

DSEF RESEARCH PRIORITIES 2015 - 2016

Research is a primary vehicle through which DSEF can build relevance and credibility to advance understanding of the direct selling channel. The Foundation's Research Priorities offers numerous opportunities for white papers and other research products, produced either by members of the Academic Advisory Council or via consulting firms or independent academics.

1. U.S. Direct Selling Socio-Economic Impact Study

Purpose: Measure and report on the full economic and social impact of direct selling on the U.S. economy. Following release of the study, we will leverage data to drive additional opportunities to publish supplemental papers on topics such as women's entrepreneurship, economic opportunity for underserved communities and others.

Timeframe: December 31, 2015

2. Strategic Marketing Success Across Industries

Purpose: Produce a direct selling company case study highlighting a business, sales or marketing success that is applicable across industries. Case study or academic journal articles.

Timeframe: TBD

3. Direct Selling as an Engine of Opportunity in Underserved Communities

Purpose and Partners: The report will document the positive impact of entrepreneurial opportunities created for Hispanics by direct selling companies. In producing and promoting the paper, the Foundation will seek a partnership with appropriate organizations such as the Latino Coalition, Hispanic Chamber of Commerce or the National Council of

La Raza to produce and promote the paper. The Foundation will work with partner organization(s) to plan companion events to publicize study themes and results.

4. Economic Impact of Direct Selling Entrepreneurial Opportunities In Less Populated Markets With Limited Economic/Employment Options

Purpose: The report will document the positive impact of entrepreneurial opportunities created in rural or economically disadvantaged areas by direct selling companies and the impact on local economies.

Research data is provided by DSA's Socio-Economic Study (SEIS).

Timeframe: TBD

5. Unique Benefit of Direct Selling Channel of Distribution as a Path to Market for Innovators/Products

Purpose: The study will document how direct selling companies and their independent salesforces drive product and training innovation. Direct selling companies have made a tremendous impact on industries that are commonly viewed as the biggest influencers behind economic growth and recovery in the U.S.—clean energy, business services, health and wellness education, telecommunications services, and Internet technologies. Direct sellers remain a driving force of the rebirth of U.S. innovation. Direct selling companies have rolled out unmatched products and services, transformed what it means to promote eco-friendly practices, and even incorporated top-of-the-line technologies to provide distributors and employees alike with invaluable business tools and education. Research data provided by DSA's soon-to-be-released 2015 Growth and Outlook Survey.

Timeframe: TBD

6. The Role of Technology/Social Media in Direct Selling

Purpose: The study will document how direct selling companies and their independent salespeople drive sales through e-commerce platforms and social media. Research data provided by DSA's 2015 "Managing Your Company's Web Presence and Information Systems Survey."

Timeframe: Feb-March 2016. DSA's 2015 "Managing Your Company's Web Presence and Information Systems Survey" will be completed in Q4.

7. Journal Submission on Ethics/Self-Regulation

Purpose and Partners: Journal article will focus on the historical events/issues that led to the creation of the DSA Code of Ethics and its recent revisions, which were announced at the DSA Annual Meeting and will go into effect in January 2016. Target publication is the *Journal of Ethics and Entrepreneurship* www.gardner-webb.edu/community-resources/journal-of-ethics-and-entrepreneurship/index.

Principal Author: Brenda Cude, Professor, Family and Consumer Sciences, University of Georgia

Co-Author: TBD

Timeframe: Ideally, to be published in January 2016.

8. Comparative Study of Industry Self-Regulation and Ethics Approaches

Purpose: To advance understanding of the critical role that responsible industries play in consumer protection. The report will compare and contrast DSA's Code of Ethics, the role of the Code Administrator and our long-standing history of self-regulation vis-a-vis other industries. The report will include an examination of product claims as well as an analysis of training and compliance in the direct selling industry.

The paper will highlight content from the Foundation's April 2015 public forum on self-regulation and consumer protection. The perspectives of

FTC officials, as well as those of leaders from other industries that lead the way in consumer protection, will be included. The paper will also serve as framing for the Foundation's follow up event on self-regulation planned for the fourth quarter of 2015.

Principal Author: Linda Ferrell, University Distinguished Chair in Business Ethics, Belmont University

Timeframe: September/October

9. Survey of Satisfaction Rates Among Independent Contractors in Direct Selling Compared to Employees in Other Comparable Industries

Purpose: Highlight earning, leadership and personal development opportunities available for those who choose direct selling as a path to entrepreneurship.

Author: TBD

Timeframe: March

10. Analysis of Earnings Representations and Choices at the Salesforce Level

Purpose: The report will focus on understanding the current independent sales representatives' attitudes and motivations. Independent salespeople represent a diverse demographic, have a variety of motivations for joining and remaining with the industry and report positive experiences. They experience significant rewards in their roles as direct sellers, most importantly as a result of their personal efforts. Research data provided by DSA's "National Salesforce Study."

Timeframe: TBD

11. Student Perceptions of Direct Selling

Purpose: The study will provide an updated, modern view of the perception of the direct selling business model by college students 18-24 years old. The 1987 Student Perceptions of Personal Selling study was the impetus for the creation of DSEF's Direct Selling Days on Campus program and the Direct Selling Executive on Campus program. The original study was conducted to assess the most salient thoughts of college students in regard to personal selling.

Timeframe: TBD

12. Business Challenges/Case Studies

Purpose: Produce multiple academic study products by partnering DSEF or DSA board member companies with an Academic Advisory Council member(s) or other academic or institution to engage professors and MBA or other graduate students to conduct research/data analysis or work on projects to address specific business challenges. These interactions will advance understanding of the direct selling business model, leverage the Foundation's academic partnerships to address key industry challenges and provide valuable experiential learning opportunities and exposure to corporate opportunities for students and faculty.

Timeframe: Ongoing based on opportunity and need.