

# RESEARCH IN REAL LIFE

Here are some explanations you may find helpful in identifying your research.

**Primary research** is research you conduct yourself (or hire someone to do for you.) It involves going directly to a source or audience – perhaps customers and prospective customers in your target market – to ask questions and gather information specifically related to your organization, project or issue.

**Secondary research** has already been compiled, gathered, organized and published by someone else. It could include reports and studies by government agencies, trade associations or other businesses in your industry.

**Formal research** is statistically sound. It is conducted using scientific methods to produce replicable results. The main distinction between formal and informal is sample selection and sample size. Formal research must be a representative sample size and employ statistically sound selection and methodology.

**Informal research** is nonscientific. Gathers information anecdotally or conveniently rather than with systematic scientific methods. Can look at values or qualities and be subjective.

**Examples:**

- **Primary/informal methods:** interviews and observation, key informants, focus groups, community forums, advisory committees and boards, mail and email analysis, social media monitoring, field reports
- **Secondary/formal:** published studies, online databases, surveys, content analysis if statistically sound

You must be able to show that you didn't make assumptions. You have started with an assumption, but you used accepted research methods to gather evidence that confirmed or disproved the assumption.