Measuring What We Spend: Toward a New Consumer Expenditure Survey

The BLS Consumer Expenditure Tablet

Presentation by
Mark M Pierzchala
A BLS Tablet is

- An expenditure recorder
- A (self-)interviewer
- A communicator
- A case manager
- Secure
- Under BLS control
- A government device
- Light, fast, & spiffy
- Much bigger than a cell
- The same for all HHs
- Instant-on
- Private to the person
- On demand
- Easily used
- Supportable
- Available in the HH

= A compelling device
The Tablet in the Household (1)

There is an interview

The FR brings the tablet

The tablet is available to all

Everyone fills in their part

It is mailed back
The Tablet in the Household (2 .. n)

The tablet is available to all

Everyone fills in their part

There are self-interview modules

It is mailed to the HH

It is mailed back

Everyone fills in their part
The Tablet as a Surveyor

- Sets up the HH
- Combines the diary and the interview (the ‘Journal’)
  - Records expenditures
  - Collects related data
- Communicates with the home office
- Keeps things straight
The Tablet as a User Device

- Instant-on
- Fast, fast, fast . . .
- Easy, easy, easy . . .
- Self-evident
- Private individual entries

- The ‘app’ is pre-loaded
- The tablet is ‘tied down’
- Can be used with or without a pen
The Tablet as a Communicator

- As data are entered, they are sent to the home-office server
  - Using phone-system transmission (no Internet access assumed)
  - Only data go back and forth
- No data are persisted on the tablet
  - During a session, data may be held in RAM on the table
- Data are encrypted and compressed
- The server has everything real-time
  - This enables powerful case-management possibilities
Case Management / Support

Timely reinforcement and interventions are possible

Computer algorithms detect success and issues

FR revisits the HH  Email / text  Phone call with HO  Message on tablet