 said they heard about the process through material they received in the mail. This was also the key source of information in 2003.
- One in five respondents cited community newspapers as key secondary sources of information (24%), down from 56% in 2003. Online voters were also less likely than they were in 2003 to mention posters or the candidates as sources of information about online voting. 16% cited the Interactive Guide on the Markham Votes website as a secondary source.
- 30% of online voters said they used the Interactive Guide on the Markham Votes website, which is comparable to the proportion of users in 2003 (28%).
- As was the case in 2003, those who used the Interactive Guide were looking for information on how to register to vote (78%), when to vote (52%), where to vote (24%) and answers to the Frequently Asked Questions about the voting process (24%).

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- Most of those who used the Markham Votes website found the information on it very useful or useful (98%). This is virtually identical to the 2003 results (52% and 44% respectively).
- Similarly, most of those who used it in 2006 expect the Markham Votes website to be very helpful (62%) or helpful (36%) in the future – identical to the 2003 findings (63% and 36% respectively).

Satisfaction With Online Voting

- Almost eight in ten (78%) described themselves as ‘very satisfied’ with the online voting process, with the balance saying they were satisfied (21%). This is identical to the 2003 findings.
- 91% said they would be ‘very likely’ to vote online in the future.
- 80% said they would be ‘very likely’ to recommend online voting to others.
- 90% said they would be ‘very likely’ to vote online in a provincial election if the option was offered.
- 89% said they would be ‘very likely’ to vote online in a federal election if it was offered.

Conclusion

The survey results, combined with the success of the Town of Markham Internet voting initiative, show that Internet voting is a viable addition to the total voter experience. It offers experienced voters greater choice in how they cast their ballots. It enables citizens to vote that would otherwise be unable to vote due to accessibility issues. It can even help to connect with traditionally difficult-to-reach audiences. Internet voting is a practical method of meeting the needs of a voting public who have embraced technology and are looking for a digital component to their total voter experience.

It is simply impractical to resist the idea of Internet voting as a component of the total voter experience. It will not – nor should it – replace traditional methods of casting our ballots, but it is in demand and it is inevitable that Internet voting will be realized as a legitimate option in the electoral process. Once Internet voting has proliferated in democratic societies, the real questions become: how will it impact the way in which democracy is realized, and how will it impact candidates’ campaigns and their accountability to voters?

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ABOUT DELVINIA INTERACTIVE

Located in Toronto, Canada, Delvinia Interactive is a leading digital agency specializing in strategic development and execution of interactive and digital solutions. Delvinia's success stems from the same belief that shaped its name: that "delving in" and "digging deep" to discover valuable insights is the first step towards the development of effective interactive solutions. Featured clients include RBC Royal Bank, Manulife Financial, Scotia Bank International, Canadian Blood Services, and Random House of Canada.

Since 1998, Delvinia Interactive has demonstrated a commitment to the ongoing growth of the digital marketing industry. Having conducted studies into the health and needs of the new media industry, Delvinia has drafted policy recommendations for every level of government, and has participated in HR initiatives to ensure that the industry has the skills necessary to meet evolving demands. Delvinia functions on the core promise to develop innovative and dynamic ideas and demonstrate an unbridled commitment to translate clients' business goals into engaging and profitable user experiences.

Delvinia Interactive belongs to the Delvinia Group of Companies, which includes Delvinia Data Collection, servicing Market Research clients in the area of survey programming, hosting, and management. It also includes Delvinia Technologies, the research and development arm of the group of companies.

In 2004, Delvinia Technologies partnered with the Hudson Bay Company's Hbc Rewards program to create a propriety online consumer research panel called AskingCanadians™, where consumers are given Hbc Rewards points in exchange for their feedback. AskingCanadians is leveraged by both the interactive and data collection areas of the business, and continues to be an important differentiator in the interactive marketplace. Other strategic differentiators include:

Our Focus on the "Digital Customer Experience"

The Delvinia leadership team is passionate about understanding the changing patterns of how people engage and interact with various technologies. We know that digital channels are unique, yet should be seamlessly integrated with all customer touch points in order to create a positive, consistent customer experience. When clients enlist our help, we apply this holistic philosophy to our approach.

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Insight Integrated At Every Step

Insight is what drives our ideas and delivers results. We believe that the best interactive solutions come from the deepest understanding of our clients' businesses and customers, as well as our own industry.

Access to Experts

Delvinia provides each client with direct access to an entire team of Subject Matter Experts along with a Relationship Manager, all focused on that individual client's objectives. This collaborative structure allows us to approach our clients' business challenges holistically, effectively and efficiently, resulting in a superior client experience.

For more information on the Delvinia Group of Companies, please visit www.delvinia.com or call (416) 364-1455.

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ABOUT RESEARCH STRATEGY GROUP

RSG was formed in October 1994, based on the knowledge that clients require and deserve market research conducted by senior researchers dedicated to their profession. Our goal is to be the research company clients can trust to reduce risk and increase the ROI of important marketing decisions.

Our approach is based on providing rigorous research design, cost-effective client service, and sophisticated analysis and reporting, delivered by senior researchers or the Managing Directors of the company. We recognize that market research is a tool for decision-makers who require pragmatic information to operate their businesses effectively.

RSG is a full service organization providing a complete range of qualitative and quantitative research services. The company has particular expertise in the areas of new product and brand development, positioning, and communications strategy. We pride ourselves on the creative and pragmatic counsel we offer to our clients.

Our senior personnel have on average over 15 years of research experience, and have managed over 1,000 research projects, for a wide variety of public and private sector organizations. This experience provides an informed context for each research project.

In our opinion, fieldwork is best deployed by matching a project's requirements with our select group of high quality interviewing resources. We use this approach to ensure field resources are appropriate to our client's needs and competitively priced. Computer tabulation is generally administered internally, by analysis experts and on-staff statisticians capable of handling the most complex analytical tasks.

RSG offers expertise in consumer, business-to-business and social research. Our members have extensive experience in many sophisticated and leading-edge qualitative and quantitative research techniques. As a result, Research Strategy Group provides useful and insightful direction for many marketing situations, including service quality measurement, pricing, new product forecasting, image 'engineering' and 'refreshment', as well as brand equity and communications development and evaluation.

For more information, please visit www.rsginc.ca.

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ABOUT THE TOWN OF MARKHAM

The Town of Markham is the largest of nine communities in York Region with a population of over 270,000 people covering 206 square kilometres of land. The Town of Markham is a blend of four communities - Markham Village, Unionville, Milliken and Thornhill. This municipality is located just north of Toronto in Ontario, Canada. The Town of Markham is a growing community with new housing developments and businesses, quality schools, parks and recreational areas.

Markham is a mixture of small town and large town, with both farms and corporate head offices of companies such as IBM and American Express within its limits. In fact, more than 400 companies are headquartered in Markham due to the well developed transportation and communication network, high quality facilities, a diverse and highly educated labour force and pro-business environment. With more than 900 high-technology and 100 life sciences companies, Markham is well known as “Canada’s HIGH-TECH Capital”. The industries within the two sectors generate a total employment of 31,000 that makes up a quarter of Markham’s total employment of 115,000.

For more information, please visit www.markham.ca.