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Two-Thirds of Large Research Companies Have a Decentralized Insights Structure

Third ARF Organizational Benchmark report reveals the similarities and differences between large and small research companies

New York, NY (May 7, 2020) – The ARF (Advertising Research Foundation) today released the third report of its first annual Organizational Benchmark Study, which features findings from a survey of research company executives' views across a variety of issues from department structure to stakeholder satisfaction.

The report reveals a notable divide between small and large (500+ employees) research companies when it comes to department structures. In fact, two-thirds of large research companies have decentralized departments (65%) with multiple centers for research and insights, while only 9% have a fully centralized structure. In comparison, half of small research companies (49%) cite a completely centralized model, while 29% say they are decentralized.

“Respondents from research companies also report sales as the most important KPI (68%), but interestingly, at a much higher rate than advertisers (54%) and agencies (54%) as found in our earlier benchmark reports,” said Paul Donato, chief research officer, the ARF.

Additional insights from the ARF report include:

- Research companies of both sizes are investing more in data science, with over 60% citing they are doing so somewhat or significantly more than the previous year. However, small research companies invested somewhat or significantly more (47%) in market research/insights R&D in 2019 than the previous year.
- For research companies of both sizes, advanced analytics/statistics is the most important skill needed for hiring *now* (80% large, 63% small), but small research companies value research methodology skills just as highly (63%). For *future* hiring, large companies still value advanced analytics/statistics skills the most (68%), while small companies rank artificial intelligence/machine learning as the top skill (51%).
- 68% of both large and small research companies cite survey analysis software as the leading *tool* used to analyze data. However, data fusion/integration (57%) is the top

technique used by large companies, while integration of quantitative and qualitative data (44%) is the top technique used by small research companies.

The research report is the third of a five-part series from a survey conducted in 2019, with the final benchmark report focusing on media companies and consultancies, to be released later this year. The ARF's first two reports were centered on advertisers and agencies.

In addition to this research, the ARF will offer its members an ongoing service to conduct a custom, detailed review of their respective companies, to provide a comparison with the overall benchmark report results.

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About the ARF

Founded more than 80 years ago, the ARF is dedicated to creating, curating, and sharing objective, industry-level advertising research to enable members to make a true impact on their advertising and build marketing leadership within their organizations. It has more than 400 members from leading brand advertisers, agencies, research firms and media-tech companies. For more information, visit www.thearf.org.

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