

More than Luck: Producing Usable Data for a Smoke-free Casino Objective

The following is an excerpt from an interview with Stephanie Taylor, internal evaluator and epidemiologist for Shasta County conducted by TCEC evaluation associate Travis Satterlund as part of the January 28th webinar on "Journey of a Survey: Roadmap to Usable Data." To hear a full recording of the entire webinar and interview, go to the [TCEC website](#).

T: Hi Stephanie, we really do appreciate you joining us today. One of the reasons we asked you to do this is because of your compelling story at Shasta County. With that said, do you mind giving us an overview of your data collection activity and what you did up in Shasta regarding the casino?

S: We originally didn't have this activity in our scope of work. The casino came to us. We had worked with them previously on an objective several years ago and built a good relationship with them...over the years. In Spring or Summer of 2008, they wanted information about the effects of secondhand smoke because the casino manager was concerned for the health of employees. That snowballed into a data gathering effort to support possible smoke-free casinos.

Previously, when they tried to go smoke-free, they didn't have any data to show if there was really any support for it. So what we tried to do is to gather that data to gauge the level of support.



T: What did you ask in the surveys?

S: In the casino employee survey, we asked them about what kind of work they do so we could determine their level of secondhand smoke exposure, how often patrons smoke around them, whether they were bothered by it, and whether or not they were a smoker. We also tried to gauge their level of support by asking questions about if they would prefer to work in a non-smoking room or in a non-smoking casino.

In the patron survey, we asked about smoking status, how often they came to the casino, why they come to the casino, and how often they would come if there was a smoke-free policy.

In the tribal membership survey and in the survey of those that worked for the Rancheria, we asked about their current and former smoking status, their level of concern for the casino employees with regard to how much secondhand smoke they are being exposed to, whether they would support a smoke-free casino, and whether a policy would conflict with their beliefs and values.

T: When all these surveys came in, how did you go about analyzing them?

S: We used SurveyMonkey to do the basic frequency analysis for us. So it did most of the work, but I did a couple of cross tabs by downloading the raw data.

T: What variables were you looking at?

S: I looked at how often the employees who worked in certain areas of the casino like the back of the house [administrative offices] versus the floor [food, gaming or security] were bothered or exposed to secondhand smoke. I also wanted to combine the surveys to look at the three ways that the respondents could express support. Let me explain. We asked the Rancheria employees and the tribal membership directly if they [would] support a smoke-free casino, but on the other two [surveys], we didn't ask

directly. We asked the patrons how often they would come (less often, more often or about the same), and the casino employees if they would prefer to work in a non - smoking casino. We combined the three surveys to look at the level of support across all respondents.

T: So what did you find in the results?

S: It looks like we had good level of support of non-smokers across the board in all the surveys for a non-smoking casino, and also not a lot of opposition.

The employees that were more exposed to secondhand smoke were more inclined to want to work in a smoke-free casino than those who work in the back of the house where some had more of an ambivalent response, or no opinion.

For the patron survey, we did get a lot of smokers that responded to the survey, so that demonstrated some [selection] bias....We did some air quality monitoring data at the same time as we did the surveys and that included smoker density counts. From those, we estimated that anywhere between 18-33 percent of the patrons were smokers. Yet about half of the patron survey [respondents] were smokers. But surprisingly we still didn't see overwhelming opposition.

T: In terms of your results, were you able to share them with the casino management? If so, what was their reaction?

S: ...It helped that we had a champion from inside and the casino manager who has always been concerned about the health of the employees. But after we shared the results with them, it kind of solidified their resolve knowing that they had a good amount of backing for the smoke-free casino. That was a good tool for them to use when they took it to tribal council.

T: Thank you very much Stephanie, this really was a tremendous success story and we thought our tobacco partners would want to hear this.

Stay tuned on PARTNERS to hear how the casino chooses to move forward!

Photos by [Jim G](#) and twoGiraffe

