

The background features a large, abstract graphic composed of several overlapping, semi-transparent shapes in shades of red and blue. The shapes are organic and fluid, creating a sense of depth and movement. The colors transition from a deep blue at the top to a vibrant red at the bottom.

Insights About Insight

Reflections on the business of insight in a high-pressure business environment leading to a new field called *Insight Science*.



Creating Insight Science

Covid-19 brought about a new, digital reality for many. While we were suddenly disconnected physically, we were confronted with continuous, 7x24 digital connections. In the process many in the insights and innovation space found they were more productive and generating more insights and innovation than ever before. But it also gave me the opportunity to undertake a study that I believe will become a catalyst for a new approach to insights heavily reliant on digital tools and technologies. Something I have started calling Insights Science.

Having been involved in the world of insights and innovation for nearly two decades after a career in marketing and brand management, I've always been an early adopter of technology. From this experience I've recognized that the analog world does not scale; the digital one does. Analog is manual; digital is automated. Analog information or knowledge cannot be repurposed; digital can. With digital, interactions become cheaper, faster and they can be deeper. Analog tends to be highly centralized; digital is easily distributed. With digital, long tails aren't just infinite, but give way to endless new long tails. Lastly, analog institutions and frameworks don't adapt or change easily; digital ones do.

In the process of applying digital techniques to insights and innovation, it dawned on me there has never been a scientific framework developed to drive costs down and improve returns on investments. Given the impact of the global pandemic and economic stress to every enterprise the moment has never been better for Insight Science.

I hope you enjoy this paper and share in the opportunity to apply the scientific method to our field.

Sarah DaVanzo
Insight Scientist

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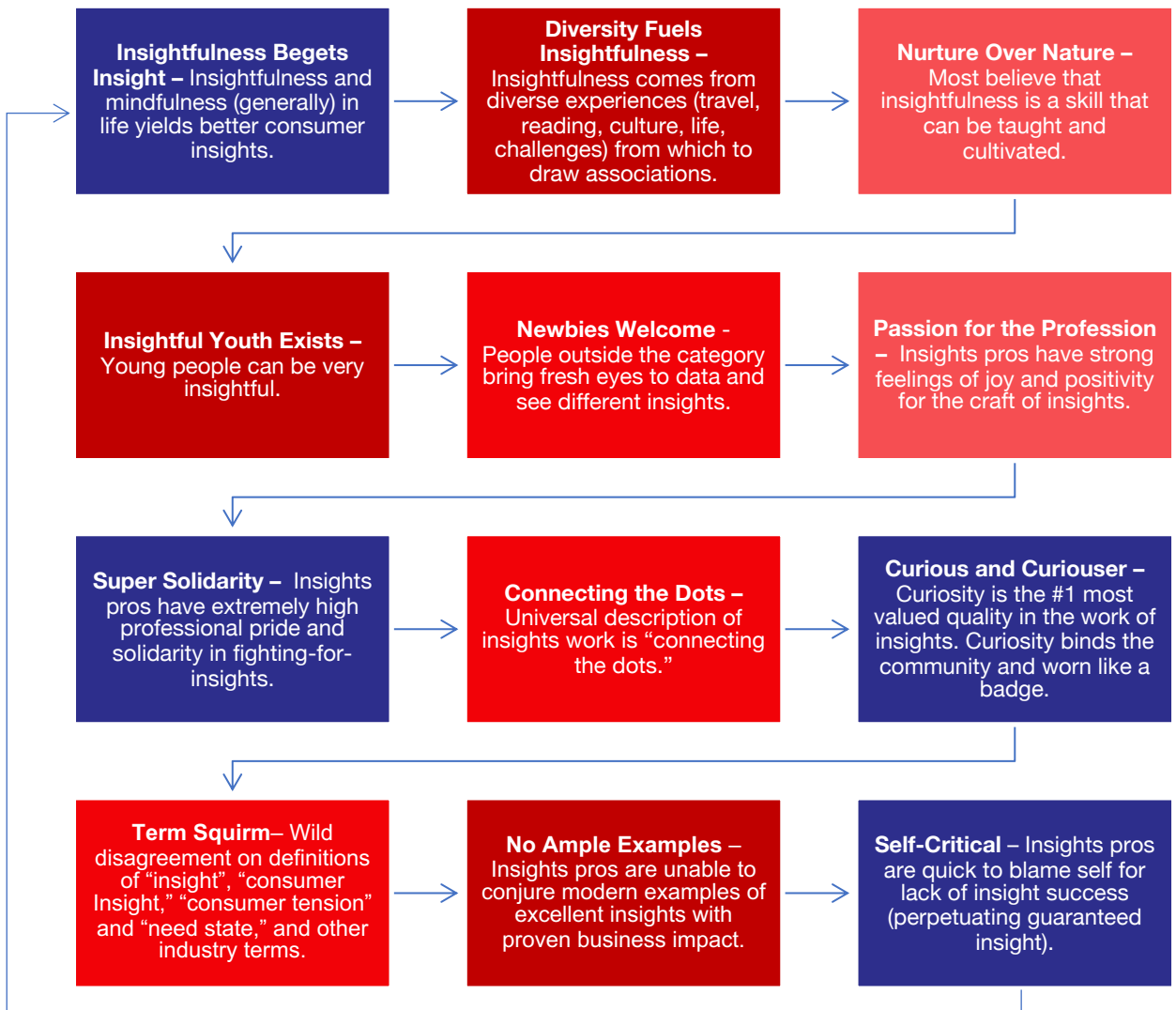
A curious journey for curious minds.

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Insight = inside (in) seeing (sight). Inner sight. Inside sight. Seeing what is hidden and not obvious or easily perceived and understood. Insight is understanding inner workings and underlying dynamics.

Executive Summary

This study uncovers a treasure trove of insights about insights people and teams, their lexicon and methods, and their aspirations and predictions. If you're an insights professional, it's worth poring through the detailed findings, which point to the need for a science of insight. However, if you don't have the time, here's the elevator summary of findings and insights from this project:



Executive Summary (continued)



Premium on Open Minds – Open-mindedness is the #2 most important trait when searching for insight.



Fabulous Analysis – Strong analytical and critical thinking skills are the #3 competency in the insights craft.



Seeking the Non-Obvious – Insights pros are on a constant hunt for surprising and non-obvious new insights.



Resourceful > Smart – Knowing how to find and analyze information is more valuable than possessing knowledge.



Tech-driven Future – Insights pros feel tech will drive insight data mining now and future, but not all are happy about it.



Context Matters – Cultural-contextual awareness is key to insights work, as insights do not come in a vacuum.



Siloed and Solitary – Insights pros tend to operate solo (and a tad competitive), with little sharing across the industry and even across insights teams within organizations.



100% in Control – Little consideration for the impact of external factors (e.g., environment conditions) on ability to discover insight.



Bias is the Enemy – Bias and assumptions are the top killers of insight discovery.



OK with Stasis – Insights pros not exploring possibilities and pushing the boundaries of the profession. Say the future is “more of the same.”

CHARACTERISTICS

Executive Summary (continued)

Mad About Insights – Insights pros love digging into the meaning of “insight”.

Meh About Consumer Insights – Insights pros are less enthusiastic about “consumer insight.”

Over-pressured – Racing against time with increased pressure for continuous insight discovery resulting in “Insights factories.”

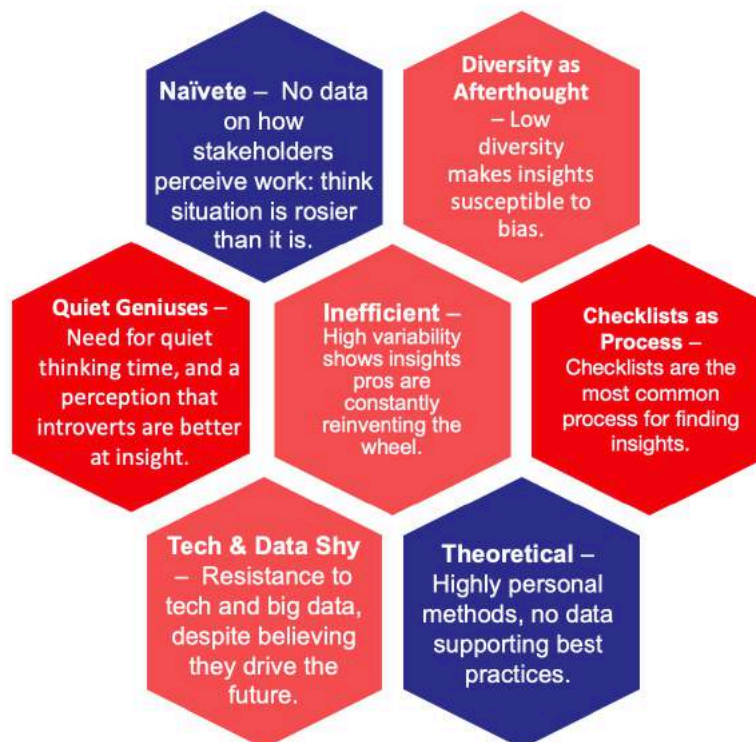
Under-valued – Mounting pressure to produce is a result of colleagues under-estimating the difficulty of the insight discovery process.

Unmethodical – Insights pros are operating more as “artists” than “scientists.”

Untethered – Lexicon and methods vary from person to person with no industry standards of best insights practices.

Unaccountable Return-on-Insight – Insights pros are not focused on return-on-investment (ROI) or on transforming insights into measurable business impact (cost vs. revenue).

WATCH OUTS!



CURIOSITIES

Executive Summary (continued)



Know to Grow– Insight pros possess high self-regard (bordering on arrogance) but are open to improvement,



Team Sport – Insight success comes from collaboration; honing outstanding insights is a team effort.



Precision Over Exploration – Insights pros are prioritizing narrowly focused investigation (due to time and budget pressure) over broad exploration.



Forgetting Transformation – Insights pros not prioritizing transforming insights into action, and business impact.



Futurists Bullish – Futurists envision a bigger role for insights, along with ambitious tech- and data-fueled futures with new insights methods..

— OPPORTUNITIES —

**“You must unlearn
what you have
learned... learned
and unlearned, pass
on.”**

- Yoda, Jedi Master

Methodology

AI helped amplify the insight.

An unusual topic in unusual times calls for an unusual approach. This project was a 100% digital study with fieldwork taking place March-July 2020. Given the quarantine participants were especially thoughtful. The methodological elements follow:

Cultural Intelligence

Foundational learning came from social listening, search listening, cultural forensics, patent analysis, and an analysis of research papers on "insight" and "consumer insights." Three questions were explored for cultural insights: What is the meaning of "insight" in culture? What is the culture of insights? And how does insight manifest in culture?

Insights Professionals Online Survey

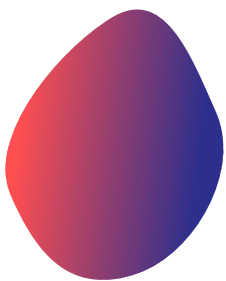
There were 155 Insight Professional recruits from LinkedIn, Qualitative Research Consultants Association (QRCA). Respondents voluntarily responded to a 27-question online survey (Survey Monkey). Participants were from USA, UK, Brazil, Germany, Japan, China, Nigeria, France, Spain, South Africa, India, Korea, Singapore). However, this study is US-centric so this research should be replicated globally in the future. Insights pros who participated represent the following roles:

- Corporate insights function (e.g., CMK, CMI)
- Agency strategic planners
- Market researchers
- Freelance consumer insight strategists

Some respondents were new to insights (2 years), while others had been in the industry +25 years, leading global teams of insights professionals for some of the world's largest brands and agencies (e.g., Pepsico, FOX, O&M, Y&R, Google, Apple, AT&T, and others). The average time spent completing the survey of 24 open-ended questions and six (6) closed-ended questions was 37 minutes. The average length of responses was 17 words/question.

Digital Brainstorm

Fifty-five (55) insights professionals recruited on LinkedIn contributed their insights in another way. A Miro.com brainstorm space was home to 12 exercises about "insight," "consumer insight," "insight discovery," and *insighting* best practices. This methodology catered to those with more visual and unstructured communication styles. The Miro Board was open for one month, so respondents from different time zones could contribute, build, and react to one another's' posts asynchronously.



What is Cultural Forensics?

Cultural forensics comprise back-casting. It is a forecasting methodology derived from examining the past. The idea being that historical patterns can suggest how a trend will unfold in the future.

General Population Online Surveys

Two online surveys (Google Surveys) of the US General Population informed this work. The first survey (N=3302) of US Gen Pop was fielded three times: 2018, 2019, and April 2020, probing, "What are you passionately curious about?" The second survey fielded April 2020 (N=301, US Gen Pop) examined, "What is 'insight' and "why is insight important to humanity and society?"

AI Emotion Analytics

For additional insight, text from responses was fed into two of the world's most advanced emotion recognition AI platforms to uncover feelings, sentiment, motivation, and intent behind responses totaling 59,000 words:

- **Qntfy**, built by neuroscientists and used by US presidents, NASA, the US Dept. of Defense and DARPA has >70% accuracy in its ability to analyze the emotions and sentiment underlying text responses.
- **Heartbeat AI** platform is built on human (psycholinguist) trained artificial intelligence and Natural Language Processing (NLP) with 95% accuracy, analyzes the emotions and sentiment underlying natural language. Clients include Kantar, McCann Health, Adelphi, Publicis, Epsilon, TELUS, Sun Life Insurance, and many more.

WFA Insights Archives

The World Federation of Advertisers (WFA) generously shared its archives of research on the insight profession. Notably, this project took findings from the 2016 WFA/BrainJuicer study, The Future of Insights, which surveyed 300 senior marketing and insights leaders across 94 of the world's largest brand owners, to examine the behaviors of corporate insights functions and insights professionals. NOTE: WFA is updating this study in 2020.

Emotion recognition AI platforms were used to parse the responses to uncover feelings, sentiment, motivation and intent.

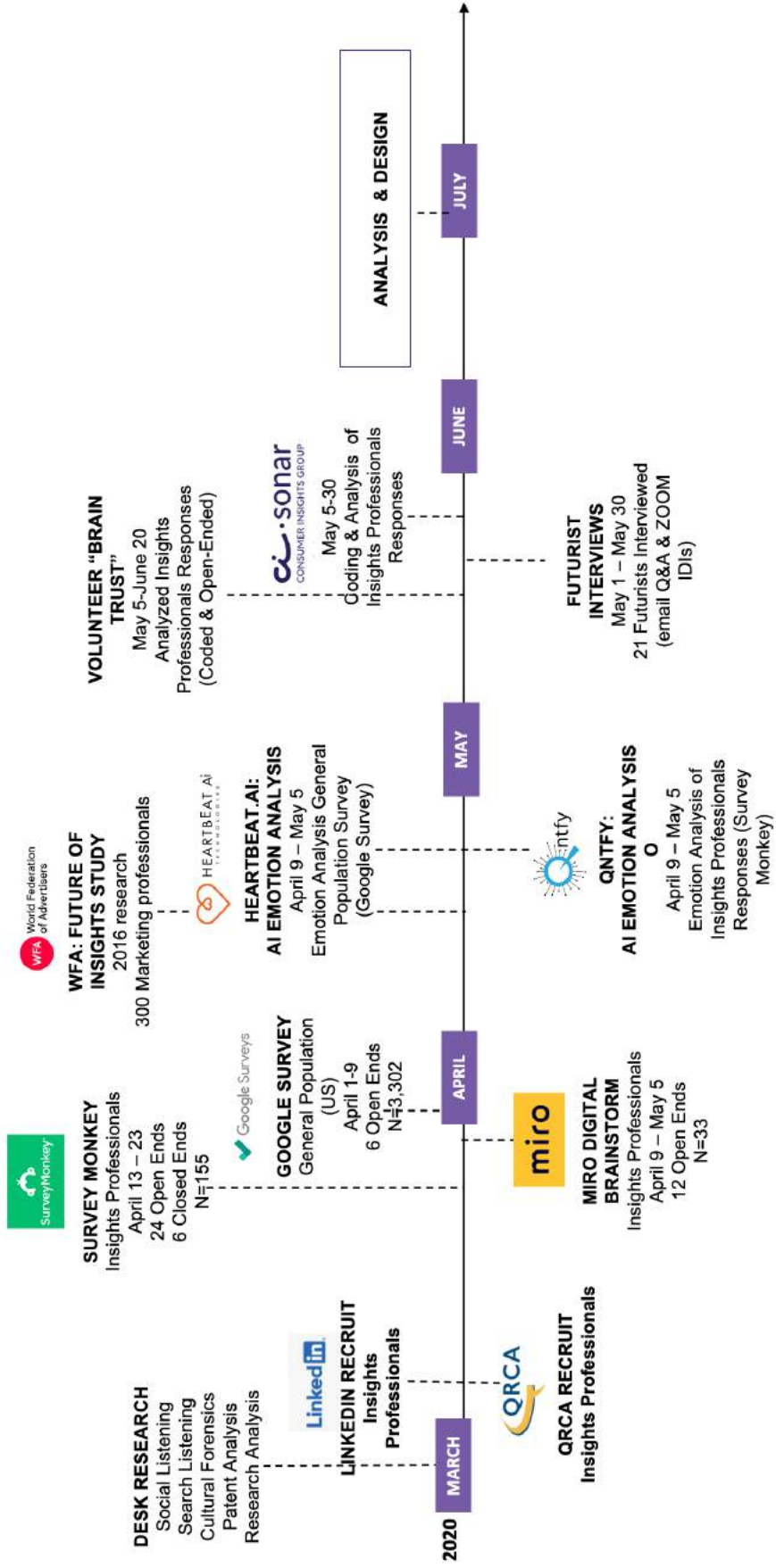
Futurist Interviews

Twenty-one (24) international Futurists (from Australia, Brazil, China, France, Germany, Mexico, South Africa, United Kingdom, United States) contributed their views on insight. In-Depth-Interviews took place on Zoom (about 1 hour in length) along with email Q&A correspondence. The discussions centered on, "What is the future of 'insight'?" and "How will 'insight' and 'insightfulness' be different in the year 2030?". Interviews with the following futurists were transcribed:

- Maria Bothwell, CEO, Toffler Associates
- Charles Brass, Chairman, Futures Foundation
- Jamais Cascio, Distinguished Fellow, Institute for the Future
- Piers Fawkes, Founder/CEO, PSFK
- Brad Grossman, Founder/CEO, Zeitguide
- Bob Johansen, President, Institute for the Future
- Annalie Killian, Human Network Catalyst, Sparks & Honey
- Rita J. King, Co-Director, Science House
- Ken Habarta, Founder/CEO, Big Cardinal
- Kenneth Mikkelsen, CEO FutureShift
- Debbie Millman, Founder Design Matters Media
- Nils Mueller, Founder/CEO, TrendOne
- Faith Popcorn, Founder/CEO, Faith Popcorn Brain Reserve
- Larry Quick, CEO, Resilient Futures
- Meabh Quoirin, Co-Founder/CEO, Foresight Factory
- Craig Rispin, Futurist in Residence, HirePay
- Jennifer Rooks-Edwards, Director of Mindset, WGSN
- Tom Savigar, Founder Future Laboratory, CEO/Founder Avansere
- Gray Scott, Techno-Futurist & Host, Futuristic Now
- Frank Spencer, Founder & Creative Director, The Futures School
- Richard Watson, Futurist in Residence, Foresight, Imperial College London
- Edie Weiner, Founder/CEO, TrendHunters
- Terry Young, Founder/CEO, Sparks & Honey
- Michell Zappa, Founder/CEO, Envisioning

NOTE: The futurist interviews were so rich and inspiring that a separate publication, *Insight Alchemy*, will be published in Q4 2020 on www.insightscience.com.

Methodology: Sequence of Activities



Project Objectives

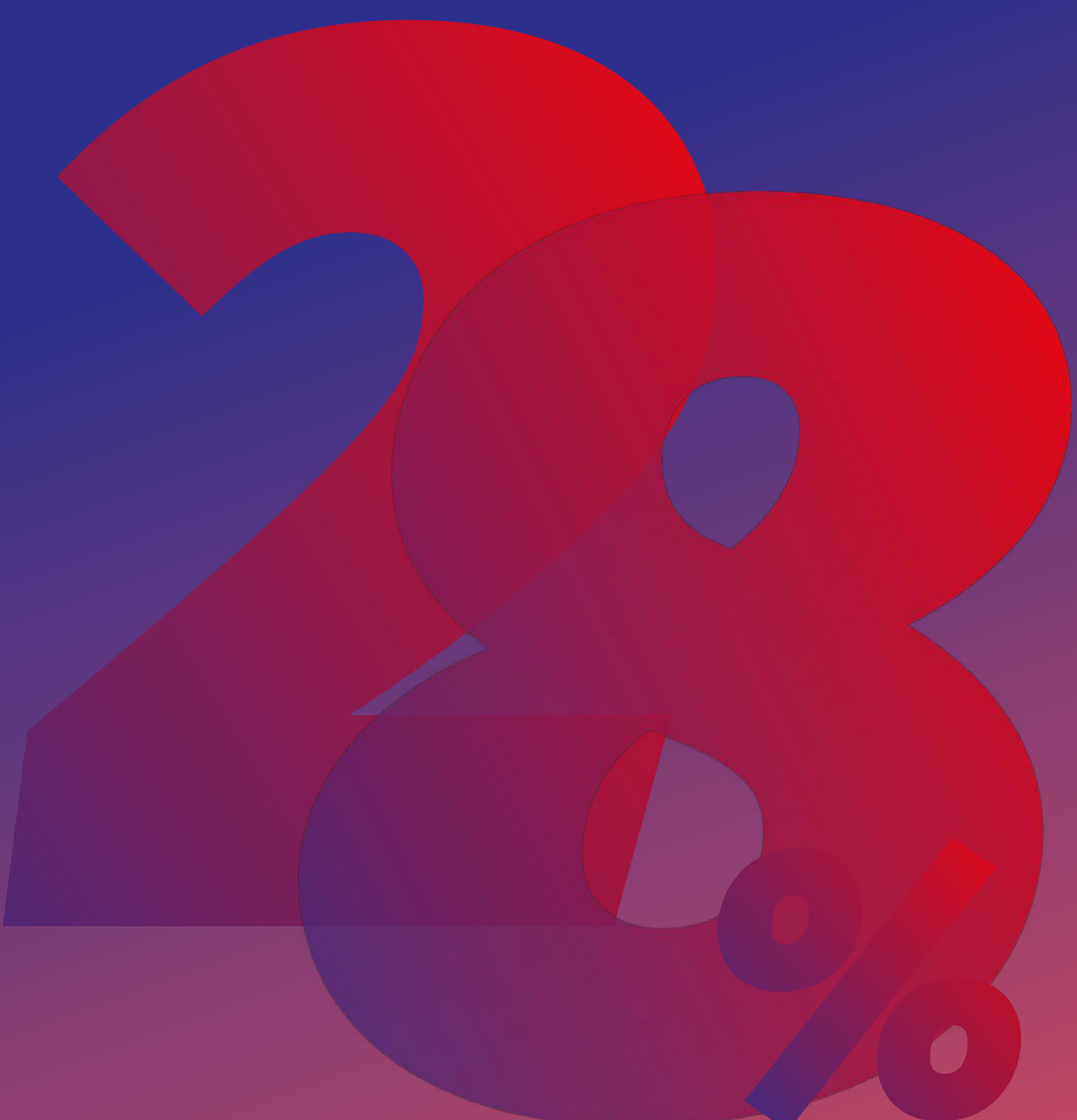
For reference, to provide the scope of this project, the objectives of this study were:

- What are the traits of insightful people?
- What are the qualities of professional insights people?
- What are the characteristics of insights teams?
- What kills insight?
- What cultivates insight?
- What is the understanding of "insight," "consumer insight," and similar terms?
- What are successful *insighting* processes?
- What should we prioritize when teaching insights discovery?
- What is the future of insight?

Survey Questions

Also for reference, the following are the questions from the online survey of insights professionals which generated 59,000 words of responses and the bulk of data for this analysis:

1. What are the qualities of an insightful person?
2. Do you think "insightfulness" can be taught?
3. Do you think you are in insightful person?
4. Why are you so insightful?
5. What is your definition of an insight?
6. What is your definition of a "consumer insight?"
7. Is a "consumer insight" the same or different from a general "insight"?
8. How is a consumer insight different from... (Human Truth? Need or Need State? Consumer Tension? Job to be Done?)
9. Please share an example of an outstanding (best-practice) consumer insight and why you think so?
10. What is your process for identifying great consumer insights?
11. How do you know a strong consumer insight when you see one?
12. What is the Future of Insights?
13. What stimulates insight discovery?
14. How do you discovery insights?
15. What are the conditions that lead to eureka or "aha" insights?
16. What kills insight discovery?
17. What does a "micro" insight mean to YOU?
18. What would you call a really, powerful consumer insight?
19. How can we improve our ability to discover consumer insights that will yield competitive advantage?
20. What's most important to our insights work ?
21. How good are you at finding powerful, non-obvious, meaningful and game-changing consumer insights?
22. If you were going to teach someone how to find powerful, non-obvious, meaningful and game-changing consumer insights... what would you tell them?
23. Are there "types" of people who are better at insights than others?
24. Would you be interested in learning more about executive coaching focused on amplifying insight discovery?
25. What insights about insights do you have to share?
26. Do you have any comments, questions or last thoughts to share?



***Of Americans lack
curiosity***

Context: Why Insight Matters Now!

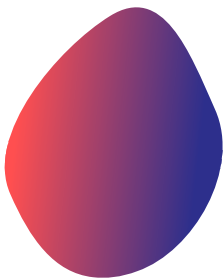
We need an insight intervention.

A “Meh-pidemic” of Indifference

There’s a reason: indifference, ennui, and a general lack of caring are widespread. Annual benchmark research of the US General Population (2018-2020) has found a steady decline in curiosity and an increase in attitudes of indifference. Approximately one-quarter of the US population lacks curiosity in most topics. This data is especially pronounced among 35-44-year-olds, with nearly 40% displaying a general lack of interest in anything. The backbone of society is disengaged. [see charts 1-3]

Negative Feelings About the Future

Some social psychologists attribute the "meh-pidemic" to technology, information overload, and anti-intellectualism. Others have drawn correlations to increased anxiety from world issues, with the “meh” response being a form of retreat. Over the past three years, two-thirds of the US General Population's response to questions about the future, curiosity, and passion exhibit a worrying trend of increasing negative emotions; men in the Northeast are especially prone to this negativity. [see chart 4]



What is the Meh-pidemic?

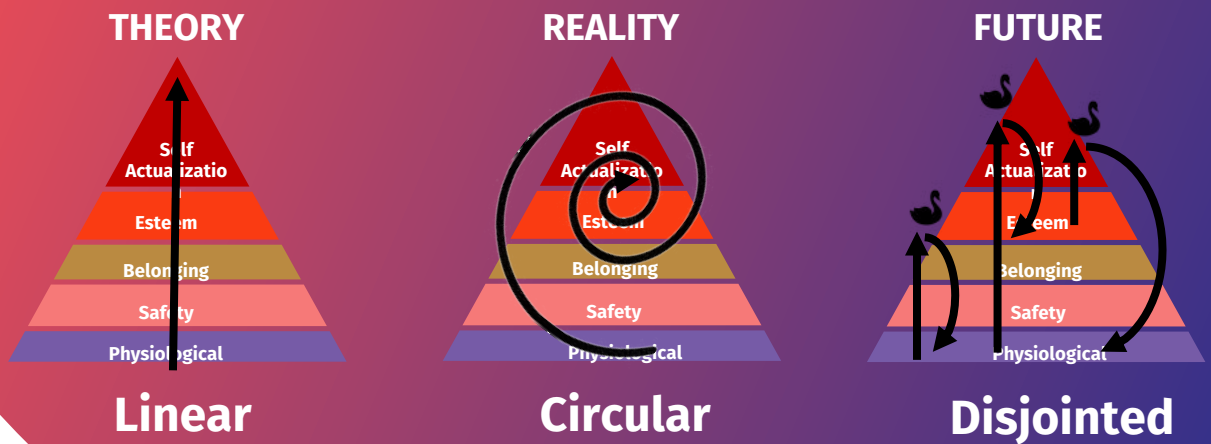
In 2018, Urban Dictionary added the term "meh-pidemic." It is a portmanteau of “meh” (slang Yiddish meaning so-so) combined with “epidemic.” It refers to worrying the trend of increasing indifference.

Insight – Not for Me!

Data shows a decline in insightfulness (i.e., increase in shallowness). A survey of the US General Population (2020) found that the majority of Americans were unable to respond to a question about the importance of insight—and unwilling to put in the effort. Those who replied offered shallow responses. Most Americans (68%) haven't prioritized insightfulness. Furthermore, "insight" and "curiosity" evoke negative emotions for most Americans surveyed. [see charts 6-8]

Insight: Overused Business Jargon?

The business world overuses the word "insight" as they're inundated with making sense of oceans of data. It's become shorthand for "the salient point." In the past 50 years, there's been an explosion of businesses dedicated to "insights." "Insight" has been co-opted by industry; the original meaning "insight" (i.e., "inner" + "sight") has subsequently lost its meaning and cultural energy. [see chart 9]



Maslow's Insight Unattainable

At the top of Maslow's linear, stacked hierarchy of needs sits self actualization which is self insight, wisdom and enlightenment. This model of insight attainment, however, assumes a linear progression through the world. But a volatility blows up the notion of sequential development and self-improvements. People can move up and down – or be thrust up or down – the layers by Black Swan events. In this new context, insight is neither the ultimate end goal nor reward for a sequence of behaviors. A world of exponential change conspires against insightfulness and insight.

Squealing – Apocalypse Soon!

A scientific term for an ecosystem bifurcating is "squealing." Squealing happens before a ecosystem, of two opposing forces, becomes more strained (polarized) right before a system collapses. The collapse is called "critical transition" of state or state change. Society is squealing! Culture is squealing, portending that we will be facing more significant problems in the future than the challenges we face today. In other words, the presences of squealing means that bigger problems and harder times are ahead and tensions will continue to rise.

VUCA World, VUCA Humans

The world is experiencing unprecedented volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (VUCA; insightful people and their insight are desperately needed to make sense of it all and to offer solutions. VUCA triggers responses of flight, fight or freeze: the Meh-pidemic is likely a reaction [see charts 10-11]. The world is so unpredictable, it's causes people to be mercurial. It causes people to be VUCA.. There are many wicked problems to deal with – Covid, culture, economy, climate – it's almost too much to deal with so mental health declines and people turn volatile and uncertain.

GAFAM-Insight Machine

Big Data. Big AI. Big Tech, such as Google, Amazon, Facebook, Apple, Alibaba and Microsoft (GAFAM), are collecting enormous amounts of consumer data, and therefore consumer insight. Big Tech ecosystems insidiously and ubiquitously mine data from all aspects of the consumer's life through investments in strategic 360-degree data collection ventures:

- **Demographics and Sociographics**, from media, browsing, user data, spending, searches, ratings and reviews.
- **Emotion** data from voice (Alexa! Siri! Cortana!), text and facial recognition (Microsoft: Emotion API, FaceAPI, Azure Cognitive Services; Facebook: FacioMetrics).
- **Biological** data from investments in Genomics (Google: Google Genetics, 23andMe, DNA Nexus, Verily, Rise; Amazon's 1000 Genome Project, Cloud Genomics; Alibaba: WXNC, NextCODE)
- **Behavior** data from devices, such as phones (phones contain 12 sensors), Oculus Rift, of home (Nest).
- **Smart Homes and Smart Cities** investments (Google: Maps, Waze, Nest, SideWalk Labs, Google Fiber; Amazon: Blink, Ring, Luma, Housejoy; Microsoft: CityNext Lab; Apple: Beddit, InDoor.io, WiFiSlam, Flyby Media)

No wonder Big Tech have established insights and analytics teams. The future of insight looks like it could be dominated by "GAFAM-insights", unless something is done.

Need for Speed

There pressures is on for faster, cheaper, deeper, game-changing insights.

Intelligence businesses are reinventing as "insights platforms". Strategy and research teams are operating like "insight factories". Insights budgets are being cut, and human insights functions are being replaced by always-on automated insights from AI and algorithms – which collect insight more efficiently (albeit more shallowly). Over 80% of senior insights roles in multi-national corporations emphasize "real time insights" in advertised job descriptions.

Quantified Everything... Except Insights

Data – *the "yeast" in the bread of insight* – is everywhere, being generated by every thing. Literally. The proliferation of sensors and the Internet of Things is generating more data (more metrics) than ever before. This emphasis on quantification of self and things is shining a light on quantifying insights. Like other business support functions (Legal, Finance, HR, Operations) developing metrics to quantify their value to the business, the Insights function is being called to quantify (justify) itself.

Insights Training is Dead

Who has the time? Who has the money? R.I.P. insights training. Good luck Insights newbies. You're on your own. [🎤 microphone drop].



***Of Americans have no idea
why insight matters***

“Everyone needs to have insight into their thoughts, feelings and actions... If you do not first know yourself, you cannot truly begin to know others.”

- Survey Respondent

Insightful People

What's their M.O.?

Never Stop *Insighting*

Successful *insighting* starts with valuing and practicing *insighting* all the time. The people best at “consumer insights” are generally insightful people in life. It follows that if you do not know yourself, you can't truly begin to know others. There is an agreement that insightful people are introspective and thoughtful. Therefore, cultivating everyday insightfulness is crucial work for insights professionals.

Joy, Surprise, Insight

Notably, when professional insights people describe the qualities of insightful people, the emotions “joy” and “surprise” pop up, suggesting glee in the novelty of the question. Eight percent (8%) wrote something like, “That’s a great question, I never really thought about it before.” The industry enjoys unpacking insightful people and insightfulness. [see chart 11]

Insightfulness: More Valuable Than Intelligence?

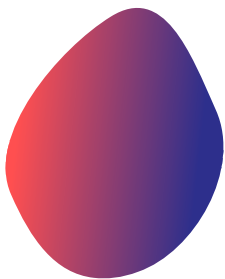
Distinctions exist between “smart people” and “insightful people,” with the latter preferred. Insightful people (wise people) are more admired and perceived to be more effective at insights than smart people. Smart people are found more common because it's easier to become an intelligent person. Whereas insightful people are rare because it requires more work to be insightful.

Being Analytical > Being Knowledgeable

The second most mentioned trait of insightful people is that they are “analytical” (68%). Insightful people are keen observers, listeners, and thinkers. Fifteen percent (15%) of responses cited “listening” as a critical trait. Other qualities of insightful people include “strategic” and “detailed oriented” (6% and 4%, respectively). Overall, there's agreement that being analytical outweighs being knowledgeable. [see chart 12]

Insightful People are Curious

Seventy-seven percent (71%) of insights professionals believe that an insightful person's top quality is curiosity. Insightful people are curious explorers of inner and outer worlds. As humble life-long learners, they're curious about everything – people, places, things, ideas, and the world. They have high “CQ.” [see chart 12]



What is CQ?

Having a high curiosity quotient (CQ) was mentioned as being a key trait of insightful people. CQ diagnostics measure exploration modalities.



***Quality of insightful
people is “curiosity”***

Insightful People Are Self-Aware

Self-awareness is another central trait of insightful people. Specifically, insightful people are aware of their shortcomings, such as "biases," "assumptions," and "close-mindedness." Twenty-five percent (25%) said that insightful people are "open minded." Insightful people strive to transcend negative tendencies yet have "humility." [see chart 12]

Insightful People Are All Ages

A handful of responses remarked at young colleagues displaying "insight and wisdom beyond their years." Icons of insightfulness included Greta Thunberg (17 years old) and Malala Yousafzai (23 years old and the youngest Nobel Laureate Prize winner).

Insightfulness and Diversity Go Hand-in-Hand

Responses reveal that insightful people are "T" shaped, enjoying depth and breadth of knowledge, drawn from an array of experiences. Insightful people draw from experiences (life events big and small, travel, reading, hobbies, arts & culture, observation) and make associations. There is the belief that insightful people connect disparate pieces of information into understanding (often expressed as "connecting the dots").

Insightful people use metaphors, allegories, symbolism, and frameworks to push thinking and to communicate.

Insightful People: Good Communicators

Insightful people use language judiciously: language matters. Similarly, insightful people use metaphors, allegories, symbolism, and frameworks to push thinking and to communicate. Respondents said that "creativity" (15%) and "speaking well" (7%) are qualities of insightful people. Icons of insightfulness included Yoda from Star Wars, Einstein, the Dalai Lama and Nelson Mandela, for their striking use of language. [see chart 12]



***Believe curious people are
more insightful***

Smart People

Sensitive to trends
Satisfaction from solving a problem
Process information systematically, logically
Express their ideas and opinions
Rely on knowledge to solve problems
May impose thinking and views on others
Acquire and apply knowledge very quickly
Aware of abilities and confident in them
Comes from information and knowledge
Educated
Insights can come come easily

Insightful People

Sensitive to subtlety of life and the human condition
Satisfaction from inspiring and coaching others
Process information logically and emotionally
Observe and listen to others and occasionally comment
Rely on judgement and intuition to solve problems
Acknowledge differences in perspectives and biases
Take time to digest knowledge and deeply understand it
Aware of their weaknesses and humble to learn more
Comes from experience and enlightenment
Life-long learners
Tenaciously work at insights

Insightfulness Takes Work

Being engaged and tenacious are traits of insightful people who are perceived to put in the work. (7% of responses explicitly said it requires "hard work.") Both the will and the way are both needed to achieve insightfulness. Routine and self-discipline are habits of insightful people. [see chart 12]

I Walk Alone – NOT!

A handful of responses allude to insightful people being both collaborative and independent. "Divergent" and "convergent" thinking and behaviors, such as toggling between solo and social activities, was a reoccurring theme associated with successful *insighting*.

Bravery and Agency


Notably, low on the list of traits of insightful people were "bravery" and "agency" despite the icons of insightfulness noted for these traits. It is a curious omission given that the industry is continuously challenged to "stand up for insight" and transform insights into action. [see chart 12]

Culturally Woke

Insights do not come from a vacuum, which is why responses describe insightful people as having cultural and contextual awareness. Insightful people are not myopic: they can see the "big picture" and the interconnectedness of life. Nearly 25% of responses said cultural context is vitally important training for insights people. [see chart 13]



***Of responses used the
idiom “connect the dots”***



“Insight comes from connecting the dots, but the future of insights will come from being able to see new, unseen and forgotten dots.”

- Survey Respondent



Enough With “Connecting the Dots”

The expression "connecting the dots" is used to explain both the process for discovering insights (i.e., *insighting*) and the definition of insight. 42% of responses include the phrase "connecting the dots" across three questions about insight and insightfulness. It is an overused cliché, which is ironic since 29% of respondents said they believe "thinking about things in new ways" and "original thinking" is central to insight.

“Culture is the Space Between the Dots”

The continued use of the mental model "connect the dots" might even be doing a disservice to the insights field. It oversimplifies the craft of insights, relegating it to scanning for signals and pattern recognition, synthesizing disparate data points, and marrying micro with macro data. While undoubtedly these activities are included in *insighting*, the field is much more complicated.

Seven percent (7%) of respondents want to challenge or reframe the expression “connecting the dots,” arguing that *insighting* is more nuanced. For example, "Our job in insights goes beyond connecting the dots to exploring the dots' space." As one respondent wrote, "Culture is the space between the dots."

Group Inquiry and Analytics Unlock Insight

"Inquiry" and "analysis" are often cited as insight stimulants by insights professionals. Surprisingly, the second most mentioned tactic (11% of responses) for creating the conditions for insight discovery is "collaboration, teamwork, and brainstorming." Those in the know, believe good *insighting* is as much a group process as it is individual (a nod to the divergent and convergent behaviors of insightful people).

People outside the insights field do not widely understand the group nature of insights work. Some professionals expressed frustration about this. "I hate the pressure put on me... the expectation that I'm to magically arrive at some earth-shattering insight by myself and present it like 'ta-da' here is the insight."



7%

Want to
challenge or
reframe
“connecting
the dots”

People of Insights

Magnetic, contradictory—sometimes hypocritical.

For the Love of Insights

Insights professionals (market researchers, strategic planners, CMI/CMK executives, etc.) are passionate, love what they do, and enjoy talking about insightfulness and thinking about the qualities of insightful people. Eight-percent (8%) of respondents replied something to the effect, "That's a great question. I never really thought about it before." AI analysis discovered that "joy" was the dominant emotion underpinning all responses to all questions, confirming the industry's love of reflecting on their craft.

Curious and Curiouser

People in the insights field wear their curiosity like a badge, with 96% rating themselves above-average in curiousness. Seven percent (7%) rate themselves as "genius" in terms of their curiosity. Therefore, it is not surprising that nearly 70% also responded that they believe "curious" people are better at insights. Curiosity binds the community.

United We Stand

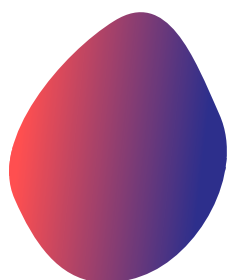
No negative sentiment was detected in the aggregate of responses, which is highly atypical. This kind of industry profile and synchronicity occurs in communities with pride and solidarity. This finding was corroborated by remarkable similarity in the language of responses, despite the diversity of respondents. Furthermore, while insights people said they feel undervalued and "exhausted" from continually educating colleagues, they seem to accept it matter-of-factly as part of the job.

GOAT (Greatest of All Time)?

Over 60% self-reported being above average in insightfulness, with 7% self-reporting being exceedingly above average in insightfulness. Additionally, 67% stated they were above average at finding "compelling, non-obvious, meaningful, game-changing consumer insights." Objectively, the verbatim responses overall were not incredibly insightful. The industry appears to be a tad over-confident.

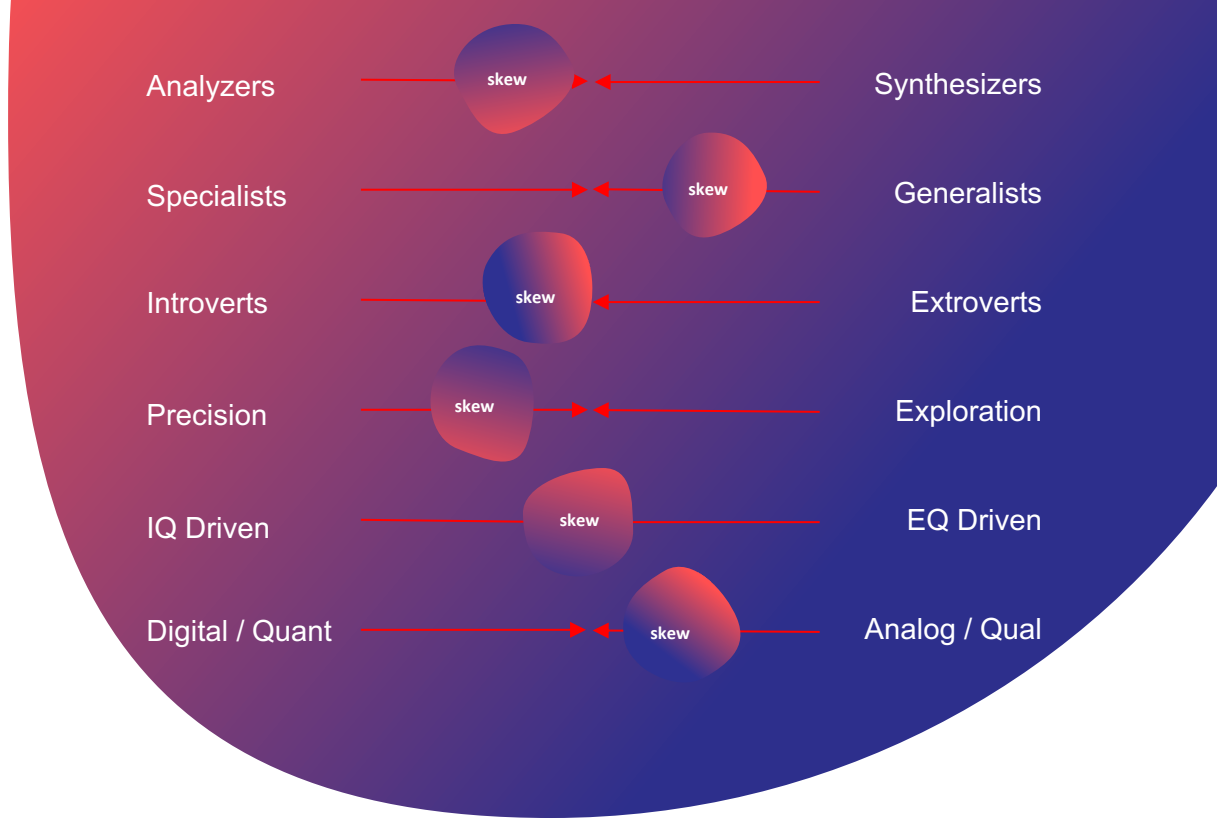
Open to Improvement

There is an industry-wide agreement (65%) that insightfulness can be teachable ("It's a muscle needing exercise"). The insights people surveyed displayed an openness and eagerness to grow and learn, with 51% expressing interest in coaching to improve their insightfulness. Yet there is the belief that some types of people are simply better at insights than others: nature favors nurture. The people who excel at insights are believed to be innately curious, creative, empathetic, and analytical.



What is Curiosity Coaching?

Curiosity Coaching is a new model of professional development that involves assessing ones' exploration modalities via a CQ diagnostic. It then provides customized challenges to exercise different curiosity muscles, leading to improved resilience and insight.



Warring Factions

Twelve tribes, or factions, along with ideological polarities, were evident from the responses. This nature of the spectra suggests a clash between an "old guard" and ingenues. Sub-groups emerged around the emphasis on analyzing vs. synthesizing, specialists vs. generalists, introverts vs. extroverts, precision methods vs. exploration methods, IQ vs. EQ, and practitioners of digital/quant methods vs. analog/qual methods. Respondents who favored data showed a single-minded data-analytics fixation and didn't mention humans at all.

Love-Hate Relationship with Technology

While technology, data, AI, and machine learning are strategic to achieving competitive advantage, many raised concerns that there is too much emphasis placed on data and analytics and not enough attention paid to human creativity. The verbatim responses reveal that the industry currently skews qualitatively and to generalist skillsets (as opposed to quantitative data specialists).

MIA: Blended Methods and Data Synthesis

Notably, there were surprisingly few mentions of mixed methods or mastering the synthesis of data from disparate sources. Data analytics skills are trendy, but they are attributed to analytics specialists. There seems to be a lack of appreciation or respect for mixed methods of *insighting*.



Believe insightfulness is a learned, teachable skill

**“When in doubt,
observe, listen and
ask questions. When
certain, observe at
length, listen harder
and ask many more
questions.”**

- Survey Respondent

Insights Teams

Rx reinvention.

Insights Factories Racing Against Time

Insights teams are under increasing pressure to improve efficiency and performance and pump out "real-time" and "always-on" insights. This systems approach to insights has resulted in insights factories, mass-producing mass-quality insights. Respondents shared that the #1 enemy of insights teams is pressure, lack of time, and speed. [see chart 19]

Pressure for Novelty (Non-Obvious Insights)

Yet, the expectation for higher-quality "game-changing" insights is higher than ever. Over sixty-six percent (66%) of insights professionals surveyed say the goal is to discover "new and non-obvious" (surprising, fresh) insights. The next priority is to find "inspiring and creative" insights. Verbatim responses showed that there is a belief that insights teams today need to be great creative storytellers. Least important are "universal and timeless" insights. [see chart 20]

The expectation for higher-quality “game-changing” insights is higher than ever.

Success Comes from Diversity

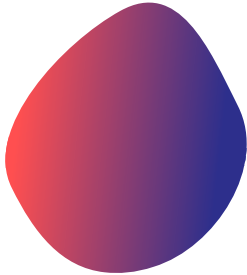
Deep expertise in a specific category or topic can hinder insight as a result of a "seen it all, know it all" mindset. Teams with a mix of newbies (for fresh eyes) and experts excel at insight. Eight percent (8%) of respondents said that "diversity" (as in cognitive, cultural, racial, gender, age diversity) improves insight. Prioritizing variety when casting insights teams supports a better quality of insight output.

Lonely Work Breeds Colleague Contempt

Insights teams tend to work in silos, not integrated with other parts of the organization. Only 8% of respondents said something to the effect "collaboration is needed for great insights." Insights professionals are much happier with their performance than their colleagues' view of their performance. Almost a quarter of business partners surveyed by WFA feel "contempt and sadness" when they think about their colleagues' insights. [see chart 21]



***Say the goal is to discover
new non-obvious insights***



What is Design Thinking?

Design Thinking is a non-linear, iterative process that teams use to understand consumers, challenge assumptions, redefine problems and create innovative solutions to prototype and test.

Involving five phases—
Empathize, Define, Ideate,
Prototype and Test.

Teams Have Distinctive Personas

Five (5) personas of insights functions are showcased in WFA's study based on the personality/behavioral types of insights professionals: Librarians, Judges, Caddies (researchers and knowledge-keepers), Explorers, and Strategic Consultants(thought leaders). Based on responses, we estimated that the Judge is the most dominant persona of survey respondents (31%), followed by Caddies (29%). It is estimated that 19% of respondents are Explorers, 15% Librarians—and only 6% are Strategic Consultants. [see chart 22]

Insights Cultures Vary: Corporates vs. Agencies

"Empathy" as core to being insightful was cited much more often by corporate insights teams than insights teams in agencies and consultants. There is a trend amongst corporate insights teams to use Design Thinking methods, which emphasize empathy-building. Additionally, the corporate insights teams place more emphasis on the team's ability to understand business dynamics. There are cultural differences, such as empathy, between insights teams (in corporations vs. agencies vs. consultancies).

Clashing Perceptions Necessitate More Data

WFA's study found that insights teams see themselves as Caddies and Strategic Consultants, with less importance placed on being Explorers and forming opinions (Judges). This clashes with reality. WFA found that business partners tend to view their insights partners as Librarians and Caddies. [see chart 23]

There is agreement that the ideal insights team is first a strategic consultant and second an explorer.

“A consumer insight is an articulated understanding of consumer behavior, motivation and how they think and feel.”

- Survey Respondent

Defining an Insight

What should have been simple was painful.

Not on the Same Page

There is disagreement on the definition of an "insight." Responses show wide-ranging definitions with no concise or common lexicon. Responses reveal contradictions in the understanding of an "insight." Definitions ranged from deep understanding to observation, a new notion to an evergreen truth; an insight being a behavior vs. a motivation or a problem vs. a tension. The only alignment is that an "insight" is not superficial but is deep and supported by data. Overall the insights industry is not operating using the same playbook.

Lack of Consistency

Regarding "consumer insight," there was vague consistency – 38% of responses were somewhat in agreement. More often than not, "consumer insight" was conflated with general "insight." 59% of respondents lazily replied with the cop-out, "It's an insight applied to a consumer."

Emotions Ran High, Says the AI

Approximately 10% of respondents volunteered, "This is the first time I've really thought about the definition of a 'consumer insight'." Misalignment about something so fundamental is evident in the emotional undertones of responses. The AI detected positive feelings defining and "insight" and negative emotions (anger and fear) in the definitions of a "consumer insight."

No Industry Standard

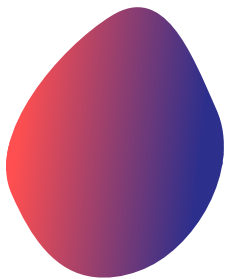
While the industry concurs that crafting the language of an "insight" or "consumer insight" is critical, there was disagreement on how to write an insight. The structure of insights statements varied wildly – there is no industry standard.

The Elements of a Powerful Consumer Insight

There were common characteristics of a "powerful consumer insight." For example, there is some unity that "consumer insight" reflects an understanding of the inner or hidden nature of consumer's lives. Other consistencies include emotion, relatability/relevance, clarity, disruptiveness, novelty, and a call to action.

All Shook Up

There is universal agreement that the test of a good insight elicits a visceral reaction from both colleagues and consumers. The majority of responses gave physical cues in response to the eureka moment of discovering a powerful insights, such as in an audible "aha" or "yup", and/or a cocked head, nodding, raised eyebrows.

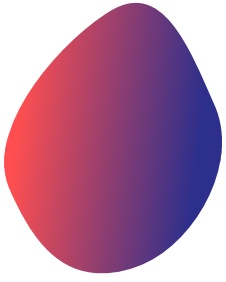


What is the Eureka Moment?

The Eureka Moment (aka Eureka Effect) refers to the common human experience of suddenly understanding a previously incomprehensible problem or concept.



***Admit having never
thought about defining
“consumer insight” before***



What is a Return-on-Insight?

Return-on-insight (ROI) is the measurable business impact of an insight, minus insighting cost. This metric validates insights people, insights teams and insighting activities. It helps to balance the costs of insight inputs with outputs.

[see chart B.]

Good Examples? Let Me Get Back to You

Roughly 50% of the examples of "great consumer insights" were from old advertising campaigns, such as Snickers/Hangry, Persil/Dirt is Good, Dove/Real Beauty, Always/Like a Girl). None of the responses seemed to know for certain the business impact and proof of insight excellence. Return-on-insights (ROI) seems hazy. Not only is there a lack of recent insights examples, curiously, but respondents also didn't seem to offer samples of their work. Many responded, "This is hard!" highlighting that great, teachable examples are not top of mind

An Insight Opens Up Opportunities

Outstanding "consumer insights" solve problems for consumers and create strategies for companies in order to benefit the consumer and the business at the same time. There is some agreement that the strongest insights inspire multiple marketing opportunities. They are doorways that open onto many avenues.

Blurred Lines

The industry cannot articulate the difference between "consumer insight", "user insight", "shopper insight", "influencer insights", etc. There seems to be no distinction seen in context: searching online vs. shopping vs. using vs. consuming vs. reviewing. "Consumer insight" appears to be a catch-all term used for all aspects of the human condition and journey. This conflation might be behind the differences in definitions, since respondents come from an array of marketing disciplines (advertising, product development, retail, etc.)

“Consumer insight” appears to be a catch-all term used for all aspects of the human condition and journey.

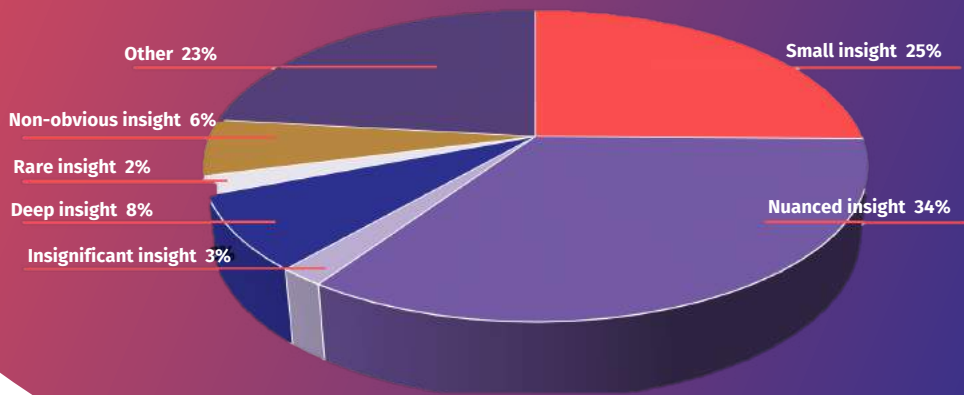
Potato, Potah-to?

There is some agreement that a "need" pertains to a "problem," which can be a "tension," but 65% of responses were vague. Alternatively, a "tension" is an unmet "need" or a need where there is an obstacle creating tension. Overall, it appears that many insights people do not universally use "consumer tensions" in their work. A "need or need state" is believed by 25% of respondents to be a subset of a "consumer insight." Some said the insights profession's role is to identify needs that the consumer is not aware of (unknown/unarticulated consumer needs).



***Of examples of great
consumer insights were
from old ad campaigns***

What is a “micro insight”?



“Micro Insight” Means Many Different Things

The term “micro insight” was presented as stimuli to see what it conjures. Thirty-four percent (34%) inferred that it means “nuanced insight,” while 25% said “small insight.” Seven percent (7%) interpreted the opposite saying it means a “deep insight” and 6% felt it conveyed “non-obvious insight.” This demonstrates how, without an established industry lexicon, terminology can be defined in vastly different ways.

JTBD: A Niche Concept for Innovation?

JTBDs (Job to Be Done) are perceived to be desired actions or behavior. JTBD is the ultimate goal. It is understood that “consumer insights” lead to JTBDs. However, 8% of respondents said the opposite, that JTBDs explain “consumer insights,” and another 5% felt they are one and the same. Overall, responses show that JTBD is uncommon, used especially in new product development.

Core Human Truths — And Then What?

Half of respondents (50%) were aligned on the definition of a “human Truth”: universal, fundamental, and unchanging. Fifteen percent (15%) believe a “consumer insight” is a subset of a “human truth.” There is a lack of agreement on how to use a “human truth,” which seems to go against discovering “unobvious insights.” For what it's worth, “micro insight” is not understood at all.



Believe a “need or need state” is a subset of a “consumer insight”

“Discovering new insights is hard work much like mining for gold... 100s of tons of ore has to be sifted to find one tiny gold nugget of an insight.”

- Survey Respondent

Insighting

Codifying insights discovery is a pink space.

Best Practices?

What are the best practice processes for discovering insights? Most respondents provided examples of outputs but not the process, skirting the request for operational tactics. A handful of respondents took exception to the statement in the survey, "There is a lack of resources to learn insights discovery practices." They wrote, "I disagree. I teach market research" or "There's plenty of resources like courses on strategic planning." Overall, it appears there is no broad teaching strategy or accessible curriculum for insights discovery.

Insighting Methods Highly Personal & "Proprietary"

An unwillingness to describe the best practice processes and author a process is apparent. Some replied that their method is "too personal" or "proprietary IP," which illustrates that *insighting* approaches are personal without industry standards or proven systematic approaches. Over 60% of responses suggest that there are limited resources (and access to help) to receive insights or *insighting* training.

Insights People Use Checklists as Process

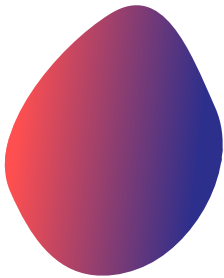
Checklists, and checklist items, were found throughout the responses. The checklist approach seems to provide comfort that there is a process. What is on the checklist inventories differ wildly, however. The use of checklists illustrates a desire for consistency and structure and the wish to make the process more scientific.

Punchlist for Teaching Insights

More concrete examples were shared when asked how to teach *insighting*. Over 25% of responses said that maintaining an open mind, being open to change and being open to people are the most important *insighting* skill. Closely followed, are "knowing the business," and "digging deep for the unobvious." The responses value physical exploration and interactions with people, beyond intellectual curiosity. Counter-intuitively, "listening," "observing", and "creativity" are at the bottom of the list.

Maintaining Curiosity is Crucial

Curiosity and open minds stimulate insight discovery (mentioned respectively by 28% and 29% of respondents), followed by "analysis" and "observation" (21% and 15%). Respondents place a premium on asking questions (and having the skills to ask "the right questions"), as well as having refined "observation skills." A lot of value is placed on intellectual exploration, seeking alternative perspectives, and pushing new ways of thinking.



What is a Pink Space?

A Pink Space, is like a white space innovation opportunity, but it is "pink" because it is a cultural innovation opportunity. It is a term used in cultural strategy to denote an innovation opportunity with a lot of cultural energy.



Feel open-mindedness is most important to insight discovery

Set-Up For Success?

100% of respondents to the question, "What stimulates insight discovery?" cited internal, personal qualities. There was not one mention of creating an external condition that could aid in insight discovery, such as curating the right environment, people casting, travel, experience or sensory stimuli. The internal factors that contribute to discovering insights fall into two categories: mindsets and skillsets.

Lack of Time Short-Circuits Insight

Nearly one-third (27%) of respondents agreed that the biggest obstacle to discovering insights (consumer insights) is lack of time and budget to do the job right. Insight requires adequate time to think, mull, collaborate, ideate—and yet timelines are getting shorter. Some offer that bigger budgets can unlock resources so more time can be spent on thinking.

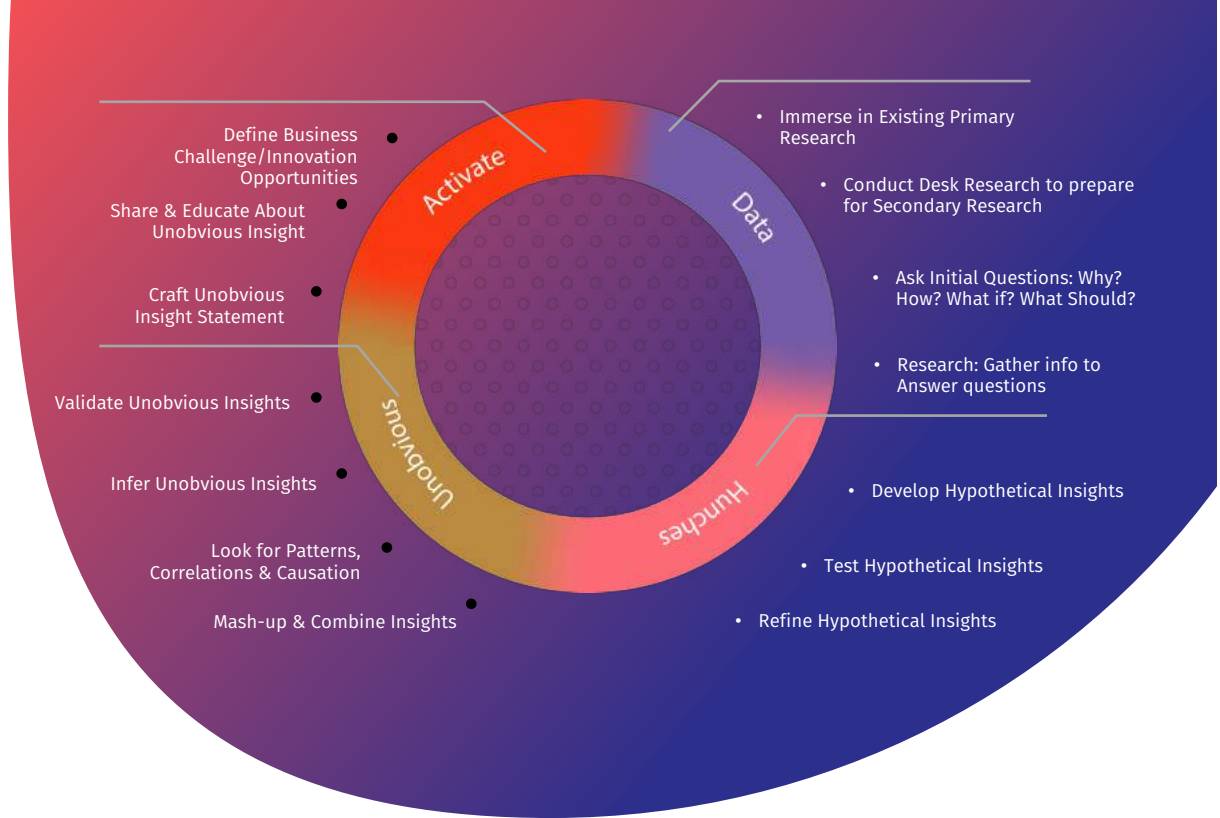
Obstacles to Insight

Company politics get in the way of insight. Following this, the most mentioned personal obstacles to insight discovery are "biases" and "assumptions" such as preconceived notions and jumping to conclusions. Being "stuck in a routine" is also believed to be bad for insight discovery. It appears that head-games kill insight discovery. But, given the Pereto Curve, if these head-games are addressed insight discovery can be improved by 60%

No mention of external conditions that could aid in insight discovery, such as curating the right environment, people casting, travel, experience or sensory stimuli.

Insighting Requires Tenacity and Engagement

Five-percent (5%) of responses literally said "it's hard work" finding "consumer insights." Some say that finding an insight is like panning for gold – as much tenacity and hard work as it is luck. Success is not always guaranteed, but business today expects "eureka" insights to be discovered like clockwork from all data sets or research studies. The industry admits that it is an unrealistic expectation. Over 40% of conditions for insight discovery fall into the category of "being highly engaged" such as being inquisitive, passionate, motivated, pioneering, etc.



How to Insight

It's agreed that teaching someone the process of *insighting* is four-fold. They need to learn data, hunch-framing, being non-obvious, and activation. Insights process involves both art and science. Alternating qualitative and quantitative methods helps to retrieve great consumer insights. There are few mentions of a trial-and-error, test-and-learn approach to processes.

Is Solitary Work Overvalued?

There's agreement that *insighting* requires time, quiet, and a place to synthesize data and think. But the benefits of collaboration and communication seem lost despite the belief that diverse minds and alternative perspectives challenging thinking.

Walk a Mile in the Consumer's Shoes

Agree to the need to walk in consumer's shoes, the consumer's experience. Firsthand, intimate consumer experience is necessary for empathy and insight. Expected to see more on methods for consumer empathy (Design Thinking). A belief exists that the process and skills for online insights (digital insights) are different from offline insights, yet there was no mention of emerging technologies in any of the responses.

Turn Insights Into Action

There is an understanding that insights teams swim in data and insights (suffering from TMI). Respondents lamented that they only get to transform a fraction of the wisdom they have in their possession. A few acknowledged the need to be better at turning insight into action. The topic of insight education and insight activation did not appear in many responses, so are not top-of-mind or priorities.



Believe insight comes to those who are engaged

“The future use of AI to interpret and action vast amounts of data on each consumer by 2030 will create new moral challenges for the insight industry.”

- Meabh Quoirin, CEO Foresight Factory

Future of Insight

Up the Wattage on Lightbulb Moments

Insights People are "Meh" About their Future

Despite being highly engaged with the question and offering long-winded responses, 92% of reactions displayed low excitement for the Future of Insights. Answers to the question, "What is the future of insight?" were highly unimaginative. Insights people are not giving much thought to imagining the future of the insights profession. A significant portion (11%) stated that the future would be more of the same, compared to Futurists (only 6% said the same). [see charts A-B]

Strategists, Meet Explorers

The WFA research conclusion: the ideal (future) role of insights is strategic. Over 50% of insights professionals and their business partners feel insights should be proactive, independent, strategic macro-thinkers. Over 30% feel that insights should be more exploratory innovators coming up with creative new ideas and solutions. Futurists also concurred that insight in the future will come from innovative approaches and thinking. [see chart C]

The role of emotion will be more pronounced, such as advances in emotional insight.

More Human, Holistic and Moody

Futurists underscore the importance of holistic insights that take into account human and societal context (mentioned in 15% of responses). More humanity in insights, and more human methods, were cited by 11% of the futurist. Futurists also said the role of emotion would be more pronounced, such as advances in "emotional insight." [see chart D]

Making the Invisible Visible

Futurists foresee that new data sources will reveal what people don't say or do, which will be as insightful as what they do and say. AI will assist with parsing enormous data lakes to identify patterns and predictions in consumer behavior. Futurists envision that absent or missing behaviors will be highlighted. Information that was once omitted be critically leveraged in insights. [see chart D]

Insight Catalysts: Tech and AI

Responses from insights people showed they are overwhelmed and intimidated by emerging tech and AI. Both insights people and futurists envision more reliance on "AI and data," new research methods, and technology. [see chart E]

The inability of humans to discover insight poses an existential risk to humanity and business alike.

Futurists Value Insights More

Futurists say that insights and *insighting* will be more valuable in the future (stated explicitly by 8%), compared to only 6% of insights professionals. Conversely, only 2% of Futurists said they think insights will mean less, versus 3% of insights professionals. Several Futurists offered that "the inability for humans to discover insights poses an existential risk to humanity and business alike." [see chart F]

Inclusive Insights

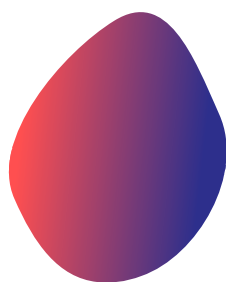
Futurists foresee a more diverse landscape of consumers and consumer researchers. Simultaneously, Futurists see technology and AI as means to collect more diverse viewpoints for better insights. Insights people recognize that their field is somewhat elitist: highly educated, white collar, erudite, often urban dwellers. A few pointed out the need to attract and include talent from a more diverse swaths of the population to ensure diverse thinking in insights work.

AI Ethics >> Ethical Insights

Futurists express that ubiquitous consumer data will shine a light on data privacy. Similarly, the ethics of algorithms used in consumer research and data mining will face increased scrutiny. With the cultural movement of radical transparency and business ethics, some futurists imagine a time where there will be a "fair trade" like seal of approval on consumer research certifying that the insights were sourced ethically. One futurist offered, "The insights community is not immune from the wider debate around the moral underpinning of digital advancement."

Human-Machine Supply Brain

"Driven by data, consumer product flows will evolve from a linear supply chain to one that can expand and contract with change" says futurist Tom Savigar, "The supply chain will become the supply brain." Futurists imagine that market insights will be married with consumer insights. This will be achieved through new human-machine processes, which combine the best of human insight and artificial intelligence.



What is a Cognitive Diversity?

Diversity in cognition is shown to improve problem solving. People have different learning and perceiving styles, just as personalities vary. Introvert brains process information differently than extrovert brains, for example. Cognitive diversity is a new frontier in the Diversity and Inclusion space.



***Prediction for the future
of insight: Innovative
new methods***

Conclusion

Steps Towards Insight Science

This study found that insights professionals are proud and passionately committed to their profession. They are insightful, extremely curious and open-minded. Business partners and Futurists concur that the role of insights should – and will – become more important. However, there are some serious shortcomings in the insights field which need to be addressed in an increasingly pressurized business environment. How do we achieve this? We've outlined some strategies.

1. Talk it Out

This experiment has uncovered a number of surprising and counterintuitive insights about the insights world, which warrant following-up and further investigation. At the very least, this data can be a catalyst to provoke self-reflection and industry-introspection. It's healthy to debate and mull over the findings from this project. Conversations with colleagues, business partners and clients (internal and external) about the perceptions and value of insights will surface opportunities for improvements. There are a lot of positive dynamics in the insights space as well as opportunities for innovation, which are open to all of us.

2. Adopt a More Scientific Approach to Insights

What has become clear from this project is that there are seven vulnerabilities holding back the advancement of the insights field, especially in context of pressure to increase the quantity, quality, speed and efficiency of insights.

3. Proposal: Reframe Insights as “Insight Science”

“Insight Science” could be a way to reframe insights on a path to improving speed, efficiency, quality and business impact. Insight Science could help elevate the craft to a more rigorous, accountable and respected discipline.

Insight Science: the systematic study of insights and insighting to codify knowledge, through data-gathering experiments and exploration for the collective advancement of the insights field.

As a mnemonic device the acronym S.C.I.E.N.C.E. spells out a scientific approach to insights:

- **Systems Thinking** - Adopt a more scientific approach to insights with tested and proven methods, protocols and systems.
- **Codified Knowledge** - Capture, classify and share key concepts, learning and lexicon.
- **Impact** - Measure return-on-insights (ROI) by tracking the transformation of insights into business impact.
- **Experiments** - Gather data on best practices in insights activities to encourage critical thinking about the craft.
- **Novelty thru Diversity** - Include more diverse perspectives in both the work and the insights talent pool.
- **Collaboration** - Encourage more insight and methodology sharing, cross-pollination and collaboration.
- **Equipment** – Build technologies and tools for to amplify insights, while prioritizing training.

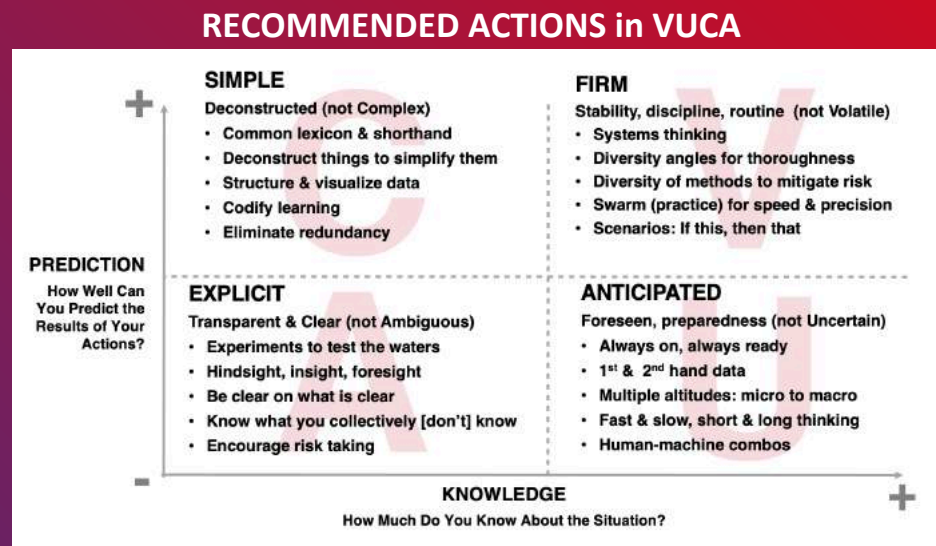
A scientific approach to insights can help address some of the industry's shortcomings, such as lack of standard practices and lexicon.

ISSUE	ANTIDOTE
Unmethodical →	Systems
No Common Lexicon →	Codified Knowledge
Unaccountable →	Impact
Theoretical →	Experiments
Diversity as Afterthought →	Novelty thru Diversity
Siloed and Solitary →	Collaboration
Tech-Adversity →	Equipment

Reframing the insights industry as “Insight Science” could help spark ideas about additional research and experiments like this project, to gain more insight and data about the profession. In addition, thinking of this practice as a new branch of science could inspire new behaviors and methods.

4. How “Insight Science” Yields Faster, Cheaper and Deeper Insight

When the situation is volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA) the recommended actions to survive and thrive are precisely those found in science.



Highly Reliable Organizations (HROs) such as aviation, military, nuclear, utilities and medical triage have adopted systems and behaviors to ensure quality, agility, creativity within boundaries, and efficient outputs with metrics. Insight Science draws inspiration from HROs to improve speed, depth, quality and reduce costs.

5. Calling All Insight Scientists

Immediate next steps towards establishing an Insight Science school of thought and a culture of scientific insights behavior, include developing:

- **Insights Glossary Wiki** – glossary of crowd-sourced lexicon and definitions fused in the field of insights.
- **Pool of Proven Examples** – a well of proven (data supported) best-in-class *insighting* methods.
- **Insight-to-Impact (I2I) Bank** – A replenished knowledge bank of insights-to-impact case studies with ROI/ROi metrics to provide examples of best-in-class insights.
- **Insights Futures**– imagining and designing the future of the profession, by applying foresight skills and future’s thinking to the insights industry (if you can’t see it, you can’t be it).

To enable this, the website www.insightscience.com has been created as a petri-dish of insight science.

A large, stylized logo for 'INSIGHT SCIENCE'. The text 'INSIGHT' is stacked above 'SCIENCE' in a white, sans-serif font. The logo is set against a red-to-blue gradient background that also features faint, light-colored chemical structures and a vertical grid pattern.

INSIGHT SCIENCE

Systems Thinking

Adopt a more scientific approach to insights with tested and proven methods, protocols and systems.

Codified Knowledge

Capture, classify and share key concepts, learning and lexicon.

Impact

Measure return-on-insights (ROI) by tracking the transformation of insights into business impact.

Experiments

Gather data on best practices in insights activities to encourage critical design thinking about the craft.

Novelty thru Diversity

Include more diverse perspectives in both the work and the insights talent pool.

Collaboration

Encourage more open insight and methodology sharing, cross-pollination and collaboration.

Equipment

Build technologies and tools for to amplify insights, while training and apprenticing on the bench in the lab.

What is the future of insight in a world jolted by technological advances and political, economic, and cultural instability? Journey forward into 2030 to explore the people, competencies, tools, and emerging technologies that are reinventing the *insighting* process and helping us discover profound insights now, next, and future. Informed by the future visions of 24 leading futurists and techno-philosophers, this curious compendium promises to make you think differently about insight and the future science of insight.

Produced as a gorgeous art-filled limited edition risography zine. Reserve your copy at www.insightscience.com

Insight Alchemy

futurists' musings on insight

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Today, inside the L'Oréal Group, she drives futures exploration and insight discovery, supporting the disruptive innovation funnel of 30+ brands. She led strategic futures assignments, including The Future of Beauty 2030, The Future of Skin, The Future of Hair, and USA Tomorrow 2030. She is also an architect of open, agile innovation methodologies – sprints, accelerators, hackathons, experiments, crowd-sourcing, open-labs, and consumer co-creation. Sarah uses data analytics, Virtual Reality (VR) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) in her day-today work.

Previously she was the Chief Cultural Strategy Officer of Sparks & Honey, and prior the Director of Trends & Culture, Publicis Kaplan Thaler. Sarah is a member of the New York Academy of Sciences. She has a BA from Bucknell University, an Executive MBA from Harvard Business School, and a MsEd from Pace University. She was awarded three patents and has certifications from:

- MIT (Corporate Innovation Ecosystems)
- Singularity University (Exponential Innovation)
- IDEO (Insights for Innovation)
- World Futures Society (Advanced Foresight Methodologies)
- Institute for the Future (Strategic Foresight, Futures Sciences)
- Blue Ocean Strategy Institute
- Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship (Innovation).

As a professional constantly on the look for improvement and adopting new methodologies, Sarah is currently in the University of Houston's Graduate Certificate program for Advanced Strategic Foresight.

Sarah's personal passion is "curiosity". She invested >10,000 hours and +10 years researching ways to cultivate curiosity for innovation (fascinated with engineering curiosity, exploration and discovery). She is a Member of Columbia University's Curiosity Research Cluster. Her Master's thesis was dedicated to the topic: *Methods to Cultivate Curiosity & Create Curious Internal Cultures*. She is Actively using curiosity-building techniques in corporate Innovation settings and measuring impact, which she has shared in two TEDx talks available online. Sarah is a certified curiosity coach: inspiring, training and enabling people to innovate and become (measurably) more curious and inventive.

THANKS!

Volunteer Brain Trust

A special thank you to a handful of volunteers who offered to help analyze an enormous amount of data (59,000 words). The volunteers, lovingly named the "Brain Trust," assisted with the tedious job of coding, analyzing, and quantifying open-ended survey responses. Over several Zoom-sessions, the Brain Trust discussed and analyzed the research findings— highlighting that *insighting* is more potent when it's collaborative and iterative, with diverse viewpoints.



Katie Arbit

"Research is to see what everybody else has seen, and to think what nobody else has thought." - Albert Szent-Gyorgyi



Ava Atri

"Insight discovery is a careful balance between persistent questioning and patient humility."



Karen Kranz

"Branding isn't a scan or a click. Branding is a relationship. Brands need to act like they care."



Larisa Mats

"You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view." - Harper Lee



CI Sonar

Eliot Roth
Rachael Misch
Sarah Cunningham
www.consumerinsights.com

Glossary*

Sciences have common lexicon for precision communication.

Consumer Insight

Deep empathic understanding of a consumer's contextual situation, attitudes, beliefs, thoughts, wants, needs, motivations, values and/or behaviors for the purpose of marketing. Demonstration of "inner sight" into the consumer.

Consumer Tension

Conflict, frustration or friction between consumer desires or wants, a consumer problem and solution.

Cultural Insight

Deep understanding about cultural context, cultural phenomena or cultural dynamics that are impacting consumer attitudes, beliefs, thoughts, wants, needs, motivations, values and/or behaviors.

Human Truth

A universal accepted fact about human attitudes, wants, needs, behaviors, motivations. A human insight that most people believe to be true or is accepted.

Insight

Insight = inside (in) seeing (sight). Inner sight. Inside sight. Seeing what is hidden and not obvious (not easily perceived and understood). Insight is understanding the inner workings of a phenomenon; the inner or underlying dynamics of self, people, society, culture, ecosystems, trends, and the natural world.

Insighting

The process of discovering insight or consumer insight. The discovery behaviors of insights professionals.

Job to be Done

An innovation challenge, as defined by Clay Christensen, as in a task that consumers are trying to accomplish, a goal or objective they are trying to achieve, a problem they are trying to resolve, something they are trying to avoid, or anything else they are trying to accomplish.

Micro Insight

Small insight or detail, which is not likely game-changing.

Need

A human, or consumer, requiring something essential or important.

Need State

The context (situation or state) in which a human, or consumer, requires something essential or important.

Return on Insight (ROI)

Similar to a “Return on Investment” (ROI), a Return on Insight (ROI) is the ratio between the net profit from an insight versus the cost of acquiring the insight. A high ROI means the insighting process was efficient and/or the performance of the insight was outstanding.

CHARTS 1-3

Source: Heartbeat Ai.

Annual (2018-2020)

benchmark survey

amongst US Gen Pop

tracking curiosity

attitudes and behaviors,

as well as underlying

emotions around curiosity.

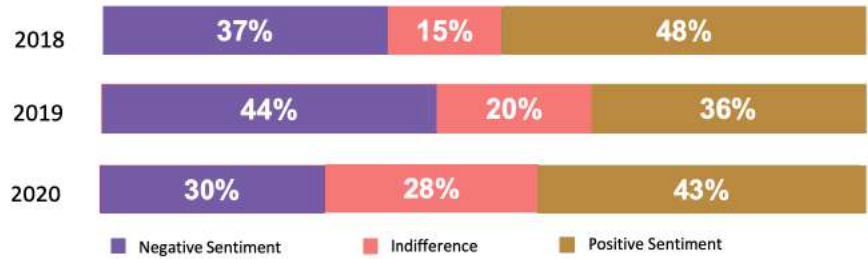
N=3302

Q: What are you

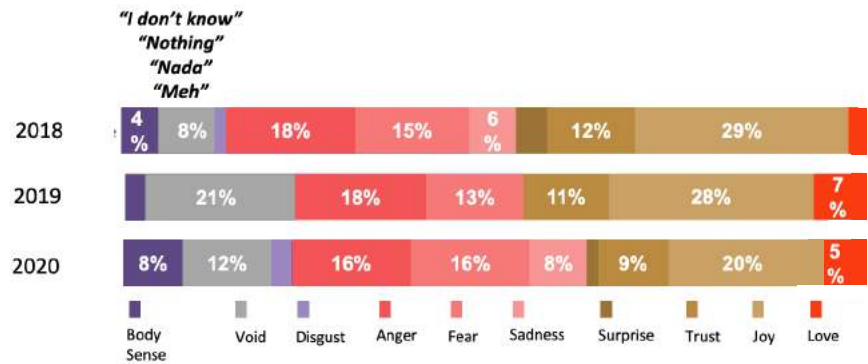
passionately curious

about?

1. Sentiment: What are you passionately curious about?

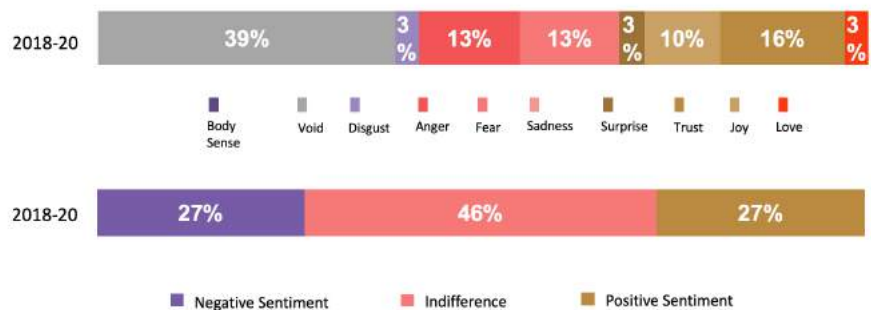


2. Emotions: What are you passionately curious about?



3. Age Details: What are you passionately curious about?

Age 35-44

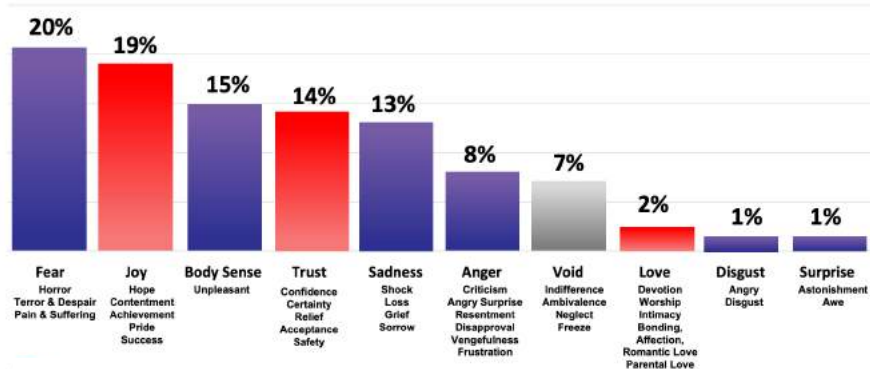


CHARTS 4-5

Source: Heartbeat Ai.
Survey (March 2020)

amongst US Gen Pop asking multiple questions about the future, curiosity and passion. N=3302
Q: What are you curious about in the future? What are you passionate about?
What is the meaning of curiosity?

4. Aggregate Emotions (Gen Pop): Questions about the future, curiosity and passion



5. Emotions (Men, Northeast US): Questions about the future, curiosity and passion



CHART 6

Source: Heartbeat Ai.
Survey (April 2020)

amongst US Gen Pop asking why insight is important. N=301.
Q: Why is insight important to humanity and society?

6. Why is insight important to humanity and society?

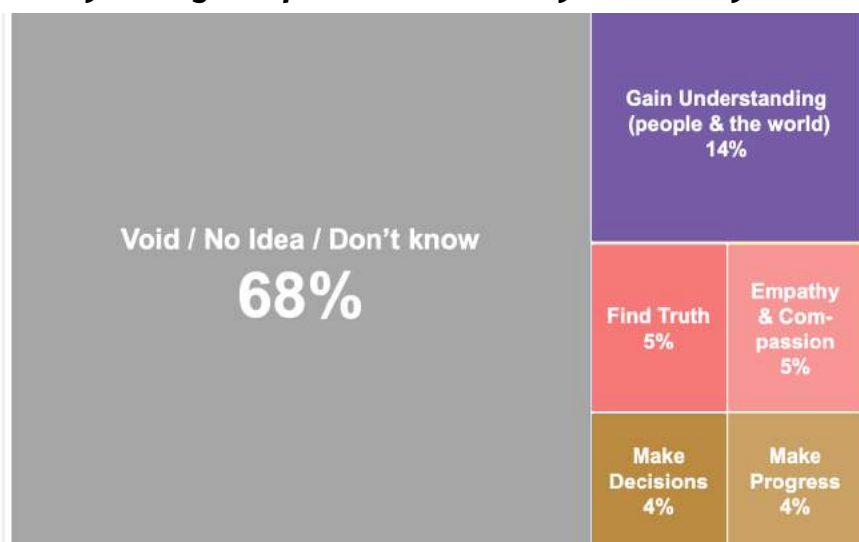


CHART 7

Source: Heartbeat.Ai.
Survey (April 2020)

amongst US Gen Pop asking why insight is important. N=301.

Q: Why is insight important to humanity and society?

7. Age Details: Why is insight important to humanity and society?

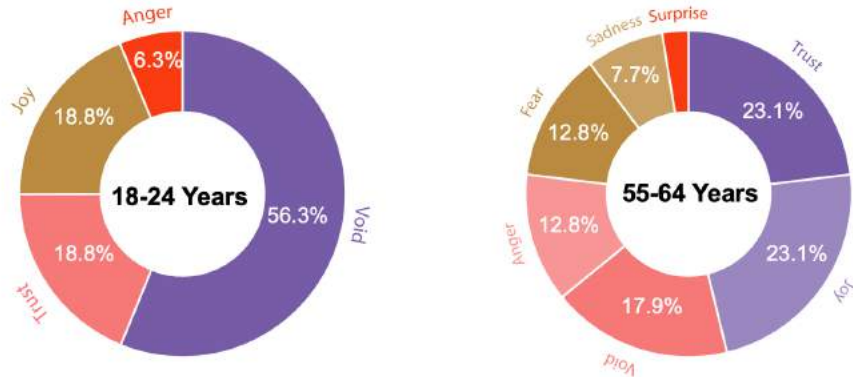


CHART 8

Source: Heartbeat.Ai.
Survey (April 2020)

amongst US Gen Pop asking why insight is important. N=301.

Q: What is insight? What is curiosity?

8. Sentiment: What is insight? What is curiosity?

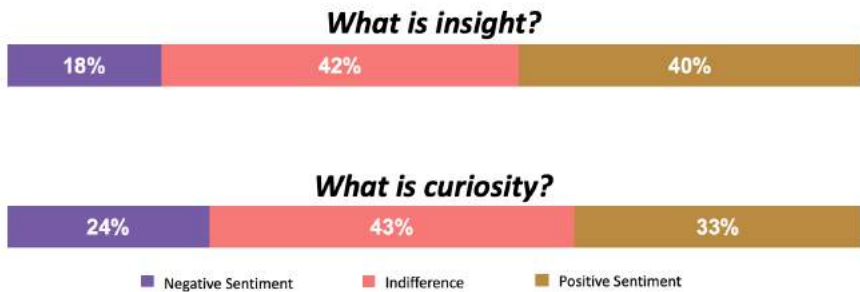


CHART 9

Source: Google Books.

Analysis (April 2020) all mentions in all English language books worldwide between the years 1800-2008 of the words "insight," "insights," and "insightful."

9. Mentions (all books worldwide): Insight, insights, insightful

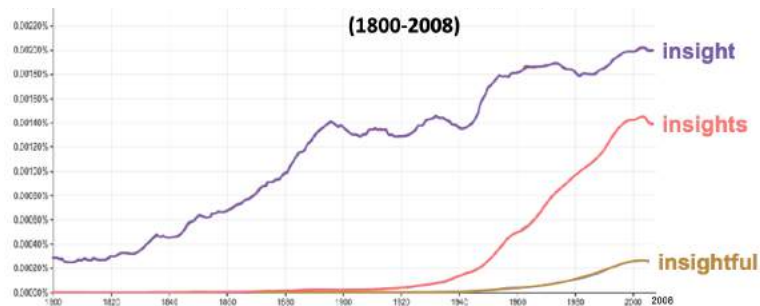


CHART 10.

Examples of "squealing" ecosystems in nature, biology and culture. It illustrates the phenomenon of increasing valences (polarization) before a critical transition (collapse), resulting in a never-before-seen outcome.

10. Examples of "Squealing"

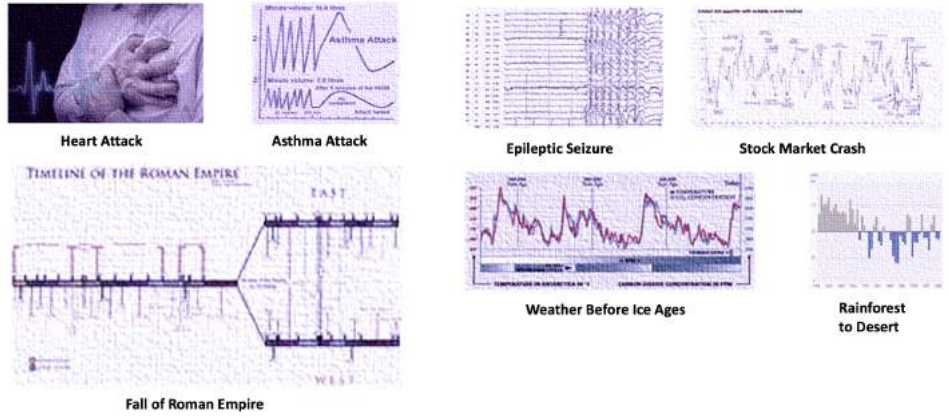


CHART 11

So many factors are working against people caring.

11. Drivers of Indifference



CHART 11

Source: QNTFY.

AI emotion analysis of survey responses. N=155

Global insights professionals (April 2020)

Q: What are the qualities of an insightful person?

11. Emotions: What are the qualities of an insightful person?:

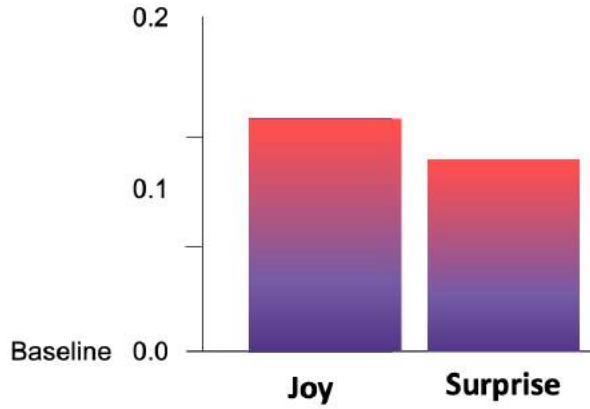


CHART 12

Source: CI Sonar.

Coded analysis of open-ended survey responses.

N=155 Global insights professionals (April 2020)

Q: What are the qualities of an insightful person?

12. Attributes: What are the qualities of an insightful person?

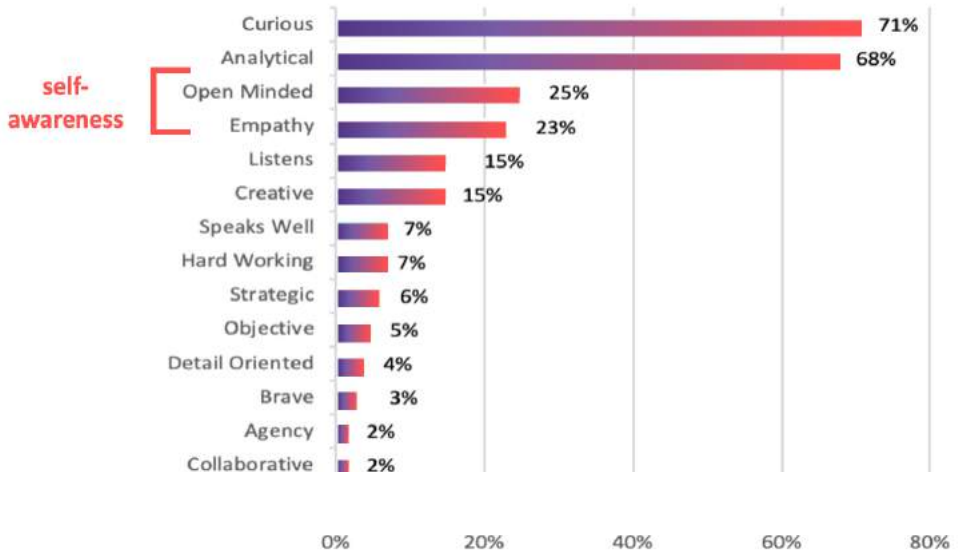


CHART 13

13. How to teach someone to find consumer insights?

Coded analysis of open-ended survey responses.

N=155 Global insights professionals (April 2020)

Q: If you were going to teach someone how to find powerful, non-obvious, meaningful and game-changing consumer insights.... What would you tell them??

Active Probing

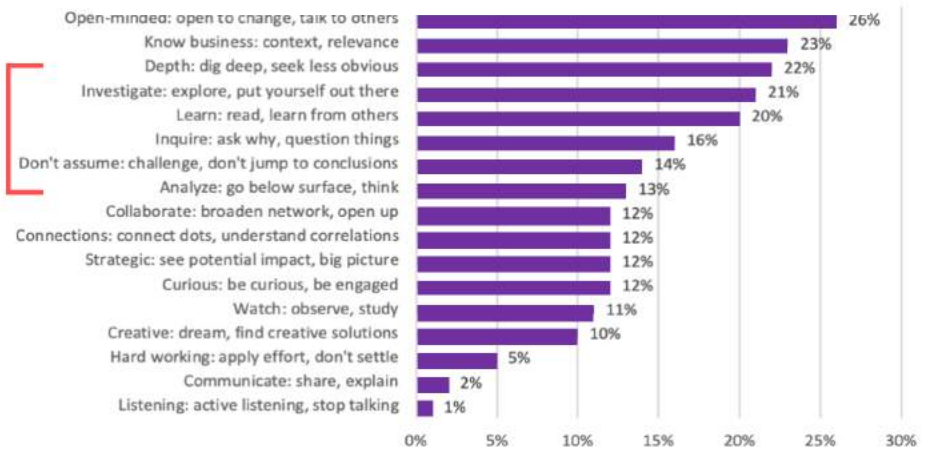


CHART 13

Source: QNTFY.

AI emotion analysis of survey responses. N=155 Global insights professionals (April 2020)
Q: What are the qualities of an insightful person?

14. Emotions: What are the qualities of an insightful person?

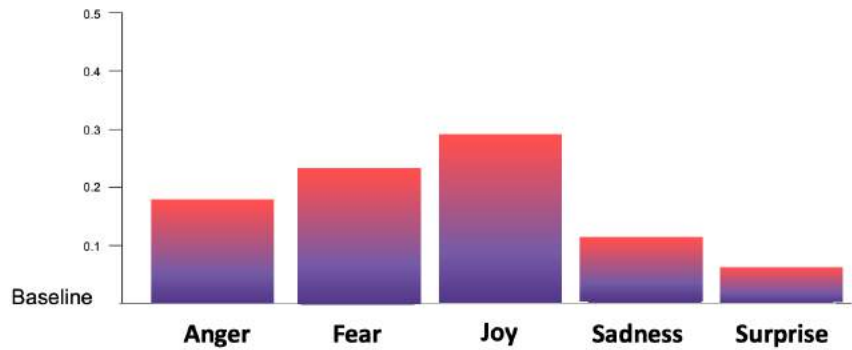


CHART 14

Source: CI Sonar.

Coded analysis of open-ended survey responses. N=155 Global insights professionals (April 2020)
Q: Are there types of people better at insights?

15. Emotions: What are the qualities of an insightful person??

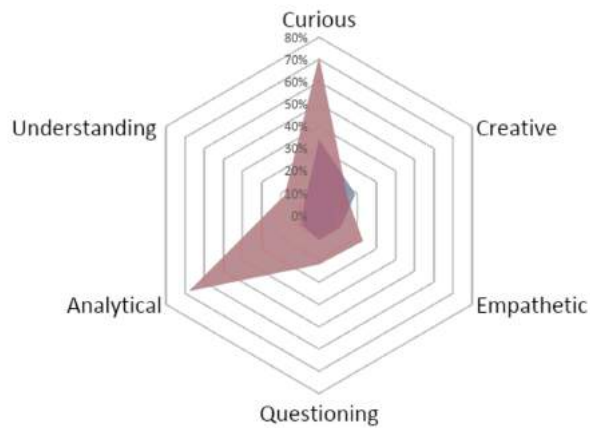


CHART 15.

Survey responses. N=155 Global insights professionals (April 2020)
Q: Rate yourself – how curious are you?

16. Rate yourself – how curious are you?

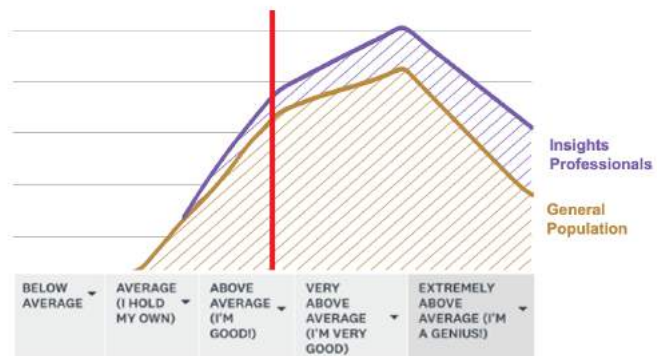
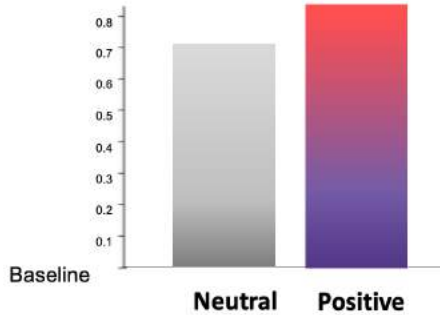


CHART 16

Source: QNTFY.

AI emotion sentiment analysis of survey responses. N=155 Global insights professionals (April 2020) Q: What are the qualities of an insightful person?

17. Sentiment: What are the qualities of an insightful person?

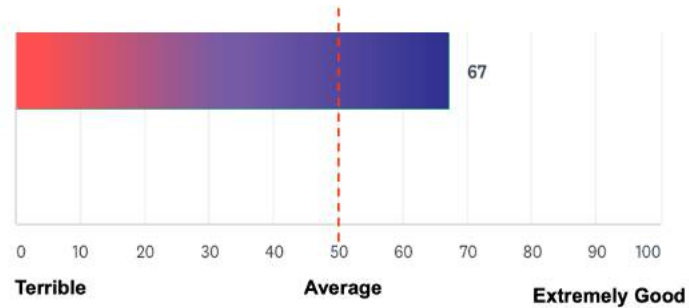


CHARTS 17-18

Survey responses. N=155 Global insights professionals (April 2020)

Q: Rate yourself – How good are you at finding really powerful, non-obvious, meaningful and game-changing “consumer insights?” Q: Rate yourself – How curious are you?

18. Rate yourself: How good are you at finding really powerful, non-obvious, meaningful and game-changing “consumer insights?”



19. Rate yourself: how insightful are you??

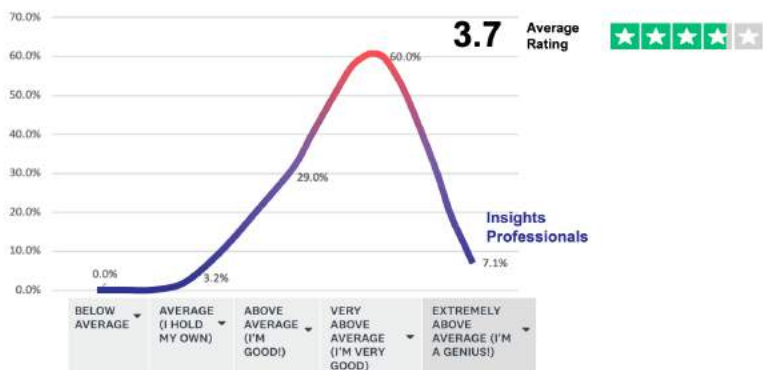


CHART 19

Source: CI Sonar.

Coded analysis of open-ended survey responses.

N=155 Global insights professionals (April 2020)

Q: What are the obstacles to you/your team's insight discovery?

20. What are the obstacles to you/your team's insight discovery?

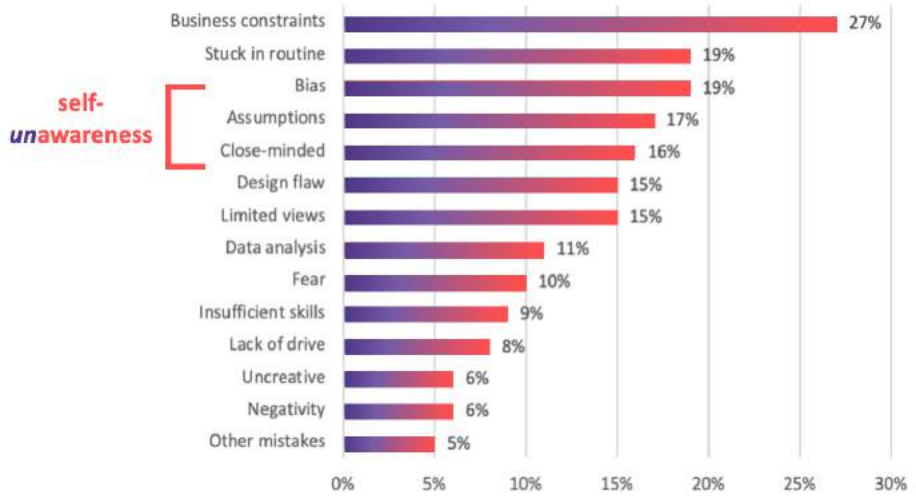


CHART 20

Survey responses. N=155

Global insights professionals (April 2020)

Q: What is most important to you/your team's work?

21. What is most important to you/your team's insight work?

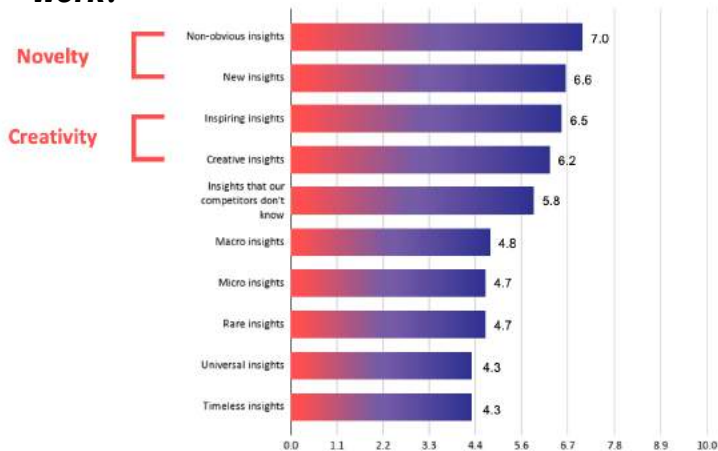


CHART 21

Source: WFA, & BrainJuicer,

The Future of Insights

Global insights

professionals (2016) :

N=300

22. How do you feel about the insights function?

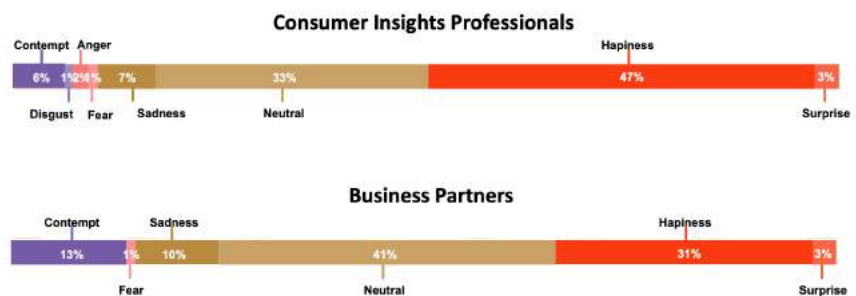


CHART 22-23

Source: WFA, & BrainJuicer,
The Future of Insights
Global insights
professionals (2016) :
 N=300

23. Personas of Insights Teams



24. What is the best description of your insights function today?

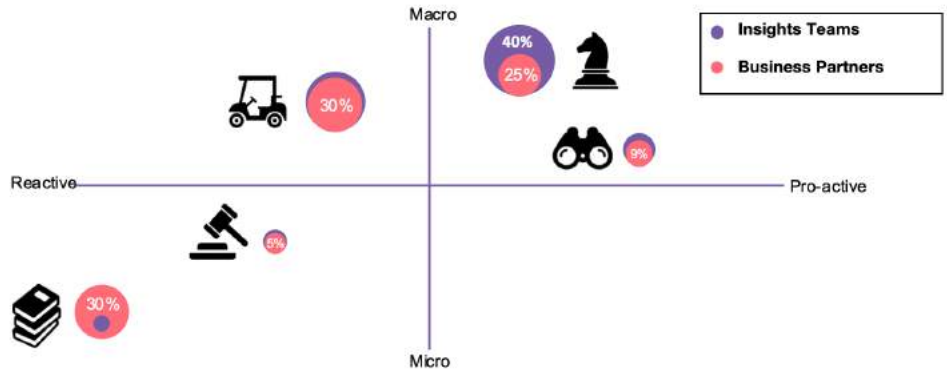


CHART 24

Source: QNTFY.

AI emotion analysis of survey responses. N=155
Global insights professionals (April 2020)
Q: Define and insight? Q: Define a “consumer insight”?

25. Emotions: Define an insight vs. Define a “consumer insight”?

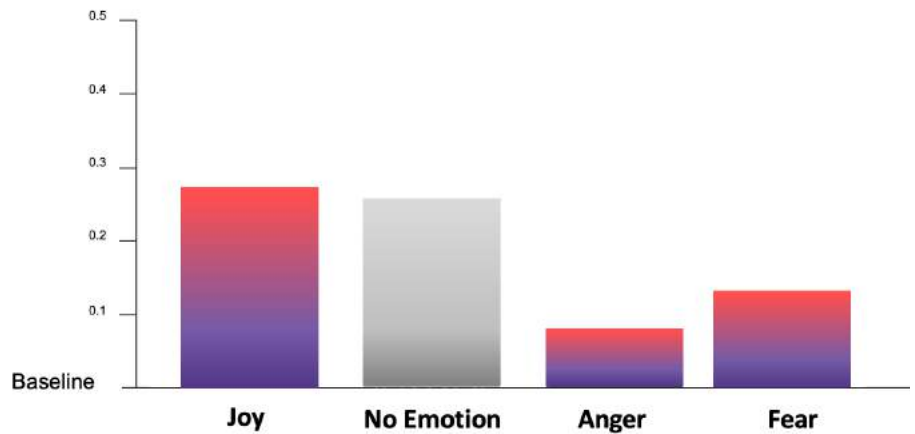


CHART 25

Source: CI Sonar.

Coded analysis of open-ended survey responses. N=147 Global insights professionals (April 2020)
Q: How is a consumer insight different from a consumer tension?

26. Attitudes: How is “consumer insight” different from a “consumer tension”?

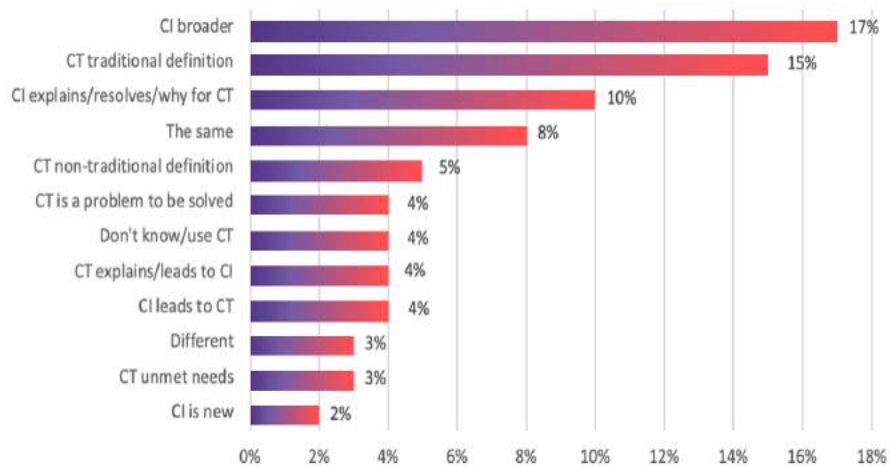


CHART 26-27

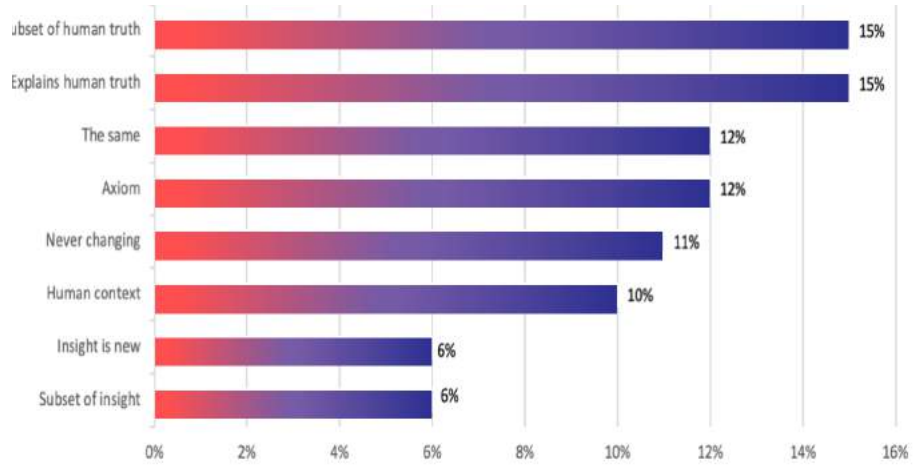
Source: CI Sonar.

Coded analysis of open-ended survey responses.

N=147 Global insights professionals (April 2020)

Q: How is a consumer insight different from a consumer tension?

27. Attitudes: How is “consumer insight” different from a “human truth”?



28. Attitudes: How is “consumer insight” different from a “need or need state”?

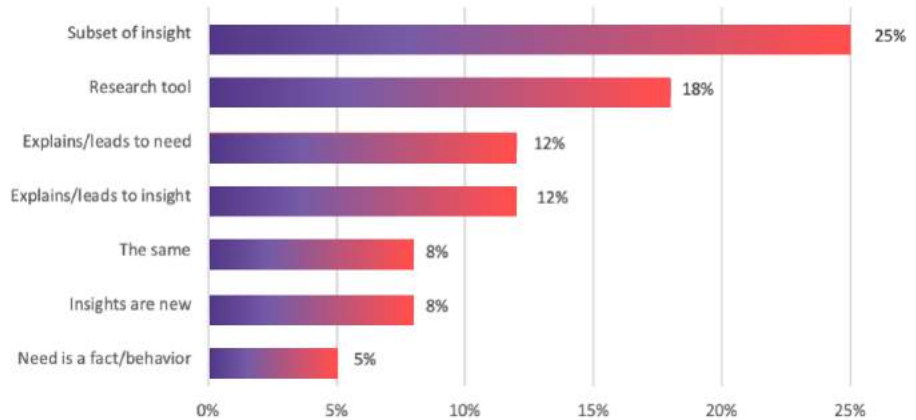


CHART 28

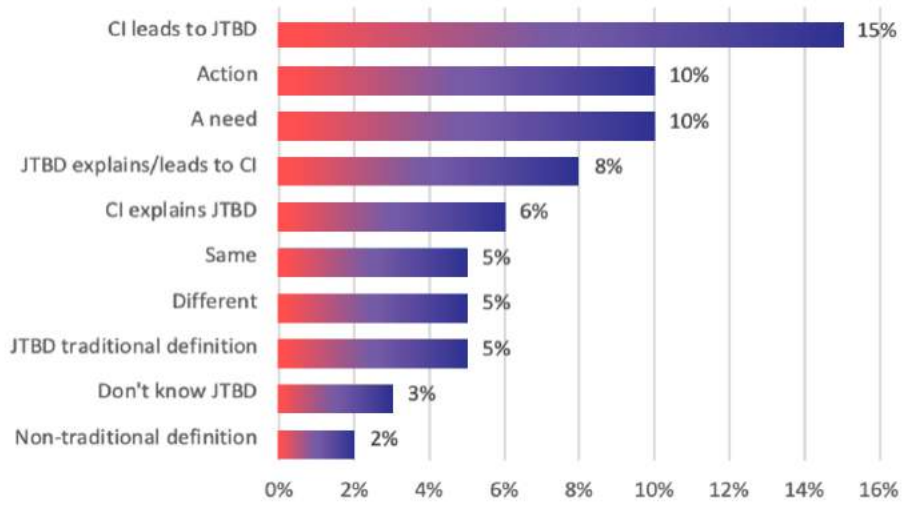
Source: CI Sonar.

Coded analysis of open-ended survey responses.

N=147 Global insights professionals (April 2020)

Q: How is a “consumer insight” different from a “job to be done”?

29. Attitudes: How is “consumer insight” different from a “job to be done”?



CHARTS 29-30

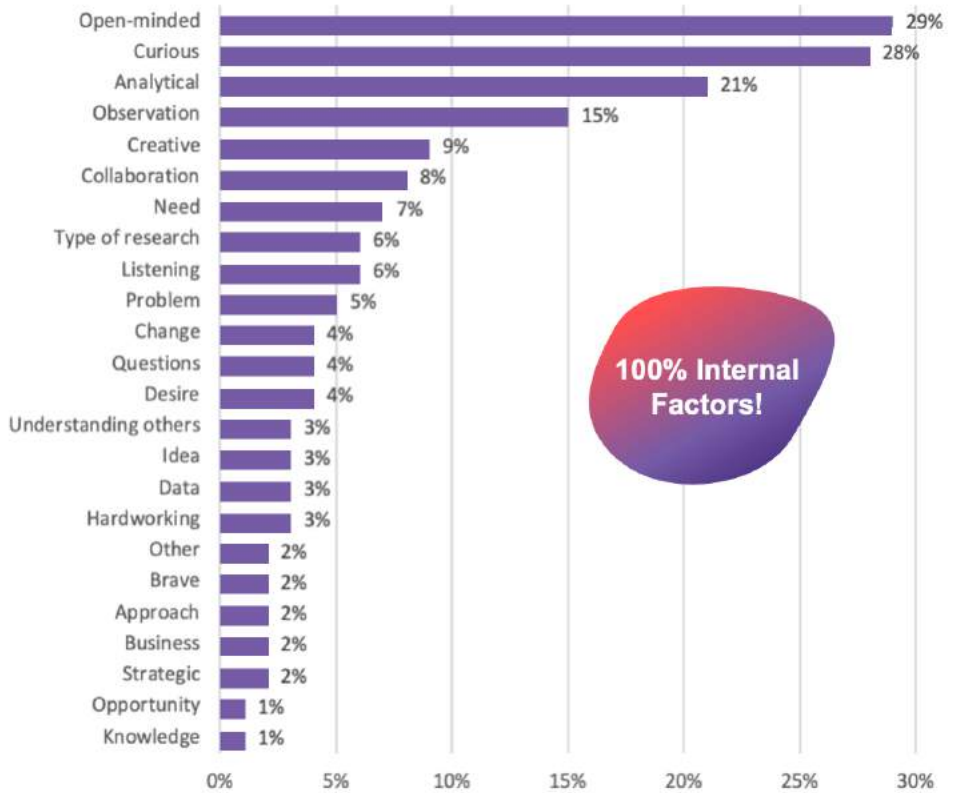
Source: CI Sonar.

Coded analysis of open-ended survey responses.

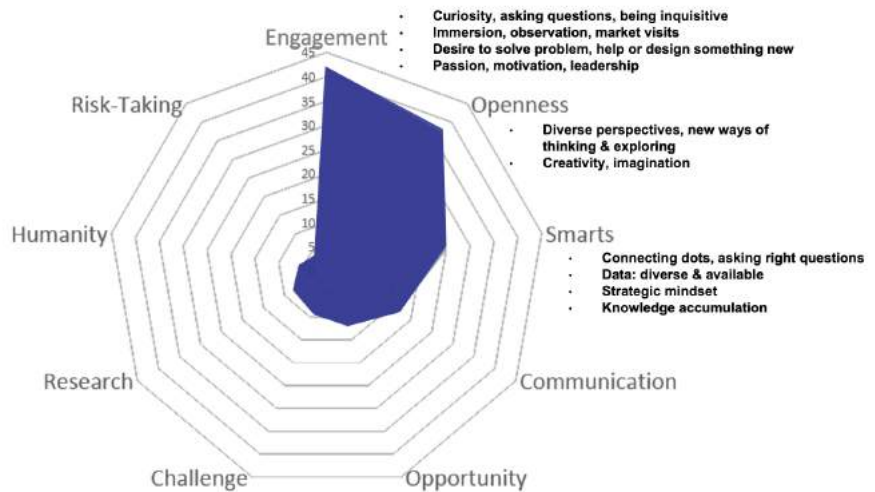
N=155 Global insights professionals (April 2020)

Q: What kills insight discovery?

30. Attributes: What Stimulates insight discovery?



31. Details: What Stimulates insight discovery?



CHARTS 31-32

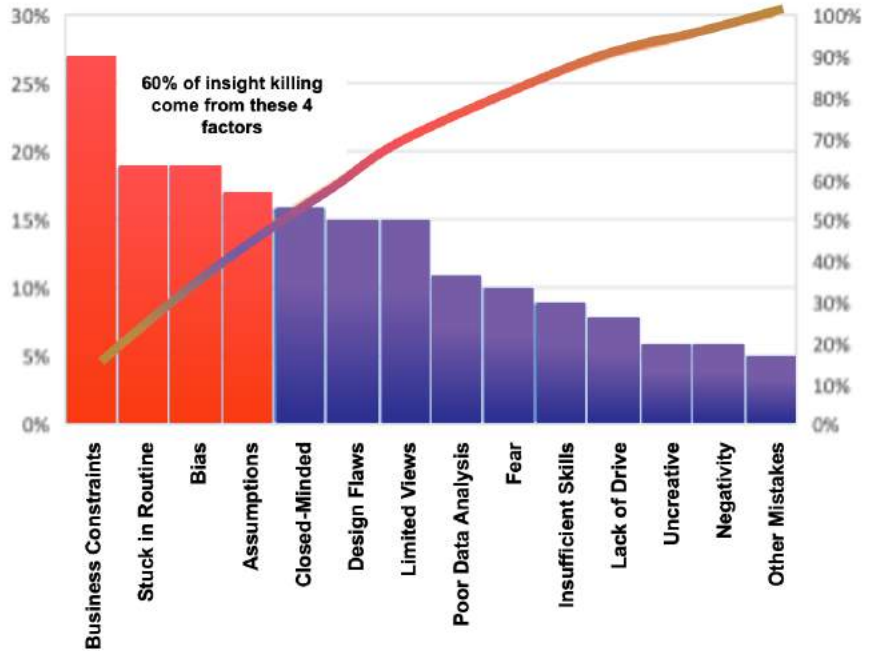
32. What kills insight discovery?

Source: CI Sonar.

Coded analysis of open-ended survey responses.

N=155 Global insights professionals (April 2020)

Q: What kills insight discovery?



33. Details: What kills insight discovery?

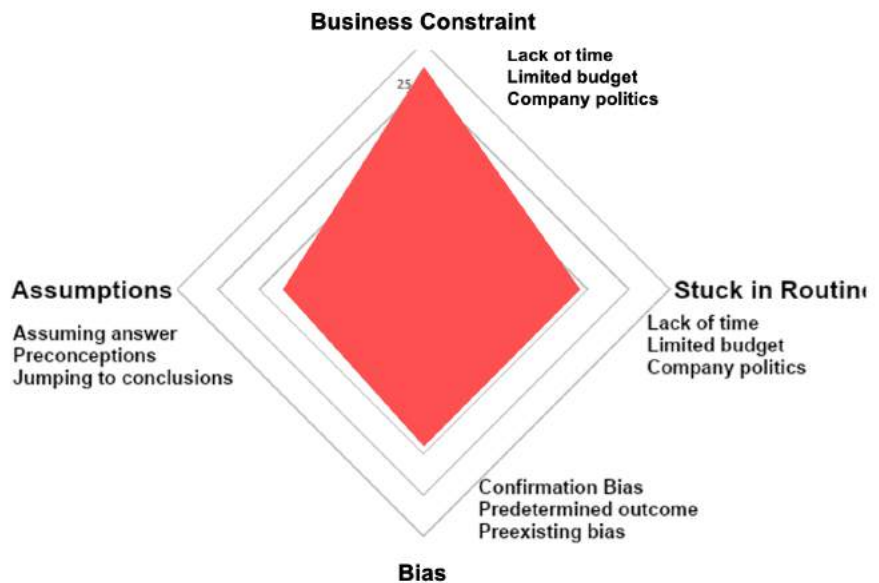


CHART 33

Source: QNTFY.

AI emotion analysis of survey responses. N=122

Global insights professionals (April 2020)

Q: What is the future of insight?

34. Emotions: Insight Pros – What is the future of insight?



CHART 34

Source: CI Sonar.

Coded analysis of open-ended survey responses.

N=155 Global insights professionals (April 2020)

Q: What are the qualities of an insightful person?

35. Attitudes: Insight Pros – What is the future of insight?

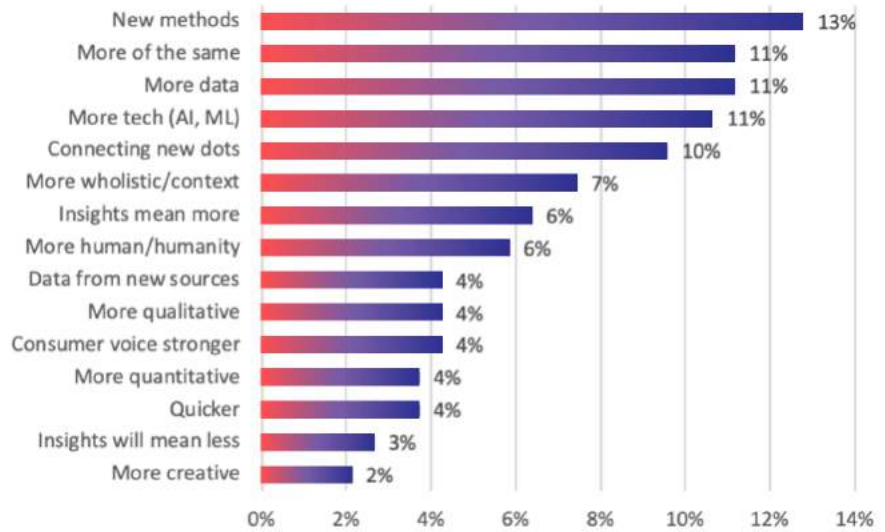


CHART 35

Source: WFA, & BrainJuicer,
The Future of Insights
Global insights
professionals (2016):
N=300

36. What is the best description of your ideal insights function?

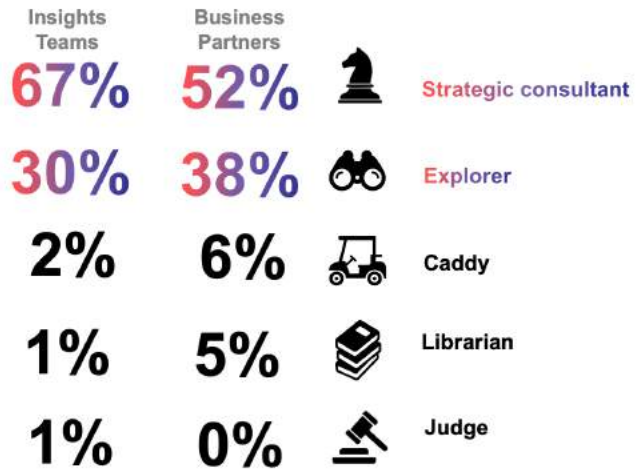


CHART 36

Coded analysis of open-ended survey responses.
N=24 Global futurists (April 2020) Q: What are the qualities of an insightful person?

37. Attitudes: Futurists – What is the future of insight?

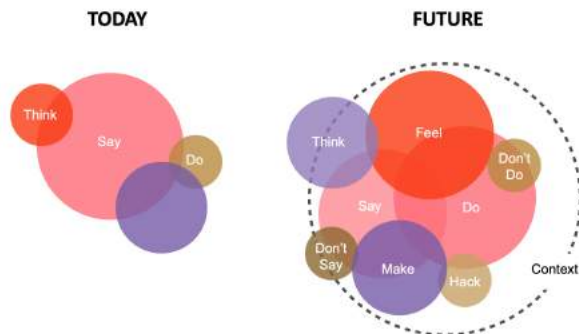
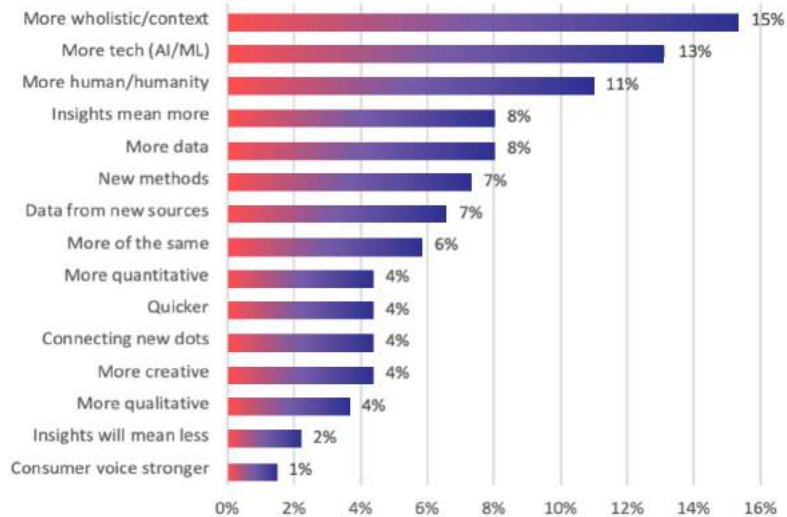


CHART 35

Source: xxxx

36. What is the Future of Insight? (Combined Responses from Futurists and Insights Pros)

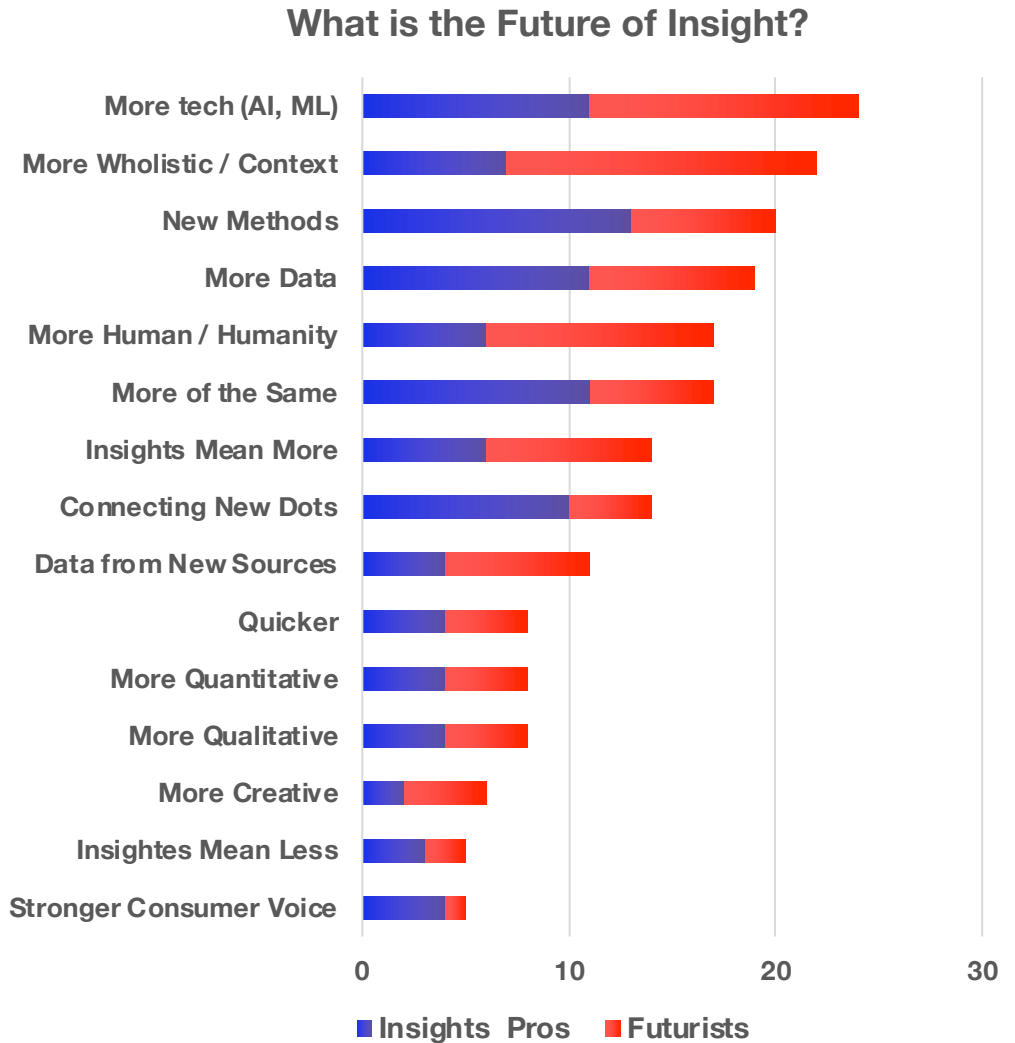
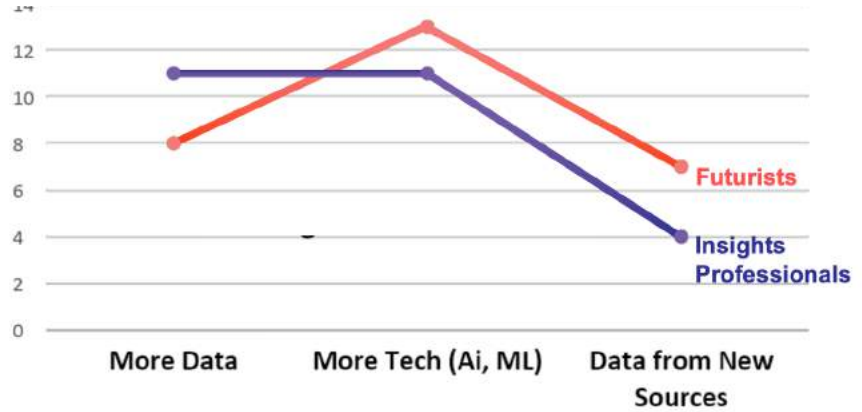


CHART E-F.

Coded analysis of open-ended survey responses.

N=155 Global Insights Professionals, N=24 Global futurists (March-April 2020) Q: What is the future of insight?

38. Attitudes: Futurists vs. Insights Pros – What is the future of insight?



39. Attitudes: Futurists vs. Insights Pros – What is the future of insight?



Contacts

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