

BEYOND INSIGHT GENERATION

Integration | socialization | activation



Beyond insight generation: integration, socialization, activation.

“With the ever-increasing amount of data sources, new technology and other advances, our worlds are changing dramatically. Do the new possibilities excite you? At the same time, are you suffering from “data overload anxiety”? Are you constantly pushing to get the most out of your research in a changing environment?”

On **Thursday, October 8**, GfK hosted a client breakfast on the top floor of the lovely Le Parker Meridien Hotel in midtown Manhattan. Over 60 clients attended and engaged in a lively and practical discussion of what’s next in consumer insights. The event began with breakfast and networking and was followed by a panel discussion moderated by Holly Jarrell (Chief Client Services Officer, GfK Consumer Experiences North America).

The panelists included:

- [Barry Blyn](#) | VP of Consumer Insights, ESPN
- [Deb Campbell](#) | VP of Consumer Insights, Verizon
- [Christine Heye](#) | Director of Market Research, Consumer Insights & Analytics, Aetna
- [Laurie Krause](#) | Senior Director of Consumer Insights, Best Buy
- [Surya Menon](#) | Director of Market insights, Abbott Nutrition
- [Jed Meyer](#) | Global Director of Research & Analytics, Annalect
- [Matt Valenti](#) | VP of Guest Experience Intelligence, Starwood

For roughly 90 minutes, the panelists exchanged views on data integration and activation, issues of quality when combining data from multiple sources, and the challenges of delivering accurate insights at increasing speeds.

After the panel, lively small-group discussions were held at tables throughout the room, with GfK staffers moderating the conversation at each and taking notes to capture the dialogue. Companies in attendance included BuzzFeed, Conde Nast, Morgan Stanley, Colgate, Samsung, J&J and The New York Times.

In the pages that follow you will find a recap of both the panel and roundtable discussions.

PANEL DISCUSSIONS SUMMARY

The **success factors** attendees discussed with respect to what it takes to navigate the quickly changing landscape:

- **Senior level support** – the panelists all agreed that they are able to make the necessary changes in whom they hire, how they're organized and how the workflow happens if their leaders (often the CMO and/or division president) are in the know and supportive of the changes in our industry.
- **Diverse talent and diverse skill sets** – some attendees said that they need to draw upon a different talent pool than the traditional client-side researcher profile. The key desired traits are: the ability to integrate disparate data, story-telling and a general ability to communicate effectively (many clients are investing in communication training), curiosity, having firm opinions and, in many cases, last: research skills. Others said they need to hire more generalists that can handle an increasingly broad array of issues and opportunities.
- **Data-agnostic insight generation** – successful client-side researchers do not have preconceived notions about what types of data may ultimately be used to address a business issue. Increasingly, this translates to considering non-primary-research sources first.
- **Simplicity** – many talked about some version of the "5 slide rule" – less is always better. Albert Einstein: "Everything should be made as simple as possible, but not simpler."
- **Speed** – attendees agreed that, more and more, something that's 75% (or less) of the way there and available now is almost always better than waiting longer to get to 100%. However, many said that this should not be an excuse for dropping the ball on quality.
- **Technology** – it should be embraced not for the sake of technology but for practical reasons. Many believe that the promise of a technology-driven internal all-in decision platform (the "holy grail") is still a long way off – but there are signs that we're heading in the right direction.
- **Socialization and activation** – the more emphasis the insights teams place on this within their companies, the more successful they are in adapting to the new challenges.
- **Everyone owns the data** – the days of researcher as gate keeper of the data are virtually over. It's more effective to allow everyone full access and focus on training/ adding value to ensure the right usage of the data/ insights.
- **"Garage band" mentality** – one panelist coined this term to mean that they'll take on any request from any part of their organization (because "they just love to play"). And many agreed that their internal client base is expanding.

ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSIONS HIGHLIGHTS:

DATA INTEGRATION

- Want to **get the simple stuff right first**; don't get too complicated; don't overbuild
- People are still **spending too much time compiling data instead of using data**
- Need to be **more integrated in storytelling and provide consumer-centric view**; need to integrate social media, web analysis, but different teams do things differently; even knowing who would have information is a challenge
- If you **get your question right**, then you can find various access points to get answers. Simple questions become more complicated if looking at more data sources, and therefore can get distracting. Before even looking at data sources, get hypothesis together and have a story to support hypothesis, then look if data sources can support the story.
- **Requires a huge system** to do it; who would run it/feed it?
- **Internal clients don't ask about or think in terms of "data integration" per se, but rather focus on need for insights/answers quickly.** While internal clients are aware of "big data" conceptually, and are aware of specific data sources, they don't think in terms of the integration process and challenges it creates
- **Silos still exist in many companies and are a significant barrier to efforts to integrate and analyze data across multiple sources.** Internal separation of digital advertising and digital analytics is a barrier
- **Customer segmentation fusion model has worked**, where segmentations from different sources can be overlaid.
- **Social media and community panels** fill need for insights when database analytics are too complex or elusive
- **Tight internal timelines could be causing bad insights** or data from research agency because everything is rushed and not done thoroughly or using research best practices.
- We're living in culture where **marketers are making business decisions based on twitter mentions.** It's useful to see what people are talking about and then look for similar trends outside of those mentions and within your own industry. Social media is an important tool, however, an accurate interpretation of what social media means (its value) is what is missing.
- **Build knowledge base so business can respond quickly to changing environment.** Marketers need to understand how to read data and act on it by telling the story.

SOCIALIZATION OF RESEARCH

- We need to focus on marketing the research better
- Globally, we socialize through reporting, but on a local level, there's more sharing across brands
- We use 1-page summaries in order to deliver quickly and concisely; get a message through
- We have a shift to self-service model of communication; deliver information through tablets and smartphones; varies by channel/brand
- Put numbers into better context when delivering a message; built an 'on-demand' reporting system
- General tone before was one of fear of social media; now it's get data from multiple sources inclusive of social
- Dealing with short attention span of stakeholders
- Ensure that research is focused on what those end clients do – business focus
- Needs to be in customer language
- Insights increasingly need to be delivered in an entertaining way
- Need to create information themes that can live throughout the year that can be revisited from project to project – it is an impossible task to keep telling new stories about each little project
- Good visualization is a key delivery mechanism
- The whole idea of making insights memorable provides tremendous value
- "Knowledge Brief" used with any research requests received from around the globe; forces the requestor to specifically state what they need the research for and how they intend to use. This process enables the team to make sure all parties are aligned on the intent and needs the research is supposed to fulfill.
- To share information internally when new products are introduced created 60 second videos for distribution on the intranet as well as power point decks to help the Ad Sales team understand these new data-heavy products. They have learned that any videos longer than 60 seconds are not going to be viewed or retained by the sales teams. The power point decks are professionally designed and focus on visuals, not numbers.

ACTIVATION

- Things move fast; **good enough is better than squeaky clean** (when it comes to data source).
- **Need speed**; have to go straight to sales force to drive sales and \$.
- **Bite size** information. Different bites for different groups. Physical delivery not just digital.
- Spend days on **metaphors to develop the story of a study**, to find the right one that will make the insights memorable; alternative is to use just “last page metaphor”, to keep the main insight in people’s minds rather than developing an entire presentation.
- **Picture or chart** is better than text.
- Get it right and **manage expectations** on time.
- Make sure **everyone is telling the same story**.
- It has to be quality research but maybe you only answer 80-85% of the ask; **focus on the most important**.
- Give a **quick answer from data in hand**, then follow up with custom if needed.
- You can’t be afraid to say “**we don’t know.**”

ORGANIZATION/SKILL SET

- Need people with **creative skill set**, but hard to put color in the story. We need to have people who can see the big picture, and not just be focused on one little area. Having eclectic background can be very helpful.
- Look for a **storyteller, naturally curious person** who has thirst for finding out more. Know how to take the info you have and tell story. Hire people right from graduation. During hiring process, give case studies, ask to give examples, and set content for 30 seconds. Look for C-A-R – C is Content, A is Action. R is results. This is framework for outcome on business – need to be able to stitch together to form a story.
- Need to keep thinking fresh, **learn more from kids**, just like he does with his own son who’s a big fan of Shark Tank TV show. Had own experience of going to their EVP to influence about making an investment about a particular product. Instead of doing his spiel for 30 min., it took only a few seconds – focused on the trend, and have gained trust.
- Hire analysts who are **straight from college**; they are curious.
- Specific analytical skills are only important during the first week. However, you really need people who are **good storytellers**.
- Look for **curious people, problem solvers and communicators**.
- Look for **different from yourself**, diversity, someone with an opinion.
- Go for an equal mix of **right and left brain** people.
- Qualities not on a resume – inherent **curiosity, drive, opinionated**, etc.
- **Technical skill set a minimum** because of need for speed. Other niceties (curiosity, etc.) are not yet on list.
- Encourage to “**stretch, learn, and grow**”. Need to be able to make a mistake. Curiosity leads to it (retraining or learning new skills).
- The trend toward hiring people who can **analyze, market and story tell is interesting**; people today lack those communications skills.