



Dynamic Intelligence

Staying in sync with your market

In today's fast-moving landscape, market intelligence must become more dynamic to enable rapid strategy development and iterative action. As a result, many organizations are rethinking how they approach research to fuel the insatiable demand for fast insights about competitors and customers. Researchers are turning to flexible, quick-turn data collection methods including online surveys and blog mining, as well as immersive methodologies such as ethnographic research, to help them gain deeper insight about customers.

Companies are also investing in powerful analytics platforms to streamline the sense-making process. But collecting and aggregating insight is only half the challenge. It's not enough to answer the question of "What's happening"—research also has to facilitate discussions around "What should we do about it?" Piles of data buried in 100-slide PowerPoint decks won't cut it—busy executives need a concise summary of just the facts that will help them make more informed decisions.

A truly dynamic approach puts intelligence in context of actions to allow the organization to operationalize the insight. This requires a new skill set that is both analytical and intuitive, both strategic and tactical. The next-gen marketing strategist needs to be able to penetrate both hard and soft data to synthesize meaning, draw conclusions, and clarify priorities.

Converting aha!s into action

These three techniques can help you drive adoption of insight across your organization:

Actionalize intelligence by going beyond reporting the facts to framing up possible actions. Attach to every finding an implication that makes clear the strategic options inherent in the data.

Facilitate knowledge sharing through "communities of practice" that connect like minded thinkers inside your organization. Consider wikis and portals to accelerate cross-pollination within and across teams.

Align insight into workflows by publishing insights in the context of internal user needs. For instance, reconstitute competitive intelligence into weekly news alerts for executives, battlecards for the field, and category trend reports for product marketing.

“Today's proliferating marketing environment creates opportunities to outsmart and outgrow competitors by generating and acting on cell-level customer insights.”

—“Insights,” McKinsey Quarterly

3 THINGS YOU CAN DO NOW

1. Begin with the end.
Before designing any survey instrument, envision the outcome to clarify the actions that research will help inform. If the question isn't actionable, don't ask it.

2. Soak in the details.
Try a new “immersive” method like anthropological interviewing or co-creation brainstorms with customers. Then create a “war room” to catalog artifacts—including video, audio, and pictures—and observations about the customer.

3. Cut to the chase.
Boil research summary decks down to the key facts that will inform decision-making. Snapshot top-line findings and implications in two slide max, and add a key take-away to every drill-down slide that crystallizes the possible meaning of the data.

Get ahead of competitors

- Make checking competitors an organizational habit; incent tracking behavior
- Reverse-engineer messages and conceptual frameworks
- Enlist partners in spotting trends
- Emulate competitors cautiously

Stay aligned with customers

- Have a continuous feedback process
- Make customers an active partner in your course corrections
- Get them vested in your success
- Deliver value by connecting them to each other

