

The Provocateur



Return to intimacy: Why it took a global pandemic to rekindle our love of insight

Wavemaker

Sometimes it's only when something is taken away that you realise its value.

Over the past six months, that something is face-to-face research. Deprived of human contact by the pandemic, it's made us see just how crucial it is to our work.

We can do great things with Big Data

The last decade has seen a tidal wave of Big Data. It's intoxicating! Behavioural data, customer data, survey data... multiple ways to understand people, brands and business. The Data Analytics Market is forecast to grow at +30% CAGR over the next 3 years¹.

But have we (agencies, advertisers, media platforms, the industry) allowed ourselves to get over-excited? Data is critical for understanding **what people do**. It has huge value, for example sizing life-event triggers for a new technology purchase or using social analytics to measure a brand's share of positive mentions. Sometimes it can even surprise us: search analysis for the **London Metropolitan Police** helped identify an unsuspected underlying behaviour in the fight against knife crime – *making a knife*.

But this is rare. Big Data rarely gets to the 'why' behind the 'what' – **why people do it**.

And *'why'* rather than *'what'* people do is critical. The 'informed point of view' that is an insight. Something that is blindingly obvious and deeply true, but only in hindsight.



Why rather than what people do is critical

¹ Data Analytics Market 2020 Trends, Forecasts & Challenges, 7th Jan 2020, Market Analytics Futures; A recent market study showed that the Data Analytics Market is expected to grow at a CAGR of 30.08% from 2020 to 2023, which would equate to \$77.6 billion. In 2019, the global analytics market was \$49 billion worldwide, which is more than double the value four years ago.

But only insight changes the strategy

This is why we need insight – genuine insight, not observations or facts – and where qualitative research really makes the difference.

When the **Sick Kids hospital foundation** in Toronto identified that ill children weren't victims, but champions, full of fight and battling their illnesses, it changed the strategy².

When the **Government of New South Wales**' HIV Testing [campaign](#) in Australia targeted men who have sex with other men, but identify as straight,

they recognised these were men leading compartmentalised second lives who actively avoided health messaging aimed at the gay community. This was the critical insight that determined the strategy 'Discreet Media'³.

When the **British Royal Navy** recognised that young people see themselves holistically, as world citizens living provincial lives, with no delineation between the professional and personal, it informed a new approach to communications – 'Made in the Royal Navy'⁴.

All these insights were uncovered by human-to-human research.



MADE IN THE ROYAL NAVY

It's time to return to intimacy

The trouble is that as Big Data has accelerated over the past decade, qualitative research for marketing insight has slowly gone out of fashion. Look around your business – how many data analysts can you see, how many skilled moderators?

Perhaps it's understandable. Face-to-face research isn't easy; it requires specific skills, is difficult to scale and can be costly to do.





*When we say insight,
let's mean it.*

If we want game-changing business strategy, we need real human insight. And the Covid-19 lockdown is not only our very own trigger to revive it, it's also given us a new, virtual way to do it.

The video conference focus group is cheaper and easier to set up. A recent Wavemaker trial delivered impressive results. While a little tricky to warm up (but isn't that always the case in a focus group?), the participants were soon happy to share thoughts and feelings from the comfort of their homes. Intimate issues related to pharmaceutical brands were discussed candidly and openly. We discovered the stress of the 'personal lockdown'; when an allergy attack hits, sufferers cut their connection with the outside world, self-medicating on top of allergy pills – sleeping, taking cold showers, using wet towels.

These groups require some specific moderation skills, but the level of intimacy is high and the technology is a leveller. In some ways it beats in-person – no commute to the venue, no drab office walls, no rush to catch the train home.

According to **WARC's 2020 Future of Strategy** report, agency responses to Covid-19 included commissioning new consumer research⁵ with 73% investing in qualitative research.

If you're after genuine, intimate, eye-widening, heart-thumping human insight that makes a difference, you can bet that face-to-face will deliver where Big Data falls short.

When we say insight, let's mean it.

⁵ The Future of Strategy 2020, WARC, warc.com

Top 5 Tips for virtual focus groups

01 Small but perfectly formed

(4 or 5 people but no more)

02 Camera on please

(promotes honesty and a commitment to be involved)

03 Everyone heard

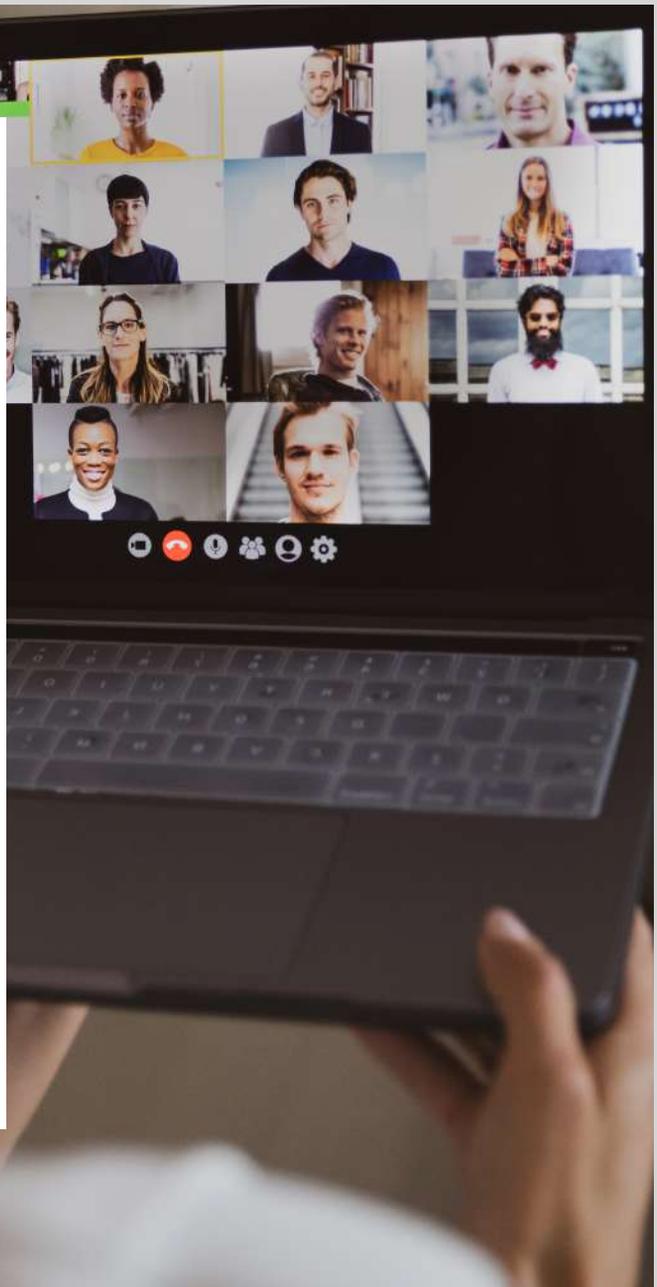
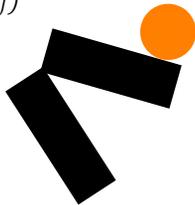
(call out each participant by name)

04 Real pictures and videos

(It's easy for participants to share their content; ask them to come prepared if they're happy to do so)

05 Observers welcome

(muted and with camera off)



Any questions? We're here to help.
Please contact

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