IT’S A GAMEFUL WORLD
ARE YOU READY TO PLAY?

SNEAK PEEK:
The QRCA Annual Conference in Orlando October 7-9, 2015

GLOBAL:
Conducting Healthcare Qual in Japan in 2015

TOOLBOX:
Coding as a Long Walk in the Woods
Actually, it is like brain surgery

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It’s a Gameful World – Are You Ready to Play?

TOOLBOX: Gameful design makes non-game tasks – like research! – more fun and motivating. By reshaping your research methodologies into challenges that lead to goal achievement and WINNING, you’ll have more engaged participants.

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Conducting Healthcare Qual in Japan in 2015

GLOBAL: Healthcare research in Japan is complicated by cultural, language, and logistical challenges. The authors offer suggestions on how best to manage a successful research study with Japanese patients, physicians, and clients.

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The Focus Group Introduction: More than Meets the Ear

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Coding as a Long Walk in the Woods

TOOLBOX: Bring plenty of patience, a map, and be prepared for a few disagreements when the roads diverge. This article will explore coding strategies for getting the most from your qualitative data.
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12 SNEAK PREVIEW OF THE QRCA CONFERENCE IN ORLANDO

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Editor’s Note: The photo and name for the Tech Talk/Online Qual was incorrectly listed as Kay Corry Aubrey for the Summer issue of QRCA Views. Our Summer TechTalk/Online Qual Editor was Karen Lynch. Kay will be taking over starting with the Fall issue.
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Welcome to Fall VIEWS! The articles in this issue align perfectly with the theme of our annual conference “A Whole New World of Research.” Joel Reish and the Conference Committee have put together a preview of the career-enhancing learning and networking opportunities that await you in Orlando.

While we all know how technology has upended our industry, in this issue you’ll find many articles that firmly establish qualitative research skills as alive and well.

Steve Quirk traces the development of his family’s business—Quirk’s magazine—from its humble beginnings in the 1960s to the present. I was especially heartened to hear his thoughts on why it is a good time to be a qualitative researcher. Pat Sabena balances Steve’s optimism with a realistic look at how the Affordable Care Act, government regulations, shifting business models and other trends in healthcare qualitative research have impacted the demand for our services.

For Schools of Thought, Monika Wingate’s “Get Out of the Project-Based Research Trap: How Iterative Insights Help Teams Build Winning Strategies” shows how to give new direction to your research by integrating design thinking, agile and lean techniques.

Sandy McCray describes how to “get people to move beyond that frazzled, distracted place, to the restoration of thoughtful consideration and independent thinking, while still moving quickly” via application of gaming techniques in “It’s a Gameful World—Are You Ready to Play?”

Our other Toolbox offerings offer a blend of old and new critical skills. Greg Rathjen outlines the formula he uses in “Focus Group Introduction: More Than Meets the Ear” that set the bedrock for success by balancing emotions with the practical. Cynthia Jacobs of NVIVO uses the metaphor of “A Long Walk in the Woods” as the best thought process for developing a coding scheme to help you mine the deepest insights from your research data. Within our Global section Bill Friedrich offers a fascinating look into what you need to know about Japanese culture to be a successful researcher there.

Robert Hoekman, an internationally known author and speaker on User Experience, introduces you to this emerging field in his Tech Talk/Online article “The 13 Tenets of UX.” Make sure to check out Robert’s companion podcast on podcast.qrca.org where he describes opportunities for qualitative researchers.

Finally for Business Matters, “Us and Them: Why Learning Who Your Audience Isn’t Matters” extends the conversation on the importance of making sure you understand the world view of your target audience. The advice applies to our research as well as business development.
Qualitative Research Consultants Association (QRCA) serves its members in the industry through education, promotion and representation. The statements and opinions expressed herein are those of the individual authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the association, its staff, or its board of directors, QRCA VIEWS, or its editors. Likewise, the appearance of advertisers, or QRCA members, does not constitute an endorsement of the products or services featured in this, past or subsequent issues of this quarterly publication. Copyright ©2014-2015 by the Qualitative Research Consultants Association. QRCA VIEWS is published quarterly. Subscriptions are complimentary to members of QRCA and are available to buyers upon request. Presort standard postage is paid at Duluth, MN. Printed in the U.S.A. Reprints and Submissions: QRCA VIEWS allows reprinting of material published here, upon request. Permission requests should be directed to QRCA. We are not responsible for unsolicited freelance manuscripts and photographs. Contact the editor in chief for contribution information. Advertising: For display and classified advertising rates and insertions, please contact E&M Consulting, Inc., 1170 Hazeltine Boulevard, Suite #350, Chaska, MN 55318. (800) 572-0011, Fax (952) 448-9928. Ad Deadlines are October 29, 2015 and January 18, 2016.
The 2015 QRCA Annual Conference in Orlando—
More Wonder and Magic for the World of Qualitative Research

The mission of the QRCA Annual Conference is: To be the premier qualitative research conference worldwide, dedicated to furthering knowledge and understanding of the practice and utilization of qualitative research consulting.

The QRCA Annual Conference is the single largest gathering of qualitative consultants worldwide. It’s an opportunity to learn and network from the best in the industry. The use of “wonder” and “magic” in my title is obviously intended to tie in with the Orlando location. But, they also closely tie to the experiences one gains from attending the conference:

Wonder: (noun) something marvelous—(synonym) curiosity. The richness of learning from our conference content always leaves me in awe with the talent and expertise of those in the industry. Learning from these experts is truly something marvelous. Curiosity is what drives qualitative researchers—the desire to want to know more. The conference feeds our curious desire to know more, making us stronger and smarter as individuals and an industry.

Magic: (noun) inexplicable things—(synonym) enchanted. The magic in the air is an unparalleled experience. It is difficult to put into words the collegial spirit that exists among attendees of the conference and members of the QRCA. If you want to know how enchanting it is, you must attend for yourself—words cannot do this justice; it’s an inexplicable thing!

This year’s theme for the 2015 QRCA Annual Conference is “Whole New World.” I spoke with our Conference Co-Chairs, Kelly Heatly and Chris Kann, about this year’s theme and how it furthers the mission of the conference.

Why “Whole New World?”
We came up with a theme that was focused on educating attendees about cutting edge tools and methodologies of qualitative research. We wanted to leverage the excitement of Orlando, and “Whole New World” hints at the magic surrounding this location. But more importantly, we wanted to leverage our three conference pillars—discovery, innovation, and imagination—for introducing new and exciting tools to researchers.

How will attendees experience this “Whole New World?”
This year’s QRCA Annual Conference is meant to be about the technology, resources, and methodologies available in qualitative research. The conference is a way to see and experience these cutting-edge tools firsthand, including a look at traditional methods with a modern twist.

Any chance you can give us a sneak peek into this “Whole New World?”
The speaker committee has been very busy selecting presentations for this year’s QRCA Annual Conference. The selected presentations fall within seven tracks designed to deliver our broad theme. I encourage everyone to visit the website to explore our conference content and register for the 2015 Annual Conference.

The 2015 QRCA Annual Conference will be held October 7–9, 2015, at the Hilton Bonnet Creek Resort in Orlando, Florida. To learn more about the conference and to register, please visit us online at www.qrca.org.

I encourage you all to attend!
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October 7-9, 2015 • Orlando, FL

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Visit QRCA.org/2015 for full workshop descriptions and to register!

Schedule at a Glance:

Wednesday, October 7

7:30 am - 7:00 pm  Registration

8:30 - 10:45 am  Demo Connections
• Three companies selected for their innovative approaches will provide demonstrations of their products.

11:00 am - 2:00 pm  Marketplace Grand Opening
1:00 - 2:00 pm  First Timers Event
2:00 - 2:30 pm  Welcome/Opening

2:30 - 4:00 pm  Plenary Sessions: Triple Feature Kick Off
• Mules, Tangelos + Pink Carnations: It’s a Whole New World of Qual Research
• The Future of Qualitative: You Better Learn to be a Techie!
• Stand Up and Qual: Learning from the Masters of Insight

4:00 - 4:30 pm  Break in Marketplace

4:30 - 5:30 pm  Breakout Sessions
• Hopping the Pond: Making the Leap from Domestic-Only Studies to Global Research
• The Responding Dead: Surviving the Horde of Fraudulent Participants
• The Gaze: How Being Observed by Clients Impacts Qualitative Researchers

5:30 - 7:00 pm  Cocktails in Marketplace
7:00 pm  Dine-Arounds
### Thursday, October 8

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7:30 - 5:30 pm</td>
<td>Registration</td>
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<tr>
<td>7:30 - 8:30 am</td>
<td>Healthy Connections</td>
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<tr>
<td>8:00 - 9:00 am</td>
<td>Breakfast in the Marketplace / Optional SIG Meetings</td>
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<td>9:00 - 10:00 am</td>
<td>Breakout Sessions</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• What Are You Worth?</td>
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<td>• Whole New World of Creative Analysis</td>
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<td>• DIY Digital Ethnography</td>
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<td>10:00 - 10:45 am</td>
<td>Break in Marketplace</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:45 - 11:40 am</td>
<td>Annual Meeting and Town Hall</td>
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<td>11:45 am - 12:45 pm</td>
<td>Breakout Sessions</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• How to Protect Yourself in an Increasingly Litigious World</td>
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<td>• Building Ideas Not Policing Them: How Appreciative Inquiry Theory Can Make Research a Creative Practice</td>
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<td>• From Moderating to Facilitating</td>
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<td>12:45 - 2:10 pm</td>
<td>Lunch &amp; Awards</td>
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<td>2:15 - 3:30 pm</td>
<td>Breakout Sessions</td>
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<td>• Getting Beyond “Once Upon a Time”</td>
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<td>• The Zen of Research: Doing Qualitative in Japan</td>
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<td>• Mandala to Metamorphosis: What Tibetan Buddhism and LEGO Can Teach You About Building Your Brand and Narrative</td>
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<td>3:30 - 4:30 pm</td>
<td>Break in Marketplace</td>
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<td>4:30 - 5:30 pm</td>
<td>Breakout Sessions</td>
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<td>• Understanding Critical Tipping Points by Going Deeper Faster - Leveraging Mixed Methods, Digital/Online Technology &amp; Innovative Projectives</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• How to Expand Your Business into User Experience (UX)</td>
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<td>• The Next Wave of Innovation in Qualitative Research: Your Recruit</td>
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<td>7:00 pm</td>
<td>A Glow New World PARTY!</td>
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### Friday, October 9

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<th>Time</th>
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<tr>
<td>7:30 - 4:30 pm</td>
<td>Registration</td>
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<td>7:30 - 8:30 am</td>
<td>Healthy Connections</td>
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<td>8:00 - 9:00 am</td>
<td>Breakfast in the Marketplace / Optional Chapter Meetings</td>
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<td>9:00 - 10:00 am</td>
<td>Roundtable Discussions</td>
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<td>10:00 - 11:00 am</td>
<td>Break in Marketplace</td>
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<td>11:00 am - 12:30 pm</td>
<td>Double Features</td>
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<td>• Leveraging Digital Tools</td>
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<td>• Going Mobile: Maximizing Online and Mobile Qual Methods</td>
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<td>• Fire the Moderator?</td>
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<td>• New Roles in a Tech-driven World</td>
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<td>• The Cognitive Approach</td>
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<td>• Tools to Transform: Learn a Framework for Applying Cognitive Tools</td>
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<td>• Cognitive Interviewing: A Whole New World of Interviewing</td>
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<td>• Game Time</td>
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<td>• Get in the Game! Expanding the Usage of Gamification in Qual Research</td>
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<td>• Customer Journey Mapping: A Game-based Focus Group Case Study</td>
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<tr>
<td>12:30 - 1:30 pm</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
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<td>1:30 - 2:30 pm</td>
<td>Keynote Speaker</td>
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<td>Gert Garman, Director of the Collaborative Design Center at Valencia College – “Creativity Tips for the Deep Dive: Techniques and Strategies for Uncovering Research Insights”</td>
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<td>2:30 - 3:00 pm</td>
<td>Break</td>
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<td>3:00 - 4:30 pm</td>
<td>Breakout Sessions</td>
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<td>• Applying New Content Evaluation Technology</td>
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<td>• Six Steps into the Future</td>
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<td>• Amp Up Your Reports: Content &amp; Beauty</td>
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<tr>
<td>7:00 pm</td>
<td>Dine-Arounds</td>
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Keeping Current with Qualitative Research
There is no better place to keep up with what’s happening in the qualitative research industry than the QRCA Annual Conference—whether it’s trends, techniques, or key people. One result—new ideas to use on your next pitch to new or current clients!

Presentations to Grow Your Business
Whether you’re relatively new or a decades-long practitioner, you’re sure to be wowed by the hands-on workshops and info-packed sessions. Expect to come away with items you can use—knowledge that lasts. You’ll select from topics that include discussions of qualitative toolbox items, running-a-business issues, and industry threats and opportunities, from many of the true industry experts who share the same goals and concerns as you.

By Researchers, for Researchers
No clients, no selling, no preening! It’s simply the most sharing environment of any conference out there. It’s a mix of top veterans and bright newcomers, coming together to talk about joys, challenges, and solutions in qualitative research. And along the way, we have fun with old friends and connect with new ones.

Exposure to Companies
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A great mix of sponsors and exhibitors will be here, bringing you all the latest tools and top-rated facilities, along with the support to keep you current. Meet them face-to-face, talk to them, and see their practical examples. It sure beats choosing from unsolicited phone calls and emails.

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Conducting Healthcare Qual in Japan in 2015

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Hana Ito, RN
- Qualitative Research Manager, Business Intelligence & Research
- M3 Research
- Tokyo, Japan
- ha-ito@m3.com
he Asia Pacific region is the world’s manufacturing powerhouse, and Japan has long been a regional center of market research in all of the consumer categories found in developed countries. Research company offerings among the 48 ESOMAR member companies in Japan reveal a complete array of qualitative research services comparable to any full service market research company.

Qualitative healthcare market research in Japan has always been perceived as daunting, slow, and expensive by those outside the country. The challenges include distance and time zone differences, local Japanese cultural customs and definite social structure, limited in-facility times, less-than-ideal market research acceptance, and numerous Japanese holidays. All of these contribute to longer time frames for research. Challenges are compounded by written and spoken Japanese-to-English translation issues.

**Qualitative research in healthcare**

Healthcare has seen an acceleration of new pharmaceutical product introductions in Japan, with a commensurate increase in the number of healthcare market research studies conducted. The pharmaceutical industry traditionally has launched new products in Japan later than in other markets. This has not changed dramatically; it actually has a clinical basis. The local regulatory approval process requires clinical trials to be conducted on Japanese patients to demonstrate efficacy and thus support the drug candidate’s application for approval.

Combined with the high cost of conducting clinical trials in Japan, many companies typically delay initiation of clinical and commercial research in Japan until fully confident of product approvals elsewhere.

**Steps toward completing medical qualitative studies in Japan have interesting twists**

Project management for studies conducted in Japan need a local partner. You will likely hold a typical briefing conference call with your local partner, who is usually bilingual. He or she will then brief the moderators on the study details and objectives, disease background, product information and discussion guide. Your local partner will handle all the local scheduling of interviews; ask for frequent updates as scheduling proceeds.

Recruiting doctors for qualitative research in Japan is quite different from other countries. Culturally, doctors are held in extremely high regard. Physicians do not respond to emails soliciting their participation in research. Instead, research opportunities are posted on a research company website, and physicians complete screeners to qualify. Scheduling doctors into research sessions is also quite constrained and done very deliberately, since it is very poor etiquette and shame to the physician for researchers to reschedule or cancel a doctor’s interview.

The U.S. has various specialties that are not distinct in Japan. For example, oncologists and podiatrists and so on do not exist. Your Japanese research partner will interpret your research objectives and audiences for local conditions to make sure your research will target appropriate participants.

The number of physicians in Japan is relatively small for the size of the population. Doctors have a very strong work ethic, are very busy, and often have long waiting lines for patients in their office. They will not travel to a research facility during the day. Thus there are only three one-hour evening time slots for one-on-one interviews or one focus group session.

Physicians will do in-office interviews, and many healthcare research projects require several native language moderators to conduct in-office interviews to manage the time in field more efficiently. Given the large, high density cities, and lengthy travel times, moderators doing in-office interviews may be able to complete only two or three interviews per day.

Recruiting patients or caregivers for qualitative research has its own cultural challenges. Japanese homes are not always set up spatially in a way that makes an in-home interview or ethnography feasible, and it would be uncomfortable for Japanese to invite strangers into their homes anyway. Patients are more likely to be interviewed singly or in small groups in a hospital lounge or, in some cases, a facility venue or even a café. Your local partner will advise you of the appropriate setting depending on the disease state and the type of participants needed. Privacy constraints are particularly high for patients in Japan, and patients are often hesitant to participate in some disease area research since it would be admitting to an imperfection and revealing personal information. Patients are likely to prefer a name other than their own when being interviewed.

**Some research methodologies and techniques are more suitable than others**

Certain kinds of qualitative research can be frustrating to the Japanese moderator. Interaction in focus group studies can be difficult to maintain if respondents are of varying seniority. Groups with mixed hospital and GP specialists generate similar challenges of interaction. Most Japanese physicians are exquisitely data oriented and accustomed to reviewing clinical data, discussing it among other doctors in the practice before rendering an opinion, and rarely giving their personal opinion spontaneously.

Many Japanese physicians tend to be stymied by some “if/then” questions or projective techniques. For example, they may find it difficult to reply to such queries as “if this medicine was out in the market, how much would it cost?” or “if this treatment were approved, in what patient types would you use it?” because they do not want to answer without any firm evidence and data. Also, they tend to feel awkward when approached with inspirational and creative questions asking for a non-clinical response, such as “if this medicine was dressed up, what kind of clothes would it be wearing?”

Remote/electronic qualitative research methods are beginning to evolve in Japan beyond individual in-office interviews. Telephone interviews were considered “rude” for physicians for many years, and some moderators still prefer only in-office interviews as the more polite option for KOLs (key opinion leaders) and senior physicians.

Encouragingly, some physicians have become comfortable with telephone depth interviews. Web-assisted inter-
Medical translations and transcripts can be tricky in Japan

Medical translation has improved somewhat as more studies are being conducted. It can still take one to three weeks to receive transcriptions from research interviews. Simultaneous translation in a facility is difficult given the few research sessions that can be accomplished in an evening, and the possibility of misinterpretations in real-time conversations. This is especially important in Japan because of its polysyllabic language. In order to have a good translation experience it is imperative that translation be done by a native Japanese translator. Finding a very experienced translator who knows medical terminology and healthcare research is ideal, but human resources are very limited in this regard.

This is illustrated by a recent translated transcript of a telephone interview with a physician in Japan by a native speaking moderator. One of the main topics for discussion involved compromised lung capacity with blood tests as one measure of assessment and diagnosis.

You can imagine our surprise when the mention of bovine blood components appeared in the transcript. The respondent said “Ushin fuzen” in Japanese which sounds very similar to Ushi (cow in Japanese). The correct term was right heart dysfunction mistranslated as “ushi,” hence the cow.

Another recent experience appeared in translated stimuli material. When we received the Japanese material, it meant Prescribing Political Administration; however, the original English version wanted to say Dosing Administration. Also, the translated Japanese characters incorrectly showed “frying pan (used for cooking)” for posterior, “pan” and intermediate uveitis. Of course, the wordings were appropriately changed before the materials went to the physicians.

To avoid such incidents appearing in your transcripts or your stimuli, you can also ask your research partner on the ground in Japan if they have a dictionary of medical terms for the disease area or specialty you are researching. If they don’t have one, you may want to assemble one in English and have your partner or their moderators translate it prior to the study kickoff. This not only speeds the translations after the field is completed, but it can become a standard part of your pre-field briefing package to help the moderators come up to speed for your project. This is especially important in disease areas where there may be little prior knowledge.

Translations for qualitative research can also be frustrating since many interviews are conducted in the physician’s office or by telephone. This introduces potential poor recording from the portable device placed on the physician’s desk or via the telephone. To avoid recording difficulties, several of our clients create a “content analysis grid” spreadsheet to facilitate analysis. The Stateside researcher finalizes the discussion guide in English, and develops the questions they want the native language qualitative researcher to focus on. Each question is placed in the first step. The moderator conducts the interview, then answers each question in Japanese across its respective row in the grid template for each interview. After several interviews have been summarized, the file is then translated. Our translation partners find that translating down a column, i.e., the same question across several interviews, speeds up the process. This can be very helpful if the interviews were conducted by different moderators, perhaps using slightly different words to answer the same question. Once you receive the file you can then begin the analysis. Native language moderators may find the process tedious, but like that it makes reporting a simple exercise. This approach appears to be especially helpful in advertising concept development studies and messaging studies.

Presenting your research results

Moderators presenting results remotely or in person cannot simply present and ask Japanese clients if there are any questions. Japanese social custom limits an individual from speaking out with a personal opinion. A good way to solicit input on the presentation is to distribute the slides ahead of time. This allows the group to discuss the information as a team, deliberate the facts, come to a consensus as a team, and have a designated team member give feedback during and/or after your presentation. This is especially helpful if you are presenting to a multinational team assembled for several days for either an established product or a new product launch.

In Conclusion

For many reasons, qualitative healthcare market research in Japan has had a slower start than in other countries. However, all the moving parts are there—excellent researchers, established research companies, healthcare practitioners who are doing research, and interested client companies who have a need to enter or expand in a large medical market.

Research methods are changing little by little and developing beyond simple in-office interviews, especially as information technology advances and physicians use more information technology in their daily work life. It’s still at an early stage but continues to develop and evolve.

Healthcare market research in Japan is progressing. All of us see research in Japan as adding value to provide the learning our clients need in market planning and product management to meet their objectives.
We find insightful respondents. 
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At Survey Center Focus, our multi-step screening process sifts through tens of thousands of candidates to find you the handful you need. No other research firm can match our recruiting process. Our recruiters search for respondents organically, where they eat, sleep, work, and play. We leverage the most sophisticated social media outlets and apply highly targeted screeners. Our ever growing panel is housed in a proprietary database and managed by in-house experts.

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Thirteen Tenets of User Experience

In my career as a user experience professional, part of my purpose has always been to help push our profession forward. And I’ve had the great privilege of being able to do just that in a myriad of ways — by writing books and articles, speaking at conferences all over the world, delivering in-house training workshops at wonderful companies, and simply doing the work for a great many clients.

If I could be remembered for just one thing, I’d want it to be this, because this is what designers and companies need to know and understand about the nature of user experience as a profession, a goal, an idea. And it’s taken me 13 years to be able to say it in exactly this way.

Following is my list of 13 beliefs on the value of user experience strategy, design, and designers. In 2012, I wrote one for every year I’d been in the web industry.

**Tenet 1**
User experience is the net sum of every interaction a person has with a company, be it marketing collateral, a customer service call, or the product or service itself. It is affected by the company’s vision and the beliefs it holds and its practices, as well as the service or product’s purpose and the value it holds in a person’s life.

**Tenet 2**
User experience is strategic. It begins with an idea to improve the lives of users, and continues through every moment of the customer lifecycle, from attention to abandonment and beyond. It is driven by a vision that guides and justifies every design decision.

**Tenet 3**
Every detail of a company and its product says something about it. User experience strategy and design ensures that these messages are put forth with intention and purpose. Design extends into each and every detail, and each and every detail can indeed be designed.

**Tenet 4**
User experience is a process of discovery, vision definition, strategy, planning, execution, measurement and iteration. It requires flexibility, and a willingness to be wrong until you are right.

**Tenet 5**
Great products and services require bravery. Design puts a shape to your courage.

**Tenet 6**
A great service or product is rarely the mere logical result of research. Most often, it is the result of a courageous belief that what you are doing will change the world, and a determination to do it well.

**Tenet 7**
The solvers of the world’s problems will be those who apply their skill, talent, knowledge and experience to design and redesign the world around us. Whether they call themselves designers or not, the creators of the future will be those who design (as in, on purpose, not by mere fact of being involved).

**Tenet 8**
The goal of a designer is to listen, observe, understand, sympathize, empathize, synthesize and glean insights that enable him or her to ‘make the invisible visible’ (as Hillman Curtis put it) — to pull treasure out of nothing, to pull value out of vapor.

**Tenet 9**
The job of a designer, just like that of a writer, is to twist and stretch and shape a conceptualized piece of work over and over again until it becomes the masterpiece the world needs it to be.

**Tenet 10**
Designers act not on opinion, but on insight. They do not mandate, but educate. While the best decision can often only be based on the best guess, designers inform their instincts every single day so that these guesses may be right.

**Tenet 11**
Designers enable companies to change the world, define the future, create value and make a ton of money, and the evidence of this is endless.

**Tenet 12**
A user’s experience belongs to the user. An experience cannot be designed. It can, however, be influenced. A designer’s job is to be the influencer.

**Tenet 13**
Designers do not manage. They lead.
We all feel it—the pace of a frenetic, hurry-up world where speed is at the center of almost everything we do. People have short attention spans and are often pushed to their limits, and it affects how they do things, including how they respond to research.

In quantitative surveys, some respondents rush to finish, or distractedly check boxes in response to a relatively dry battery of questions.

In focus groups, some participants are relieved when an outspoken leader emerges. Pressure off, they can relax a bit and agree or disagree with that person, rather than having to carefully consider their response to a question.

So how do we get people to move beyond that frazzled, distracted place, to the restoration of thoughtful consideration and independent thinking, while still moving quickly? And to a place where we can glean better predictions about what people are actually going to do?

When we were kids, we focused on fun. Our playful interactions had an emotional payoff—they helped us establish relationships, inform our thinking, develop our character—ultimately framing the “outcomes” of who we are today.

Even as adults, we’re naturally more engaged with activities that have an emotional payoff. Social media keeps us in touch with family and friends. Gaming is not only entertaining, but also draws us in by presenting a challenge that takes some thought and consideration, and that we can potentially win.

And those are indeed the elements of “gameful design.” By definition, gameful design makes non-game tasks more fun, more engaging and more motivating—
By Sandy McCray
Insights Curator
Intengo
Golden, CO
sandy@gointengo.com

If your research feels more like a game, your participants will more thoroughly contemplate their ‘moves.’”

and it’s already being successfully integrated into market research.

Second, think differently about your participants. People are better at predicting the actual behavior of others than their own. So rather than recruiting only customers, as an example, think about the types of people those customers interact with. The diversity of their sphere of influence is important, and includes their friends, family, colleagues, and acquaintances. Those people know your customers and how they think on a more objective level than the customers know themselves.

Third, make your participants feel like part of a community rather than focusing on them as an individual. Their responses will be part of a “collective wisdom” you’re relying on the community for. By now I hope it’s obvious that you don’t want to ask them what they themselves would do. Rather, you’ll be asking them to think about a particular type of person, one from their sphere of influence. Their part in the community is to help predict what that person would do or prefer. We’ve found that these types of social predictions are a much more accurate view of future behavior than someone’s own self-reported intent.

Fourth, give them a reason to stay engaged. I’m not talking about a survey participation incentive that everyone gets. Rather, dangle a carrot of something special if their responses help to solve your problem or challenge. It should be your answer to “What’s in it for me?” After all, one of the reasons people play games is the anticipation of “winning,” so your participants, too, need the opportunity to feel that satisfaction or sense of accomplishment.

Lastly, think about how you can make it FUN—truly the main reason people play games. If your research feels more like a game, your participants will more thoroughly contemplate their “moves.” They’ll stay more engaged, and have a good time in the process.

Some examples of gameful design in action include:

- In the FourSquare (https://foursquare.com) app, users have incentives in the form of badges they can earn when they visit new and unique places. The information about where users visit informs the research behind the scenes that helps to develop customized content for others in specific geographic areas.
- Crowdtap (http://crowdtap.com/) provides consumers a platform where they can interactively play and be creative, while informing brands at the same time. For example, participants can compete against others to host the best brand-sponsored event.
- Intengo (http://gointengo.com), where I get to “play” every day, is a company whose solutions are rooted in the “wisdom of crowds” and where game thinking is applied to all types of research and innovation challenges like ideation and concept testing.

Super Better, a game (and app) created by Jane McGonigal, builds real-life resilience. More than half a million players so far have used it to tackle challenges like depression, anxiety, chronic pain, and more. Jane is a world-renowned designer of alternate reality games that are designed to improve real lives and solve real problems. I’d encourage you to look at her research and watch her TED talks. She believes that game thinking and gameful design can change the world!

For now, let’s leave changing the world to Jane (you go girl!). All I’m asking you to do right now is to reconsider how you approach your projects. Through the core elements of gameful design, you have the opportunity to reshape your research into problems that can be solved, or challenges that can be overcome. In doing so, you’re sure to have more engaged and spirited participants providing deeper, more thoughtful responses.

I hope you’re ready to play!
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Here are some excerpts from a recent conversation with Steve Quirk, President and Publisher of Quirk's Marketing Research Media.

Judy: Hi Steve. Thank you for taking time for this conversation. As qualitative researchers, all of us are familiar with Quirk's as a "need to read" publication. Could you start off by giving us a little background on how Quirk's came about?

Steve: My father's second or third job after college, back in the early '60s, was doing marketing research for a magazine and journal company here in the Twin Cities that covered the agricultural industry. His job was to do readership studies for various titles that the company would use to go back and get more advertising. The research was so novel to the advertisers that they started coming to the publishing company, saying, "Hey, we want to know this and we want to know that."

The magazine was something my dad always had in the back of his mind. As he was going out and selling marketing research to his clients, he would make recommendations to them. They didn't understand what needed to be done: "Why do I need to do a focus group? What's the difference between quantitative and qualitative?" He would educate them but he was also selling them a project, so they were very leery. He wished that there was a place that could educate the end-user or corporate researcher that gave them practical advice on the types of marketing research they should be doing. He was in a financial situation where he could start the magazine.

There weren't a lot of people advertising at that point. He had to build the list, and it was solely supported by the advertisers, as we still are today. He found that there was a need for the content, and the industry really supported it with advertising—the industry needed it.

So the publishing company eventually started its own in-house marketing research company, Miller Research. They would do telephone interviewing and focus groups for their advertisers. My father ended up running that division. The company was sold to ABC, the television broadcasting company. My father left and started his own full-service marketing research company in '83, Rockwood Research.

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Judy: Did he right away say, "I'm going to call it Quirk's"?

Steve: No. The name of the publication was Marketing Research Review. He wanted people to know that we had editors on staff who were actually compiling and vetting all the information to make sure it was independent, not a sales piece. He only put "Quirk's" really small. He said, "If I'm going to print all these magazines and distribute them I'm going to put my name on them. If it fails at least the magazines were my calling card."

All of a sudden we started getting phone calls, "I'm calling Quirk's." The industry embraced Quirk's. That was never our intention, but we embraced it.

Judy: When and how did you get in the business? And how many Quirks are there in the business today?

Steve: I came on with the company full-time in 1994, right out of college. I'd never even thought about going to work with my father and a couple of my siblings. I have an economics degree with a business minor and English minor. I started looking for a job and it just happened that my father had a position that was open—very entry level. I was eager to get a paycheck and not have to go through the pain and humiliation of interviewing.
Steve: That’s the thing with the family business. My father started very small and so we all were in the business from day one doing whatever needed to be done. We spent a lot of summers early on, my siblings and I, sitting in front of a computer typing in people’s names as we built the mailing list. I was in junior high looking out the window, thinking “Ach, I’ve got to go to dad’s office and enter names.”

We started doing directories. My father had been handling them but they had grown to the point where he just wasn’t doing a very good job, simply because he didn’t have time. So my job was managing the various directories we had—the moderator directory, the focus group facilities directory, our big annual researcher resource book directory and some smaller ones as well. I did that from ’94 up until 2002 when my father retired and then I became the business manager where I handled all the finances in the day-to-day operation.

There are six children in the family. Two of my brothers are active in the daily operation of the business. My sister does not work here, but Evan Tweed, vice president of sales, is married to her.

Judy: Let’s talk about Quirk’s and how it sees its mission in covering market research and researchers. Has that changed over the years?

Steve: Our mission and vision are still the same. It is about providing what we call “practical application of marketing research and insight” to the corporate researcher. It’s not academic. Our whole list goes to suppliers and vendors, as well as corporate researchers. A lot of times suppliers or vendors will say, “Oh, you really need to write on this.” And we think, “Well, no, our core audience is the corporate researcher.” Not that the suppliers and vendors don’t read Quirk’s, but when we select articles we’re always thinking of the corporate researcher. We’re approaching 55,000 in our total distribution list and it is almost split 50/50 between corporate researchers, and suppliers and vendors.

Judy: Quirk’s has expanded and modernized, in terms of websites, e-newsletters, webinars, and so on. How do the parts interconnect?

Steve: The principle behind the content is all the same. If readers want information in an e-newsletter, we have it. There are people who like to attend webinars so we provide education that way. We have a magazine in print and in digital. We utilize Facebook. We launched the events because subscribers want that one-on-one, personal interaction.

Judy: It sounds like qualitative has always been part of Quirk’s. What does Quirk’s feel is the role the publication plays in qualitative research?

Steve: Qualitative is a really big part of marketing research. There’s been so much noise with the new techniques and technology that traditional qualitative to a certain degree has gotten a bad rap. I would have liked to see some of the larger qualitative players come out swinging, to say, “Listen, we’ve been around for more than 50 years. Yeah, there are new methods but traditional qualitative is still good sound research.”

Judy: What do you and Quirk’s feel “traditional” qualitative research’s value is today?

Steve: I think if you’re a corporate researcher, it’s a fascinating time to be doing research for your company. The amount of tools and data available and the different ways you can connect with your customers or potential customers is pretty amazing. That said, you can’t always get to people’s true thoughts and feelings without some sort of conversation. A good qualitative researcher is able to probe and understand what the respondent or customer is saying and feeling. In my opinion, that is not always the case with some of the new techniques. For instance, you can get information from your Facebook but is that really giving you a true story of what’s going on or is it just a bunch of people who like your brand or really hate your brand? Just because those people are talking about your brand doesn’t necessarily mean it’s really going to give you the story of what’s behind those comments. That’s where you need qualitative—and going into the future, it will still have the role. Now there’s a lot more tools out there for the researcher. To sit down with people and have a conversation—whether it’s in a video focus group or it’s a chat focus group—to actually talk with your customer or potential customer to really understand what’s in their head, I don’t see that going away.

Judy: Is there pressure on the part of clients to do something new since there are a lot of new techniques? Pressure on you as a publisher?

Steve: Readers want to know what is new and what’s out there. I don’t think anyone wants to feel like they’re left behind. What we have found is that people don’t really want to just hear “here’s this new product”—they want a case study of how it works. I would say clients are cautious. There are some departments that are large and have bigger budgets that are all about trying new things but they are the outliers. Clients need to know that new products are valid and are going to work. Otherwise they’re not going to touch it.

Judy: How does Quirk’s decide which articles to publish?

Steve: We avoid reporting any stories that are directly about a particular product and what it can do because that ends up just being completely self-serving. If someone came out with a product that they think is the best or a platform that’s slightly different and they want us to run a full-featured article, we’re not going to do that; it goes into our product and service update. The corporate researcher is interested in articles they can read and go, “This company utilized the technique and they were able to do X, Y and Z.”

Judy: What new qualitative trends or services do you think are the most interesting or valuable?

Steve: With the huge expansion of mobile devices, there certainly is potential on the qualitative side. Being able to interact with people in-the-moment is really interesting and fascinating; you can actually go with your customer as
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they shop in your store. But to get really deep insights, to understand people, you have to able to ask questions in-the-moment.

**Judy:** What about social media? Some qualitative researchers feel that it is a threat and, from what I’ve read, some clients perceive it as a substitute.

**Steve:** Obviously, it has had an impact. You can collect data and get people’s feedback. It’s not in an artificial environment but it has its limits. If you really want to get the deep insights, you have to have someone on the other side who’s probing and asking questions. Without that you’re simply getting all these unfiltered comments and you don’t really know what the motivations are behind them.

I have a neighbor who utilized Facebook. He realized after several months that people leave comments there because they happen to like your product. It’s all the other people that he was not asking, who weren’t buying the product, that were the real problem. And that’s why his product wasn’t selling. He came to me and said, “All right, this isn’t working because these people are already fans; they’re not really telling me what I need to know.”

There’s a lot more people doing marketing research than ever before, like my neighbor. But at some point he’s not going to be able to muddle through. He’s even mentioned, “I’m going to have to hire someone.” It’s slow and it’s taking him time, and he’s starting to understand the fact he needs to get insights to drive sales.

**Judy:** Where do you feel our field is headed? Is it good news or bad news for qualitative researchers?

**Steve:** I would say that in the short term there’s been a lot of pain. We’ve seen it—people’s budgets have been cut, they’re doing fewer focus groups and the traditional qualitative researcher has probably seen a decline in business. There are a lot of focus group facilities, probably too many. You’re going to see a thinning out of qualitative facilities; we’ve already seen that.

But I’m very optimistic for people who are on the qualitative side. I still think that despite all of the various new techniques and methodologies, you still have to go out and question people to really understand them. It’s no longer good enough to collect the data. Clients don’t want to just be dumped with a bunch of data. They want you to help solve business problems. Just from the very nature of having the higher emotional intelligence and being able to understand humans, the qualitative researcher is in a better position to tell the story.

**Judy:** Do you think in-person focus groups and depth interviews will be around in the future?

**Steve:** We will continue to see the use of in-person interviews. Humans want to connect to other humans and in-person interviews are an extension of that connection. Look at all of the live events, in our industry and others. They are booming because people want face-to-face interaction. Clearly, there are faster and more cost-effective ways to hold an event. Virtual event providers declared that software would render live events obsolete, but that didn’t happen. We had an article back in the 1990s that warned that e-mail surveys were the possible death of in-person research—it didn’t happen. Now, I don’t think you will see a complete resurgence of focus groups; there are simply too many means to collect insights. The key to me is still being able to ask probing questions during a dialogue, which in-person research accomplishes.

**Judy:** How do you see QRCA views and Quirk’s fitting together?

**Steve:** I think they fit together really well. Our full focus is not on all qualitative. We cover quantitative and biometrics and some of the other various new methodologies. QRCA plays an important role in that it’s the community of qualitative researchers—to be able to discuss the challenges that you face and coming up with solutions. I really enjoy everyone I run into who’s with the QRCA—some of the happiest people I have met. Because of the great recession and the downward pressure on pricing, there is a lot of negativity. At our recent event there was a whole contingent of QRCA members and they were fabulous. They were happy, approachable, fun people. It was nice and refreshing.

**Judy:** That’s interesting since, as you say, there’s been some pain for qualitative people. Maybe it’s because you can’t really be a qualitative researcher, or a good one at least, unless you really love it.

**Steve:** Maybe it is just the ability to talk and to connect with people. My father was a qualitative researcher. I’m always amazed by him—he can get into a situation where he doesn’t know anyone and connect. My father can sit there and hold a conversation with them for a half hour. That to me is his qualitative side. He probes and asks questions. Whether he was born with it or developed it, he can relate to others well. I see that in the QRCA members. You can start a conversation with them, and it’s always an engaging, fun conversation.

**Judy:** Anything you want to add?

**Steve:** In our corporate research report last year we asked our readers, “Hey, here are all these new technologies that are coming out. What do you think they hold for the future? Do you think they have any potential?” Biometrics and facial coding, even predictive markets and neuromarketing—corporate researchers don’t see much potential in them. They see those as a fad because they understand that you can see someone’s face twitch but you don’t really know what that’s all about.

Another neighbor is a big data guy. He says storytelling is the biggest need in our industry because we go out and we get all this data and companies don’t understand the data, because they’re all just data people. There’s where I see the role of marketing research in insights—being able to tell that story. He even said, “They’re now drowning in data and they don’t know what the story is.”
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US AND THEM:
Why learning who your audience isn’t matters
Jean-Paul Sartre, the 20th Century French philosopher, once wrote a play about hell. Sartre’s hell was three people in a single locked room. That room with three people symbolically captures a fascinating idea. That with only three people, a group dynamic exists. And the raw ingredients for an “us” and “them” situation are created.

Oftentimes in strategy and marketing, we think about the “us”: our market segment, our team, or our tribe.

And we go to great lengths through market research, data mining, and the use of complex analytical tools to determine who and what our most important market segment is.

But any audience—any tribe—can also be defined in part by what it is not.

Part of the point of Sartre’s play, is that in any population—no matter how small—people will choose to align themselves with, and against, other people.

They find clarity and meaning in defining their own identity, by drawing a sharp line between people who are like them, and those who are not like them.

And the potency of “us vs. themism” increases when applied to people’s values and aspirational personal identity.

Using Both Sides of the Magnet

The approach that our firm takes in our strategy, marketing, and communications work is based on a philosophy that we call Magnetism. And the basic idea behind our approach is that organizations and brands have an inherently positive (or negative) level of attraction to the people who matter to them the most, the people who constitute their tribe (to use Seth Godin’s terminology).

There are seven key questions and three important measures we’ve identified that—when answered and taken together—can result in a powerful and sustainable competitive advantage for organizations or brands.

We don’t start by asking about the functional needs of a target audience. We want a deeper understanding of what makes them tick. So the first of the Big Questions we ask is this: “What are your tribe’s values, and shared aspirational personal identity?”

And an important way of gaining a richer, more insightful, and nuanced understanding of those values and that aspirational personal identity of a tribe—is through understanding what they are not.

Because one powerful way of appealing very strongly to members of a tribe, and creating a powerful bond with them, is through contrast. Communicating that you share the same worldview. Bonding on a deeper level—showing that you get them, and that your organization or brand is one of them. And, importantly, putting you and your tribe firmly in one corner, and your competitors in the opposite corner.

Going Deeper into People’s Brains

We so often see messages focused on tangible or functional benefits. A soap that keeps colors brighter, a car with more torque, or a restaurant with faster service. And indeed, in some product categories, the functional benefit trumps everything else.

But in order to build a more profound, sustainable relationship with your tribe, understanding the tribe’s values and aspirational personal identity can yield insights that focus on emotional and psychological benefits.

Let’s dive deeper into what we mean by values and aspirational personal identity.

Values are deeply held. They are difficult to change. They reflect a worldview about society, how people should interact with one another, and what is fundamentally right or wrong. Values are based on powerful convictions, many of which are learned in childhood and reinforced through our socialization, school, and religious learning.

Do you know two people who just can’t get along? My suspicion is that on some subconscious level, they have different values.

Here is an example, based on a story I heard from one of our clients, who I’ll call “Vanessa.”

I recently met with Vanessa, and asked her about one of her co-workers, “Sally,” who had been on a project with us.

By Hugh D. MacPhie
- Principal
- MacPhie
- Toronto, Ontario
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“Oftentimes in strategy and marketing, we think about the ‘us’: our target audience, our market segment, our team, or our tribe. But any audience – any tribe – can also be defined in part by what it is not.”

When I asked about Sally, Vanessa’s body language changed. She tensed up a bit, and said they had parted company with her. Let me describe, based on what Vanessa shared, the perspectives that Vanessa and Sally might have had. Vanessa’s perspective: “When people are hired in relatively senior levels of an organization, there is an expectation that they will work long hours, check in regularly with their superiors updating them on their progress, identify opportunities proactively, and not always head home at 5:00pm if there is still important work to be done.”

Sally’s perspective: “Modern employers should respect boundaries, set clear direction regarding the tasks to be completed—including specific deadlines, set detailed goals and milestones with pre-established touchpoints, and have an understanding that people have other pressures and priorities in their lives.”

Put differently, Vanessa values hard work, creative proactivity within an ambiguous context, and dedication to the team. Sally values work-life balance, clear and specific task-oriented direction, and flexibility.

It didn’t work out for Sally within an organization whose values and culture were just different from her own.

When it comes to understanding a tribe, even more important is aspirational personal identity. Personal identity is about how we see ourselves in contrast to others. And in some cases, we define “tribes” somewhat literally through our ethnic or religious backgrounds. Personal identity is about who we are. And by definition, who we are comes into sharper focus through the lens of who we are not.

By understanding your tribe’s values and personal identity, you can impact people’s emotions and actions.

Challenging someone on facts, and provide new evidence, and they are typically agreeable.

Question their values, and they will be emotional and irritated. There may be yelling.

But insult their personal identity? That’s how wars get started.

A key lesson in all this? When seeking insight into the tribes that matter to you or your client, seek not only to understand their values and personal identity, but also their opposites. What are their anti-values—alternative worldviews that turn them off profoundly? And what aspect of how they see themselves or how they want to be seen gets them most upset when attacked or challenged?

Leveraging knowledge of aspirational personal identity can be implemented tactically in subtle ways—but quite devastating ways. Clever marketers appreciate the impact of building a narrative or story in which their product or brand says “we exemplify what you want to be…and the other guys do not.”

Here is one of my favorite examples: Before it achieved the highest market capitalization in the world, Apple used a comparative platform for most of it’s advertising. The most critically acclaimed example of Apple’s us-versus-them advertising was the famous 1984 Super Bowl ad, promoting the launch of the Macintosh.

If you haven’t seen the Apple Macintosh 1984 ad, watch it as soon as you’ve finished reading this. Through David-and-Goliath mythology, Apple positions its brand as young, innovative, and confident, as opposed to the conformist, identical, and somewhat creepy “clones” of IBM. The 1984 ad does all this, without mentioning a single tangible benefit of the new product Apple has just introduced. Or mentioning IBM.

But that’s not the Apple ad that is most interesting within the context of “us vs. themism.”

The meanest, cruelest, most devastating negative advertising of all time.

Warren Kinsella, who is proud to be called the “Prince of Darkness” in political circles, wrote a book about winning in politics. A major topic in his book is negative advertising, or to use the language preferred by practitioners, “comparative advertising.”

One of the points he makes relates to the most devastating trick the comparative advertising artist can use. It isn’t a dark, grainy picture, or an ominous, sinister-sounding music bed.

It is humor.

Why is humor so effective? Because it doesn’t feel mean. Which reduces the other party’s ability to respond to the attack ad in a way that calls out the negativity and mean-spiritedness.

So what is the meanest, cruelest, most devastating ad campaign? That just might be the one that started with the words “I’m a Mac…and I’m a PC.”

When the “I’m a Mac…I’m a PC” campaign was running, no one came to me and asked “Did you see those devastating negative attack ads from Apple?” Because they didn’t feel like devastating negatively attack ads. They felt fun.

But my hunch is that hours of research went into understanding exactly what the computer-buying public decision maker—the tribe that mattered to Apple—wanted to be like. And the answer was an aspirational personal identity. They knew that people would gravitate more towards the cool, articulate, good-looking Mac guy, more than the well-meaning, slightly slower, conformist PC guy. Importantly, they didn’t make the PC guy too plump or too smarmy. You’d still talk to him if you were at a cocktail party—but you’d rather go and hang out with the Mac guy.

Did that campaign also highlight features or tangible benefits that were superior on the Mac? Of course it did. But the platform was based on a profound understanding of whom the audience wanted to be like.

So fight for richer, deeper insight that goes beyond the surface. Know what your tribe finds attractive—and unattractive. With knowledge of aspirational personal identities can come a profound sustainable competitive advantage.
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It was just fifteen minutes to the start of my next group. I was preparing the room while getting myself enthused to inspire the kind of group dynamics that matter. Just as I was getting into the zone, my research client unexpectedly came into the room with a sheet of paper she wanted me to read. I assumed it was new content for the next session, another approach to wording for the creative shown in the first three sessions we’d already done.

It wasn’t new content. It turned out to be a backroom request that I streamline my introduction by using an approach they’d prepared—a four paragraph “script”—rather than the intro I’d been using in my practice for thirty years, with this client for over five years, and the first three sessions of this project.

The timing couldn’t have been worse; so much for getting into the zone. What could inspire a pressing need to rewrite the introduction, of all things, now? Sessions were going as they usually did in projects like this one—nothing seemed broken as far as I knew. My introductions hadn’t changed during this project or for earlier ones with this client. My introduction, I thought, did a pretty good job for all my clients. But now I had some doubts. Maybe there was something I’d missed for this client and other clients I didn’t know about. None of this bode well for the group members now taking their places.

The Backroom Intro
So, what was it the backroom wanted? Here is the introduction that was proffered:

Hello, my name is _______. I am an independent researcher who has been hired by a company to gather your thoughts and opinion on a particular topic. Today we will be talking about _______. In particular, I am going to show you two unfinished commercials. I would like to get your honest thoughts and opinions of these unfinished commercials. Again, I am an independent party, so it is important that you feel free to express yourself openly and freely. The mirror in front of you is a one-way mirror. I have some research colleagues observing the session and taking notes for me. This session is also being audio and video taped so that I can review what was said when I go to write my report. This video and audio is confidential and will not be shared beyond this research team.

Does anyone have any questions? Just to get us started, let’s have you tell us your name and something interesting about yourself. Let’s begin.

Not all that bad on the face of it. This introduction contains what good moderators know must be shared at the outset: says what will be done; encourages participants to be forthright; notes AV recording, viewers, and confidentiality; and clarifies moderator independence. Not surprisingly, its condensed form offers the backroom something it probably wanted: getting to the meat of the discussion faster. For me, though, it had the tone of the pharmaceutical disclaimer that makes your eyes glaze over and your interest levels plummet. Fortunately there was some good Karma that day as well: my research client, in concert with a senior marketer, reversed course and left me free to introduce as I’d been doing.
Revisiting the Intro

The backroom intervention made me do some needed reflecting. I revisited my introduction and eventually shared with my research client what I believed I was achieving. The reflection served me well in better understanding why the introduction mattered, how it achieved larger purposes that paid off later in the session and down the road in the analysis. Here's my ten part "script" and the rationale for each part:

1. I begin by welcoming them and sincerely thanking them for being willing to participate. I share that their backgrounds and experiences make them ideal for the needs of this enterprise.
   **Intent:** To genuinely make them feel welcomed and reduce their anxiety about whether or not they can contribute.

2. I encourage them to make themselves at home as much as they can (noting that if someone had a home like this focus group room, there was cause to worry).
   **Intent:** To further reduce tensions and anxiety at the outset with jokes acknowledging that the setting is not normal.

3. I tell them that this is simply an information gathering process with me asking questions and the group answering them. I note that questions asked aim to trigger robust group conversation.
   **Intent:** To start defining roles, mine as questioner and nudge and theirs as interactive, engaged conversationalists listening and focused on topic.

4. I point out that the questions being asked are "painless" since they are about opinions that have no "right" or "wrong" answers. I discourage self-censorship since these thoughts could trigger new points of view from others and remind them that we are not jury, being unanimous is not our goal.
   **Intent:** To reduce their anxiety about expressing "incorrect" views or narrowly staying within socially acceptable expressions of opinion; to avoid group think.

5. I let them know I am a "hired gun" with no "skin in the game" and that I am not the creator of anything I show them.
   **Intent:** To encourage frankness since they won’t be pleasing me or hurting me.

6. I let them know that I take the findings from all the sessions back to those who hired me. My report starts by saying that we got the right people, who spoke frankly and honestly, and what is shared are participant’s stories not mine.
   **Intent:** To take some of the mystery out of what happens after they are done with this session; to boost their sense of importance that their comments matter; to reinforce the obligation to be frank and honest; and to let them let me be their partner in communicating points of view.

7. I tell them that I share their points of view about what works, what doesn’t, and what could be fixed or changed and that many times participants’ views lead to improvements.
   **Intent:** To signal that their points of view matter and will be listened to and to take what we embark on with some sense of seriousness.

8. Then I say that to do this well, I need a record and that the session is being recorded. I note that the recordings are for me (to make sure I haven’t misheard) and that they will not get a call to audition for Disney or Sony.
   **Intent:** To acknowledge the recordings and lightly address privacy to lessen intimidation that comes with recording.

9. I mention that there are research colleagues watching us behind the mirror. I let the group know that my colleagues help with the report and that I will go back to see if they are sure we haven’t missed anything.
   **Intent:** To shift the observation aspects from voyeuristic to something purposeful; to lessen my stature as authority figure by admitting I am being helped; to reduce their anxiety about performance and being observed.

10. I then ask them to introduce themselves (first name, where from, how occupy time) and to answer a specific question about the category the research is focusing on.
    **Intent:** To ease into gradual participation; to provide content for making connections later in the discussion.

This ten step intro has become, over time, a performance piece that I run almost on auto-pilot. As I am going through the intro, I begin to gauge and sense the group dynamic. I’m making predictions about what I’ll need to do to engage or manage these participants. (Part of my anxiety about reciting the new script involved losing this ability to multi-task and read cues that enhance my comfort in managing the group.)

More important to me than the elements themselves, I told my research client, is the fact that this enterprise helps in gathering information for use later in the group session. Item 10’s revelations are particularly valuable in offering ways to segue into deeper territory or clarification later in the session, while allowing connections to be created when I can use something early in the sessions that shows someone is really listening and that what they say matters.

The Rest of the Story

As any moderator reading this has already guessed, my research client was responding to internal political dynamics of the backroom. A young newly hired marketer and a junior account planner from the agency were not hearing what they wanted to hear and thought that my intro was the cause. As well, they thought I was encouraging participants to be critical. My introduction remained in play, but, I admit, with more effort to encourage both negatives and positives.

Lessons Learned

Since then, I’ve added more due diligence to my first encounters with new observers by striving to acclimate them to my introduction and to how it pays dividends in better participant engagement and higher quality information. The due diligence has paid its own dividend by keeping surprises at bay.

“As I am going through the intro, I begin to gauge and sense the group dynamic. I’m making predictions about what I’ll need to do to engage or manage these participants.”
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ADVERTISING RATES

1-ISSUE RATE

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Qualitative research for healthcare companies, especially Big Pharma, has changed notably over the past decade. The business climate for healthcare is changing, along with the introduction and enforcement of new regulations. Following are some of the major trends that are impacting qualitative research in the healthcare sector:

1. Change in Pharma Business Model
   Developing a drug through the traditional “pipeline” model is an expensive process. Many blockbuster drugs have already gone off patent enabling generic competition at lower prices. To improve their drug development portfolio, major pharma companies have resorted to an “acquisition” model. In this approach, to avoid the substantial investment required by the traditional pipeline model, smaller startup companies who have successfully developed
compounds through positive Phase 3 clinical trial results (i.e., “make-or-break” studies that unequivocally prove safety and efficacy) are acquired by larger companies. This approach decreases, or in some cases, virtually eliminates the qualitative research that used to accompany the long pipeline stage where the brand team learns about the disease state, and unmet needs of physicians, patients and caregivers.

2. Increased Regulations and Restrictions

Over the past several decades, as scientific understanding has improved, the FDA has become increasingly vigilant in monitoring safety data. As a result, many “black box warnings” have been reported, which undercut advertising and promotional spending (and qualitative research) for each drug so designated.

Promotional spending toward physicians is now famously regulated, banning the boondoggles that physicians used to receive to travel to desirable destinations with their spouse to “learn” about a drug in between swimming and golf.

Rep activity has similarly declined, which makes pharmaceutical companies less likely to spend money on qualitative research to fine tune any “vis-aid” material used by reps in physician visits and “lunch ’n learns” in physician offices. Many such materials previously had been developed and refined in iterative qualitative research.

3. Gigantic Layoffs of Market Researchers

Since 2010, many of the top ten Pharma companies have decimated whole departments of market research personnel in an effort to save costs (as part of the change from “pipeline” to “acquisition” models). Some have left a market research department in place only in categories where acquisition drugs are about to launch. This has vacated the trusted vendor relationships that market research executives once had with their qualitative suppliers.

4. “Sourcing” Research Vendors

Starting around 2005, so-called “Sourcing” departments were installed with the aim to cut vendors (for example, one big-name pharmaceutical company went from 120 research vendors to 18 “preferred supplier” market research vendors, and ultimately down to four) by negotiating price-reduction deals for research.

Typically, 80% of suppliers had to be on this resulting “approved supplier list,” with only 20% discretion for outside vendors, further deterred by considerable annoying paperwork on the part of the brand team. Price negotiating sessions were brutal, and usually only big companies (e.g., Ipsos, GfK, Millward Brown, TNS) could survive this, typically by using on-staff junior personnel with senior supervisors. Big companies also can afford to pay or pressure to postpone the traditional big advance deposits for qualitative research (incentive fees, 50% facility fee, discounted FocusVision, etc.), which sole proprietors or smaller qualitative companies find more difficult to manage.

5. Affordable Care Act (Obamacare)

In anticipation of reduced reimbursement for patient care and procedures, many physicians (especially in primary care) have chosen to retire rather than maintain office staff, overhead, and huge paperwork loads in a time of declining reimbursements.

Other physicians have become “hospitalists,” transferring their jobs to working on salary at hospitals to provide care for hospitalized patients, thereby eradicating staffing requirements for themselves. Insurance formularies have also tightened their disbursements toward the cheapest drugs. In this environment, fewer physicians have meaningful roles in what version of a drug class they prescribe, which further diminishes any point to market to (or market research) them.

6. Electronic Medical Records Requirements and HIPAA Compliance

Another development is the mandate for electronic medical records (EMR). Although the government subsidizes this program to an extent, there is no universal or standardized software to accomplish this transfer of data from paper to electronic.

Adding further complication, an individual physician may choose one software package, whereas his hospital and other doctors (and even departments within a single hospital) have selected different software. Few, if any, of these platforms are able to interface with the other.

These disconnects, along with HIPAA Compliance (the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996), make it increasingly difficult for pharmaceutical companies to know which doctors are or are not prescribing their brand of drugs. (This information had long been available previously, and it was delivered as a confidential list to qualitative researchers to enable them to recruit only High or Moderate Prescribers of a specific drug instead of Low or Non-Prescribers.)

7. Adverse Event (AE) Reporting

Another restriction that has affected the quantity and quality of qualitative research is the increasingly imposed restrictions and consequences of mandated Adverse Event Reporting.

Qualitative research often uncovers specific complaints or cases of side effects of specific medications in conversation with physicians and/or patients. Any mention of an adverse event during qualitative research requires several immediate follow-up questions in the midst of interviewing, plus immediate 24-hour vendor reporting by fax or phone to the Adverse Event Reporting Department. Because of this, the marketing department tries to avoid any specific feedback about adverse events, via formal training of any vendor involved in research and by intense scrutiny by pharma legal of any discussion guide. This is one reason why some pharma companies limit the number of vendors.

Considering these trends, it is evident that qualitative research in the healthcare sector is changing. While the demand for research has reduced, it is still there for those who understand the evolving needs of these companies. As the effects of new regulations and changing business models stabilize, it will be interesting to see how the needs for qualitative research will play out.
In qualitative research, coding is all about making choices, and we know from research in psychology that making choices tires us out. A long walk in the woods can be tiring, too, but it leads us to something enriching. So, too, does coding. How can we get the most value from our qualitative data without getting lost, and without turning back before we reach the greatest possible insights? Here are some strategies to help you conserve your cognitive resources and reach a powerful analysis of your rich and valuable data.

As a first step, let’s agree on a working definition—what is coding? To digital natives, I often describe coding as a process of “tagging” portions of data which provide evidence of some theme or phenomena. We once did this by marking up hard copies of text with colored markers, notes in the margin, or sticky notes. As we code, we are often splitting data apart in early phases, and then aggregating or building up to new concepts, ideas, phenomena or theory as we progress. Ultimately, our goal in coding is to discover meaning, and to provide evidence to support our discovered meaning. Saldaña’s
...Coding leads us to something enriching. How can we get the most value from our qualitative data without getting lost, or turning back before we reach the greatest possible (in)sights?

choice, and strict adherence to formal qualitative methods will make the choice easy and clear. Grounded theory? You’ll surely wait to allow nodes to emerge. If you are working instead from a more pragmatic approach, a client’s goals and preferences may make the choice for you. For example, if you are evaluating the outcomes of a campaign, a client’s clear ideas about particular questions or areas of interest will push you toward a predefined set of codes. Typically, though, you’ll have some key areas of focus, and there will be some unexpected encounters in the data which lead to “emergent” codes, and eventually to key findings. Keep in mind the following as you make your choice.

Is there time for veering off the trail?
A quick, focused analysis with a tight timeline will probably require more adherence to a priori codes. If you do choose to allow yourself or your team of coders to create additional codes, be sure to keep the main trail in sight or at least in mind. You might allow your list of codes to expand for some time, and then periodically look back and refine it with your research questions clearly in mind as a guide. Qualitative data analysis is often an iterative process; this will be yet one more series of iterations—expanding and refining your coding structure.

Prepare for a few disagreements along the way
If you decide to allow some divergence from the marked trail, be sure to set some guidelines for yourself or the team. Does an emergent theme need to rise to the level of a drastic change in our understanding, or are we trying to encourage an open exploration? If you are using software for your qualitative analysis and working with a team, you might make a special folder for each team member to store the emergent codes each coder identifies. Then, when you come together as a team, you’ll have a manageable way to identify, compare and discuss each of the codes you’ve created.

There is a very good chance you’ll find that members of your team have identified similar themes. If so, these codes can be combined once you agree on an appropriate name for the new code. When conflicts come up, they will be pointing you to important refinements to your approach, and to discoveries that will shape your findings. Allow time for disagreement and dialogue.

Regardless of whether you decide to create many emergent nodes or only a few, be sure to make notes to yourself along the way. These notes are often described as “analytical memos.” Using specialized software, you might link these memos directly to the codes. You will continue to return to the memos over time as coding continues and your understanding evolves. (See Di Gregorio & Davidson [2008] or Bazeley & Jackson [2013] for more on using specialized software for qualitative data analysis.)

The Forest and the Trees
As we noted above, an expansive list of codes can become overwhelming. Even without emergent codes, there can come a stage in coding where you begin to wonder how you’ll ever reach anything like “findings” from this research when you seem to have spent so much time now breaking down the data into these analytical bits. From those bits, you must eventually build back toward a whole, and that whole consists of meaning. When walking in the woods, if you begin to feel lost, the first rule is perhaps “Don’t panic! Stop, have a rest, look around you.” Return to your research questions, and return to read some of the memos you’ve written along the way. The feeling of uncertainty won’t disappear instantly—qualitative analysis is messy and uncertain—but this will help you begin to see a way forward.

Don’t Cover Your Tracks
Rigor in qualitative research comes in part from transparency. A consumer of your research will evaluate its credibility by understanding how you arrived at the conclusions you describe. In order to provide this map for others, it will be critical for you to maintain records of your thinking, decision-making and process. Here again is where your memos will be helpful (how did we decide how to

book The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers provides one good source for a thorough introduction to coding.

Now, continuing with the metaphor of the walk in the woods, here are some guidelines for a successful outing.

A Slow Meander or a Brisk Walk Down the Marked Trail?
One of the first critical choices you’ll encounter in coding is whether to create a priori codes. Sometimes codes are created even before data are gathered. The alternative is to allow codes to emerge during the analysis. This is ultimately a methodologi-
Conflicts that come up in these discussions are pointing you to important refinements to your approach and to discoveries that will shape your findings. Allow time for dialogue.

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**Structure A**

**Structure B**

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How do your participants differ?

Other types of queries will help you make comparisons. If I’ve tracked characteristics of my participants, I could ask “Do novice hikers talk more about trails and experienced climbers more about summits?” Demographic information and fixed response survey items can be integrated with qualitative coding, and can lead to fascinating discoveries, sometimes helping you come to an understanding of a curious result in your quantitative analysis.

**How do your codes overlap?**

A well-designed coding structure will make your coding more reliable and efficient, and will help you make powerful use of queries in allowing the data to speak for themselves. What does a well-designed coding structure look like? One characteristic is that it will tend to be broad and shallow with very little repetition of codes, rather than narrow and deep. Compare the two coding structures in Figure 1.

After reading through my interviews, many times in the process of coding, I have a hunch that my participants find rocky trails more difficult to climb. With Structure A, a query will efficiently and thoroughly find all references to rocky trails, and will allow me to compare the degree of overlap amongst all the nodes.

With Structure B, my coding will be more arduous, more prone to lapses and lost data, and will require a clumsy series of comparisons to answer my question about the difficulty of rocky trails.

**Follow (and Test) Your Hunches**

If you’re using software for your coding, query tools become a useful companion at several stages along the way and can help make the route to your conclusions more transparent.

“Great quotes”

This code can help you gather material you know will have a powerful impact in your report, even if you don’t yet know quite why, how or where.

“I struggled with how to code this.”

Some material will not give up its meaning easily, but you know you shouldn’t pass it by. Code it in just that way. Then, later, return to this code and review all the material coded there together. That juxtaposition itself is likely to help you see something interesting you might have otherwise missed in your data.

“Codes for another day”

This might be a folder where you gather codes that emerge from the data and are simply too far off from the current research question. You don’t have time to meander quite this far from the main trail today, but you know that you’d like to return to these codes someday. Data are valuable, as is the time you have invested immersing yourself in the coding. Gathering these intriguing codes will make it much more efficient for you to return to the data again when you are ready to write another article or report.

**As Long as You’re Out Here, Be Sure to Appreciate the View**

Qualitative coding is by nature time-consuming, subjective, and uncertain, sometimes even laborious. Whether you are working alone or with a research team, take time to consider the many possible paths through your rich data. Even a tightly focused analysis under pressure of an imminent deadline is likely to tempt you toward a bit of brief, unexpected, and productive exploration. The most powerful discoveries are likely to fall somewhere off the most well-worn path. If you’ve taken the time to come so close, enjoy the view!


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GET OUT OF THE PROJECT-BASED RESEARCH TRAP:
How Iterative Insights Help Teams Build Winning Strategies

By Monika Wingate
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Business teams today are expected to complete more strategic initiatives than ever before: repositioning their brands; building new social campaigns and web applications; finding new market opportunities; and launching products and services.

Despite big objectives, teams are smaller and have shorter timeframes and tighter research budgets. To succeed, they are looking to consultants for solutions. Unfortunately, the project-based research approach that’s been the norm for the past 50 years is not equipped to meet today’s business demands.

Why? Project-based research approaches are based on decomposing business objectives into discrete research questions, which are answered through individual research projects. Each project typically takes weeks or months to get to an “answer,” delivered to the team in a lengthy report. The results often lead to another research project to answer more questions; meanwhile the team is either paralyzed waiting for results or makes decisions without research. Some teams have gone to the opposite extreme, moving toward “quick and dirty” research methods promoted by some industry vendors. However, by extending project-based thinking into increasing numbers of small projects often overwhelms researchers’ time. To make it worse, the plethora of cheap online tools leads senior management to devalue research and underemphasize the time it takes to conduct quality research that provides needed strategic input. The result is overtaxed teams burdened by managing dozens of small projects, each with less rich insights than the more in-depth projects of the past.

The Solution: Iterative Insights
Fortunately, we don’t have to look very far to find a better approach. Other functional units including R&D, IT, and Operations have already streamlined their techniques by applying Lean, Agile, Design Thinking and Open Innovation methods. Rather than a project-based approach, these methods use what I’ve termed Iterative Insights™ that align with overall business strategy rather than specific project objectives (see figure 1).

These methods include more collaboration, rapid iteration, and experimentation to achieve ongoing customer and stakeholder input. The overarching benefit goes beyond time and cost savings, avoiding the scenario where companies have to opt out of research because it doesn’t align with timelines or budgets. A study by Booz Allen in 2012 showed “companies can get to market 50% faster and are 25% more productive using Lean and Agile development methods.” Similar benefits can be seen with these more nimble research approaches.

**Lean: Learn When to Pivot**
Lean has its origins in manufacturing as a way to take waste out of production. Lean takes any new product/service idea and pushes to quickly get to a minimum viable product. This “MVP” is the simplest possible solution for customer input as opposed to the more traditional larger investment in a product ready for full implementation. Based on customer response, preferably a behavior measure that simulates purchase, organizations can choose to either make changes based on input (e.g. pivot) or persevere and move ahead with their product plans. By investing less before getting customer feedback, waste is minimized during the process.

**Agile: Think in Sprints**
Agile has its origins in software development. Rather than getting a list of requirements and developing a complete solution for testing, agile methods call for developing customer stories that each represent subsets of features, and
then developing those in a series of short timeframes, called sprints. Each sprint delivers part of the completed product for testing, allowing for validation and adjustments much earlier in the development process.

**Open Innovation: Remove the Silos**
(See figure 4) Open Innovation has its origins in Research & Development. Rather than operating in department silos behind closed doors, innovation teams collaborate to seek out and advance external and internal ideas and explore internal and external paths to market.

**Design Thinking: Live the Problem**
(See figure 5) Design Thinking has its origins in industrial design. It sought to move beyond collaborative thinking to meld what is desirable from a human point of view with what is technologically feasible and economically viable.

**Examples**
Getting out of the project mentality begins with thinking about your clients and other stakeholders as collaborators in the success of a broader strategic initiative. Rather than breaking a strategic process into phases each with specific research objectives, you build the right team of collaborators to inform your lean or agile process.

**Case Study 1: Tool Innovation**
(See figure 6) A major tool manufacturer wanted to enter an established tool category with a new product. In order to gain traction, it needed to create a solution that significantly improved upon current solutions while staying competitively priced.

Typical project thinking would suggest three discrete projects: Start with ethnographic or other observational research with consumers, move to in-person ideation and finish with focus groups or concept testing. In this case, the company did not have the time or budget for the traditional approach. It was, however, able to get to the end result they needed for far less time and money by using an Iterative Insights approach. The team created a single online community of contractors in a nearby market. All team members were able to observe the discussion and hear the voice of the customer. Weekly touch-points allowed the team to refine the questions as they went, incorporating insights uncovered in the community. They invited a subset of the contractors, along with other external experts, to join in an in-person

“We have an obligation to our clients to develop a world research capability.”


feedback sooner, but decided it would be too costly and would take engineers away from important pre-launch activities. Instead, they used a lean collaboration approach designed to gather the Iterative Insights they were looking for. They brought all of their field trial customers into a single online community. Similar to agile software development, each week they had the participants use and provide feedback on various appliance features. Engineers were able to get feedback faster than ever before, and go back and ask follow-up questions or clarifications each week as they learned. Senior management was able to observe the communities from headquarters and see issues customers encountered, which provided greater impetus and support for changes needed based on the feedback.

Getting Started with Iterative Insights:
What do you need to do differently, right now, to be more relevant to your clients? Here are four steps that will help you redefine your next client engagement.

**Plan for Business Objectives Rather than Research Objectives:**
When a client approaches you with a potential research initiative, design your approach based on the context of the request. Here are examples of specific questions you can ask.

**Collaborate Using a Broader Team**
(See figure 8) Determine all the stakeholders to decision-making, both internal and external to the organization. Make sure you capture all your constituents in these categories. These are the participants you will want to recruit for the duration of your initiative.

**Key Participants (See figure 9)**
Create a Research Approach with Multiple Milestones
There are several different ways you can lay out your research milestones to allow you to iterate over time. Pick the approach or combination of approaches that work for your initiative. Here are some examples:
“There are now more mobile phones in the world than people.”

Examples: Applying Iterative Insight Approaches (See figure 10)
Leverage Qualitative Technology for Iterative Insights

The examples shared in this case study were based on having an insight community in which you can engage participants over time. While insight communities have grown in popularity, many solutions today are built more as panels for survey responses, rather than as a secure group for true collaboration and iteration.

While input from hundreds of people might feel validating, most of us know that the tenth focus group doesn’t offer much incrementally vs. the fifth focus group, unless they are a different type of people. Consider everyone you want participating in your initiative, and decide how many communities you need. Then, keep your group size small. It could be as few as 10 or as many as 50, but true collaboration is difficult if you can’t get to know your participants.

Getting people together in a room is time-intensive and logistically challenging, but sometimes necessary. Identify which research questions require an in-person approach, and whether you need to talk to people individually or in a group. You can also evaluate whether everyone needs an in-person touch-point, or whether a subgroup will work. Often you can use your online community for most of your input, and supplement with a smaller number of personal touch-points. Or you can align the in-person component with specific milestones (e.g. idea generation).

What Does Success Look Like? (See figure 11) Clients like the Iterative Insights approach because they do not like having to pay to recruit new participants for every research question. Consultants who use an Iterative Insights approach see their relationship with their clients transform from tactical to strategic. No longer do they have to sell more and more small projects to make a living. Instead, they work hand-in-hand with the team, getting them the answers they need exactly when they need them. Schedules are more predictable because you are anticipating the follow-up questions and have the concept of changing direction built into your research design. And most importantly, Iterative Insights approach allows your clients to understand the context of a customer’s feedback over time, building better ties across initiatives. Relative to project-based research, this closer tie from insights to decision making helps clients acting more directly on your research, ultimately creating more successful products, services and communication.
QRCA continues to conduct and record interviews with thought leaders in the qualitative research industry. These podcasts shed light on subjects of great interest to those whose work involves qualitative research. Podcasts of these interviews are available at the QRCA website (www.qrca.org) under the Publications link as streaming audio and can also be downloaded to your laptop or portable listening device as an MP3 file.

Robert Hoekman, Jr. has authored several books and dozens of articles for a range of publications, including Fast Company magazine’s “Co.Design” blog. He is a columnist for the revered motorcycle culture and lifestyle magazine Iron & Air (www.ironandair.com), where he is also a contributing editor. He has spoken to packed rooms at dozens of events all over the world.

He’s also the author of “Thirteen Tenets of User Experience” for the Fall 2015 issue of QRCA VIEWS magazine. This article originally appeared in Smashing Magazine and they have been nice enough to let us republish it.

Robert’s talents for questioning and challenging conventional wisdom have earned him success in a myriad of professional interests, including design, product strategy consulting, freelance writing, editing, and public speaking. As a veteran of the web industry, he was among the few who preached and practiced the fledgling profession of User Experience before it became a household term, and is considered by many to have written several of the profession’s defining guidebooks. He has an undying drive to chase what he loves, a knack for asking the questions that will get him in the door, and a relentless devotion to understanding, accuracy, and quality.

He is a lifelong drummer, and has a passion for psychology, metalwork, and—as his Dutch lineage would require—building furniture. He lives in downtown Phoenix, Arizona with his partner Jodi and their two large dogs, Max and Daisy.

In this podcast Robert offers an overview of the UX field and how qualitative research is used. He also gives us a preview of his latest book (whose working title is “Experience Required”) where he explores the soft skills UX folks need to get their ideas implemented in an organization.

If you would like to hear an interview with an interesting person in the field of qualitative research, please contact Mike Carlon at mjcarlon@mac.com
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The Most Respected Public Opinion Source
Though this book is directed toward young people considering a career in market research, I found it valuable because it contains a concise and updated lay of the land on the industry. Heisler is a professor and has been a quant-oriented market researcher since the 1970s. In simple language, he presents an updated view of the knowledge and skills any person in our field needs to succeed in today’s tech-infused and highly competitive marketplace. Skills in statistics and being able to build stories from large data sets are critical.

He does a great job of showing the truth that can be extracted from social media, big data, and biometrics as well as where these inputs fall short, which create new opportunities for QRCs who have learned how to work with these technologies. For example, Heisler says big data is “very good at showing us patterns of behavior, but we don’t yet have reliable insights into how two or more behaviors are linked by cause and effect.” By recognizing this gap, a QRC might create a new service that draws correlations by combining big data, qualitative and quantitative techniques.

People considering this field will appreciate Heisler’s concise, bird’s-eye view of where the opportunities lie. According to the numbers, the best industries are consumer non-durables, media, pharma, and the public sector in North America and Europe. Clients spend the most on qualitative research projects, market measurement, B2B, and media audience. Across the industry the preferred methods are online, automated digital, phone, and in person.

He devotes a chapter to the history of market research, and in another he describes a typical project from responding to an RFP to writing the report. The final chapters outline differences between working on the client side vs. supplier side, career and average salaries, and how to get hired.

While technology and globalization may have upended our industry (like everywhere else), it was comforting to read his old-school view of the industry’s mission. He writes “Market Research provides information about relevant needs, wants, attitudes, perceptions, and behaviors of constituents so the organization can create, communicate, and deliver products, services, and experiences that meet its customer’s wants and expectations.” It seeks to answer four key questions: “Who is the audience for our product, service, or message?”, “What should the product or service look like?”, “How do we take our product or service to market?”, and “How are we doing?” So the goal of the profession is the same as it was 80 years ago. The message from this book for seasoned QRCs is to embrace (rather than lament) these forces and learn how to work with them to better serve our clients.
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