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The Delphi Technique as a Forecasting Tool: Issues and Analysis

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Description / Abstract

This paper systematically reviews empirical studies looking at the effectiveness of the Delphi technique, and provides a critique of this research. Findings suggest that Delphi groups outperform statistical groups (by 12 studies to two with two 'ties') and standard interacting groups (by five studies to one with two 'ties'), although there is no consistent evidence that the technique outperforms other structured group procedures. However, important differences exist between the typical laboratory version of the technique and the original concept of Delphi, which make generalisations about 'Delphi' per se difficult. These differences derive from a lack of control of important group, task, and technique characteristics (such as the relative level of panellist expertise and the nature of feedback used). Indeed, there are theoretical and empirical reasons to believe that a Delphi conducted according to 'ideal' specifications might perform better than the standard laboratory interpretations. It is concluded that a different focus of research is required to answer questions on Delphi effectiveness, focusing on an analysis of the process of judgment change within nominal groups.

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