

Unlocking Insight



The word 'insight' has become part of the research and marketing vernacular to such an extent that it has lost its potency. In many cases it has come to mean anything but insight and is no longer the exciting, change-inspiring notion it once was.

A great insight should have the same power as a metaphor: It says of itself what it means. It carries all its power inside itself. It's complete and needs no explanation.

More than that, it should have the ability to transform a business situation, to change our view and drive us towards a solution. In this way, a transformational insight is something we need to create, rather than find. We need to make connections and think about challenges in a way that will unlock opportunity for a brand. It's not something you can uncover or mine for; don't underestimate the work involved in crafting it.

Transformational insights tend to arise out one of three key sources:

- 1) based on customer behaviour
- 2) based in the category
- 3) based on the brand.

For the first, it is critical that the insight is inspired by what customers do (rather than what they say). This can include observed behavioural biases. Take for instance when we test a new app with physicians and the verbal feedback is brilliant, but do they ever use it in practice? No. In this situation, we need to think about the drivers of their entrenched behaviour and how to connect that with their enthusiasm for the new app. The transformational insight may be around something as simple as mobile devices not being on their desks when they are at the point of diagnosis. An example unlocking insight could be "App X turns mobile devices from a distraction into an essential tool, when consulting with patients."

In the second case, the insight is inspired by a truth about the category, for example, what it focuses on and how this is framed. This is an opportunity to shift the way people make choices in the category; e.g. treatment sequencing.

An insight based on the brand is inspired by a truth about the brand or product. This shouldn't be something other brands are already saying (even if they could!). What is uniquely differentiating about the brand that speaks to a specific tension?

How do we move from a truth to a transformational insight?

Customer truths or brand truths are often *called* insights, but as we've demonstrated, they're not the same thing. They're just facts or observations. The first step to turning a truth into an insight is to look at your 'truth' from every possible angle and craft it into something that can make a difference. The below is an example of how we can move from a truth to a perspective to a transformational insight:

- **A truth**
When they're shopping, people forget about frozen food. The interesting and exciting stuff is in the fresh and chilled sections.
- **A perspective**
The freezer section is usually at the end of the store so people have 'built' their menus before they get there. But frozen food is a) 'fresher' than a lot of chilled or fresh food and b) cheaper for the same quality.
- **A transformational insight**
You only need to walk 20 metres to be able to feed your family healthy food for weeks. Because frozen foods are less processed, frozen from fresh in under x minutes and on average 30% cheaper than unfrozen produce.

How to tell if you've got a 'good' insight?

To check if you have succeeded in turning your 'truth' into an unlocking insight, you can test it against the ALERT principle:

Actionable: It triggers action or is capable of being actioned.

Latent: It ignites the unsaid, the unacknowledged.

Emotional: It sparks an emotional connection. People need to feel the truth of what you are saying/offering.

Relevant: Speaks for itself that it is appropriate, in context, useful.

True: Obviously. But also, true for the audience, true for today or tomorrow, true for the brand/category.

Once you have stress-tested an insight against ALERT, ask yourself 'is this really transformational'? Does it unlock a problem? If not, it may just be a truth that's useful but not unlocking. So, it is an iterative process. Keep going!

And when we think we have mastered the insight generation process?

Creating insights is a skill that only gets better with practice. The principles described here will help anyone to improve. The secret is to keep an open mind and try to feed it whenever you can with different perspectives and experiences, from reading books to visiting a different supermarket. It all helps you connect with people and ideas in new ways. And that's the trick to unlocking insight.

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