

# Market tested Moore Research celebrates 40 years



Story by **Pam Parker**  
Photography courtesy of **Moore Research Services**

**DID YOU EVER** test a product and offer your opinion? If you did, you may have met the people behind the scenes. Colleen Moore Mezler, president and CEO of Moore Research Services and her mother, Peggy Moore, have been testing products on the shores of Lake Erie and beyond for decades.

Moore founded the company at home long before the government endorsed female-owned businesses. She started the family business literally with card tables and door-to-door cereal distribution, and now it's a global enterprise with clients as large as Proctor and Gamble and Kraft.

Mezler has been part of the family business from birth, but she officially joined the company in 1985. Eight years later, she became company president and sole owner. Last year, the mother-and-daughter team shared a distinct honor when Moore installed Mezler as president of the national Marketing Research Association (MRA). This was quite a milestone for a mother-and-daughter team that continues to make its mark on national research.

In a Q&A with Lake Erie LifeStyle, Mezler shares some interesting tales of consumer research and how cell phones and the Internet are changing the way Moore Research Services gathers our opinions.

**LEL: You're not even 40 yet; what is your earliest memory of market research?**

I remember looking up phone numbers for my mom on a card table in our basement. I thought it was "my desk." My mom made it sound like it was a really important job. I also remember the company employees calling and coming to our house at all hours of the day. In some ways, that hasn't changed for me as I am connected to work 24/7. I didn't



COLLEEN MOORE MEZLER AT WORK HELPING MOM AT HOME IN THE EARLY DAYS OF MOORE RESEARCH.



think anything of the interruptions when I was a child, and now my family keeps the same hours, although my son tries to hide my Blackberry on occasion.

**LEL: How did your mom become a business owner when most women weren't even working?**

She bought a business she worked for, and I am so grateful and proud of how she turned it into a corporation. It really was a bold and courageous move for a woman in 1969 to take that leap, and she allowed me to build a career that I truly love.

**LEL: This really is a family business, isn't it?**

Yes, and it wasn't until I married and had a family of my own that I realized how much the spouse sacrifices and contributes to the success of the business. I don't know what I would do without my husband (Frank Mezler). He is a constant support and also helps in the business technology advancements. My dad (Richard Moore) and

husband have contributed to what Moore Research is today.

**LEL: Tell us about the door-to-door research for Quaker Oats.**

They were our first client, and we tested their products in Erie for 20 years by going to people's homes and asking them to try a box of cereal for a week. We would then return to get their opinions. It was fun, and at the same time surreal, to walk down the cereal aisle and see the products come to the shelf after months of testing. For the first 10 years in business, door-to-door research was the majority of our work.

**LEL: Tell us how Erie was a test market in the early days.**

Quaker Oats came to Erie because the city was an average-size market with diverse demographics, making it an ideal test market. The Erie market is currently considered a great market for consumer research. If it can make it in Erie, it can make it anywhere.

## **LEL: Have you tested ad campaigns?**

Since 2003, we completed more than 25,000 telephone surveys for the Pa. Lottery. We helped determine players' attitudes toward the lottery and advertising awareness of Gus the groundhog. Gus has been very successful.

## **LEL: It must be tough to tell clients their products won't make it based on research.**

It's the hardest thing we do, but research ensures that clients don't spend millions on a product or service the target audience won't purchase.

## **LEL: You've had some sweet assignments?**

Yes! Think candy – lots of it! A candy company was changing ingredients and wanted to know if buyers would notice the difference. They sent us so much candy we had to rent a warehouse. Halfway through the study, we determined that consumers didn't taste any difference, so they stopped the research and left us all the candy. We donated candy to the Second Harvest Food Bank and we were very popular with friends and family with candy.

## **LEL: So are people honest in their opinions?**

Kids are always the funniest and the most honest. We test a lot of toys where we invite children in to be part of a test group, and we ask them questions. In most focus groups and by-invitation testing, people are honest. We select them from a pool of candidates, and invite them in to share their opinions, and we pay them for their time.

## **LEL: Is it easy to find people for focus groups and opinion polls?**

Not always. A survey can be very specific where respondents need to use one specific health-care feature or another service, and we have to find people who use the services, know about them and are willing to share their opinions. We've paid up to \$200 to individuals.

## **LEL: Can you give us an example of how your research really made a difference?**

We had a focus group that evaluated destination weddings and Caribbean vacations. The New York City ad agency redeveloped an entire campaign based on our research.

## **LEL: You and your mom are/have been active in national research associations. Tell us about that.**

My mother joined the Marketing Research Association (MRA) very early

in her career. I started attending with her when I was 18 years old, and together we learned about new research methodologies, networking and world travel. I was thrilled to have my mother install me as the president last year. It was one of those moments in life I will never forget.

## **LEL: What will we see in the future of market research?**

How we reach respondents will change dramatically. With so much of the population relying on cell phones, land lines are becoming nonexistent (82 percent of the population has cell phones and 21 percent of those do not have land lines). The newest additions to the cell phone family include the widescreen iPod and Internet touch screen. Traditional phone surveys could become a thing of the past.

Generation X and Y have grown up with the Internet. To reach this market, we opened a "virtual" office on SecondLife and we have a presence on FaceBook. We can now conduct all types of research worldwide on the Internet.

## **LEL: How does market research work?**

Market research is the process of gathering, recording and analyzing data and information about customers, competitors and markets. Research enables new product and service launches and expansion. It reveals who will purchase a product/service, based on variables like age, gender, location and income level.

## **LEL: What is the biggest misconception about your business?**

We're not telemarketers. People constantly feel like someone is trying to sell them something. You can't blame them for being a little skeptical. However, once they participate in a study with us, they realize we pay them for their opinions, and they are more than happy to participate again.

## **LEL: What's the best part of your job?**

I never have the same day twice, as we are always testing new products/services. Marketing research is one of the most exciting professions out there. It is about finding out people's opinions' on products or services. It is about determining consumer behavior. It is finding out what makes people purchase certain items. Without research, companies could not evaluate their services or products. Every day is different, and every day we help shape the image of some of our clients.

Research has come a long way since Peggy Moore started the business with door-to-door research in the late 1960s. Today, Moore Research specializes in:

- Focus Groups
- Telephone
- Online and Web-based Research
- Central Location Testing
- Mall Intercepts
- In-Home Product Placements
- Taste Tests
- Mock Juries
- Mystery Shopping
- In-Store Audits
- Merchandising

## **ABOUT MRA**

The Marketing Research Association is the leading and largest association of the opinion and marketing research profession, a multibillion dollar a year industry dedicated to providing valuable information to guide the decisions of companies that provide products and services to consumers and businesses. Established in 1957, MRA's international membership encompasses over 3,000 member companies and professionals engaged in all segments of marketing and opinion research, including End Users, Full Service Researchers, Data Collectors and Support Service Providers.

## **COLLEEN MOORE MEZLER**

**Occupation:** President and CEO of Moore Research Services, Inc.

**Age:** 39

**Education:** Graduate, Burke Institute of Research

**Other:** Among the first people in the U.S. to receive the Professional Researchers Certification from the Marketing Research Association.

**Memberships:** Marketing Research Association (MRA) where she serves as immediate past president. She also serves on the board of directors for (CMOR) Council for Marketing and Opinion Research. She is a member of Marketing Research Association/Great Lakes Chapter (MRA/GLC), American Marketing Association (AMA) as well as the Small Business Alliance and Manufacturer and Business Association.

**Last book read:** "The Last Lecture"

*You can participate in research!*

*For more information on Moore Research Services, please visit [www.moore-research.com](http://www.moore-research.com)*