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**ONLINE  
COMMUNITIES**

JULY 2021



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# VERVE

Energising Insight

**Experts in community panels  
and smart digital research.**

**Inspiring insight,  
vividly brought to life.**

Read on to find out how we're using communities to help two of our favourite brands.



How Europe's best selling smoothie-maker uses an innovation community to develop, test and launch new products.



How John Lewis use community research to deliver strategic brand and proposition development.

[addverve.com](http://addverve.com)

**Verve London**  
[London@addverve.com](mailto:London@addverve.com)

**Verve Chicago**  
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# 21 YEARS OF... DRNO

This year it's Daily Research News' turn to be 21, as it started a little after the jobs index and directories of MrWeb - so on we go with the celebrations. We're delighted to be returning to the subject of Online Communities; to have our title sponsors Verve back for this issue and their drive and enthusiasm infused throughout; and to be here taking stock of what's happened in the last 20 months since the previous Communities special came out.

...and it's been a heck of a 20 months. The tone of the whole series has remained upbeat, but there is now quite a lot more to be cheerful about, both in world terms - vaccine roll-out, release from lockdowns, and general economic recovery - and especially, it seems, in the MR industry, which is in a surprisingly good spot. In these pages, you'll see much about recovery and new normal; much optimism about the way our response to the pandemic has changed the game in favour of insight teams and companies; and even a bit about how the research job market is back on its feet. Not everyone is seeing these upturns yet, but our qualitative conclusion from the many people we talk to is that the recovery is deep-rooted and the economic optimism well-grounded. We won't tempt fate by saying anything more general about humanity being over Covid, but that's for other publications to discuss.

Online Communities in particular have seen a significant boost from the increased public comfort with digital communication, and particularly from the increased need for information about behaviour and attitudes, which is driving greater respect for insights teams and indeed greater freedom of action - all of which you can read about in articles and podcasts by our sponsors Verve, Toluna, KL Communications and QuestionPro below. Communities are also finding common ground and cross-over with the fast-growing segment of (Customer) Experience Management, which presents enormous opportunities - see contributions from our sponsor Platform One. We get the distinct impression of a sector with a spring in its step: expect a lot of investment and expansion here in the next 20 months.

Please follow up with our contributors and advertisers on anything where you want to know more; and let us have your feedback on the publication. We hope you enjoy the video podcasts, and the space they provide for a little more personal discussion in addition to what's in the abridged versions in this pdf. If you find any of them not yet in place, check back in a week as they're the last thing being finalised and as ever, we run right up against our deadlines and often beyond. Plus ça change...

Nick Thomas, MrWeb



I love change and the opportunity it creates for innovative businesses to break the inertia of the status quo. And my gosh what a change the pandemic has required - not just for the short term understanding of what is happening to customers now, but how habits broken during lockdowns will be replaced with new behaviours, across all parts of the economy, across all economies.

Community panels, a digital first approach in which we were pioneers over 12 years ago, have stepped up another gear in the last 15 months. Consumers, of all ages and backgrounds, are now more familiar with using digital devices to communicate, allowing them to tell us in rich detail about their lives in a way we haven't seen until now.

Clients have been more willing to try new things to get stuff done at pace and make decisions quickly. They've been required to break old habits around face to face versus digital approaches - and have been pleasantly surprised by the results!

And consumers requiring change, in not just the detail of our clients' propositions, but change in their very business models, has put consumer insight far more to the centre-stage for senior decision makers.

Exciting times for community panels and smart digital research. Energising times for our industry. And at Verve it is our time to get out there and Energise Insight, our clients and our team like never before!

Andrew Cooper, CEO, Verve

## IN THIS ISSUE...

### 1 INTRODUCTION

- 'A Seismic Shift' for Digital Qual, **4**  
*Andy Dexter, Verve*
- Right Place at the Right Time, **8**  
*News Review, Nick Thomas, MrWeb*

### 2 COMMUNITY ROI

Growth, Barriers, Optimisation

- Podcast, Dan Fleetwood, **14**  
*QuestionPro*
- Case study, innocent drinks / **20**  
*Verve*

### 3 MATURING MARKET

- Interview Mark Hallums, **24**  
*Toluna*
- The Rise of Agile Communities, **30**  
*Kevin Lonnie, KL Communications*

### 4 TRENDS - CX INTEGRATION

- Podcast Jon Gumbrell, **36**  
*Platform One*
- A Single Platform for **42**  
Customer-Centricity,  
*Peter Flower, Platform One*

### 5 TRENDS - MORE AND DEEPER QUAL

- Interview / case study, **48**  
How Verve's Communities are  
Helping Transform John Lewis
- Podcast Tim Martin, Verve **52**

### 6 INSIDE COMMUNITIES

- Tasks, Feedback Formats, **58**  
Engagement
- Podcast Kevin Lonnie, **58**  
*KL Communications*
- Case Study, Energizer / **64**  
*QuestionPro*
- Getting Closer to Your **68**  
Consumers, *Jack Lee, Toluna*

### 7 CAREERS

- Back to the Future, **72**  
*Nick Thomas, MrWeb*
- Current Vacancies **78**

### 8. DIRECTORY **80**

# I. INTRODUCTION

## ‘A SEISMIC SHIFT’ FOR DIGITAL QUAL

As the insight world emerges from the shadow of Covid, ‘only around 50% of formerly face to face activity will revert to type’, says Verve’s Andy Dexter.



### **Verve Adds New Graduates and Talent Manager** *Oct 8 2019*

In London, community panel specialist Verve has completed its fourth graduate intake, bringing the total number of graduate recruits to twelve. The firm recently appointed long-time MR recruitment specialist Sarah Penny as Talent Manager. [More](#)

One of the many knock-on economic effects of COVID-19 has been to light a fire under certain sections of the market research ecosystem.

Pandemic or not, businesses still needed to know things, to get things done - but they've needed to do it in different ways. So there has been significantly accelerated broader adoption of digital methods in general, with even the most hard-core face-to-face advocates adapting fast, if not always by choice. This coincided with the entire world - across generations - getting used to ways of communicating online. The pandemic forced clients (and agencies) to engage with online approaches faster, in greater volume, and for a wider and more sophisticated range of needs.

ethnography, would be centre stage. To some extent, this just reflected the old preconceptions that from fast, cheap, and good you can only have two!

However, even before the pandemic we were seeing increased consideration of a digital first, community panel-led approach for these strategic assignments. From April 2020 that demand exploded - and it continues to grow.

## Leveraging embedded knowledge

One of the core benefits of large scale community panels is the fact that there are ongoing relationships with members, and a vast amount of embedded knowledge and data about people's

Rather than going back to a binary digital or ftf world the future of qualitative research will be more dynamic, combining methods and approaches in a more flexible way.

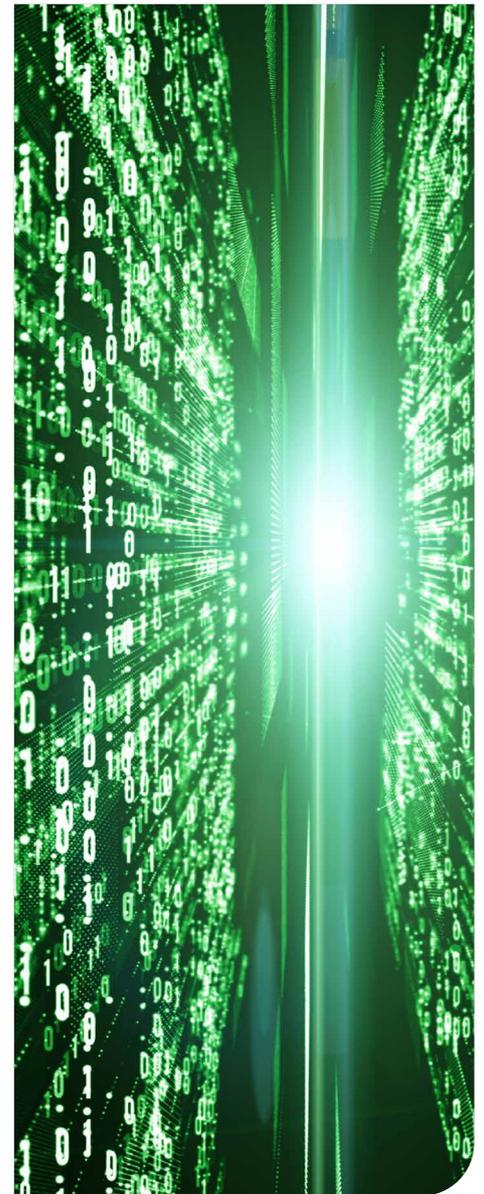
## A change in perspective

Pre-COVID, we had already seen this trend emerging. Going back a few years, the primary benefits of community panel approaches were seen as being for ready access and continuity - faster turnaround, evaluative projects (both qual and quant), dips into customer sentiment, communications and proposition testing, and so on.

Conversely, it had tended to be the case that for more foundational insight work involving deep brand strategy, white space, innovation and so on, ad hoc specialists would be the first port of call. And face-to-face qual, co-creation,

attitudes and behaviours. It means we instinctively know the essence of a typical customer; and we know how different customer cohorts or segments respond to things.

For example, when the pandemic hit, and we saw even small shifts in attitudes and behaviours, we could identify this quickly, and deep dive into it correspondingly fast, creating significant added value for Verve clients without commissioning complex new project work. But these small dives very quickly span out into more significant projects about people's lives, values, beliefs, hopes and fears and dreams - which would perhaps previously have been briefed and commissioned with specialist agencies.



Pandemic or not, businesses still needed to know things, to get things done - but they've needed to do it in different ways.

### CMNTY Ramps Up Community Software Platform *Oct 8 2019*

Research software firm CMNTY has launched a new version of its community software platform, to help brand and insights professionals wanting to build short or long term online customer communities with 'minimal effort and maximum effects'. More

October 2019

## The benefits outweigh any downsides

Any initial reservations about the 'limitations' of digital qual quickly fell away in the face of the very real and tangible benefits...

- Access, reach and diversity of participants - not just the 'usual suspects' from the metropolitan areas. Digital qual offers the ability to get to traditionally harder to reach populations, or people who don't ordinarily participate in research at all.
- Positive participatory effects - no in-group dominance, better comfort levels online, and often more openness and willingness to share.
- Accessibility, immediacy and easier stakeholder engagement on their own terms - far more convenient and often more engaging than face-to-face.
- The ability to spin up and combine methods quickly and seamlessly - asynchronous communities plus video depths or online focus groups plus mobile self-ethnography makes for a potent combination.
- For international work, changes to working patterns brought about by COVID mean it's now easier to employ native speakers as part of a core team without needing an office for them to sit in.
- The ability to quickly bring insights to life with a range of ready-made multimedia resources.

There is now a fundamentally greater openness to trialling new tech and generally tech-led approaches for these programs, and that openness will not be going away. While Verve's platform supports end-to-end community panel management and research it also makes it easier to integrate new technologies that deliver against a specific need, for example mobile ethnography, Augmented Reality and Virtual Reality.

As these and other tools develop, the digital options for clients will grow too.

While ftf will come back, these experiences have certainly led to a change in the consideration and use of digital going forwards. Rather than going back to a binary digital or ftf world the future of qualitative research will be more dynamic, combining methods and approaches in a more flexible way. Strategic projects that blend online and ftf as needed will become the norm.

There will remain a firm set of use cases where there really is no substitute for in-person interaction. Co-creation programmes generally are almost

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There is now a fundamentally greater openness to trialling new tech and generally tech-led approaches.

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impossible to carry out online, especially for complex propositions. Even simple workshops can be a challenge to manage. Deep extended ethnography too - we all know we can learn more (and more unexpected things, too) from a day's true immersion in a participant's life, neighbourhood and home than any amount of self-reporting.

So whilst demand for digital is now a permanent feature of our insight lives, let's not forget all the other great things the so-called traditional approaches can bring to the party.

Even factoring this in, however, we'd guess that only something around 50% of formerly face-to-face activity will revert to type. This feels like a seismic shift - the strategic digital qual boom is here to stay.

## Greater integration

Leading on from this, we have seen a significantly increased demand for more integration of research programs - a desire for connected ecosystems not silos. For example, a demand for more integration



### Blockchain Pioneer Adds Communities Option Oct 22 2019

In the UK, person-based, blockchain-powered data marketplace Measure Protocol has added community functionality into its MSR App, initially in partnership with global consumer insights agency Interpret, which will use it for a new video gaming community. More

of CX evaluation and community panels. CX tells you what is happening, community panels tell you why and what to do about it.

It could be considered T-shaped research: both broad and deep as needed. Connecting the dots of CX quant research (such as NPS popup surveys) with community panels for fast exploration of issues as they surface gives vastly greater connectivity between customer, marketing and insight. In essence, breaking down the silos to make 'measure and diagnose' one frictionless process.

Similarly, John Lewis is on a strategic journey to re-evaluate its value proposition, and over the past year, we've worked with them to explore new territories to help keep the brand relevant, forward-facing and attractive to new audiences. A classic foundational insight programme, interconnected across many different workstreams. When COVID presented itself, the initial challenge of navigating an unexpectedly reduced set of methodologies gave way to the opportunity to discover new ways of doing things.

This ongoing programme incorporates an iterative approach through which community panel customers helped with detailed quantitative evaluations and qualitative exploration of brand territories and potential value propositions. Going beyond this, we are also using semiotics, AI and machine learning technology to evolve the expression of these territories and propositions. It's another fully integrated long-term strategic workstream. [An article about Verve's work with John Lewis appears in section 5]

## Towards an insight data ecosystem

In general, more and more data is produced all the time about customers

and their attitudes and behaviours. However, ad hoc research panels and communities often don't connect to customer data; while data sources like media exposure and purchase panels can't provide the 'why'. The role of insight should be to provide holistic learning, not just adding another data point into the mix.

So by combining regular feeds of behavioural and transactional data with an 'always on' research capability, community panels can provide a uniquely holistic view. For example, in retail you can feed into the community database transactional data from loyalty card holders, bringing a much-needed econometric lens to research and allowing fast targeting of those known to buy a certain product set.

Going beyond this, as more research is done with community members, the more we record and learn about customers' cultural values, behaviours, attitudes, lifestyles and habits - at a granular individual level. And you can look back in time, across all the projects a panel member has participated in, and connect it all together into a single profile. What they buy, what they think, what they respond to... and much more. What story is told by their contributions across many projects? How have their habits changed? Their life events - moving house, getting married, having a child. What their NPS says. What they're watching, or searching for on the web, and what they're doing on social media.

With every project and every data point the profiles grow ever richer:

This individual-level integration of data across multiple sources, projects and methodologies over time makes community panels a potential gold mine of data - and a truly unique resource to underpin strategic insight projects of all types. ■



**Andy Dexter**  
Non-Executive Director  
at VERVE.

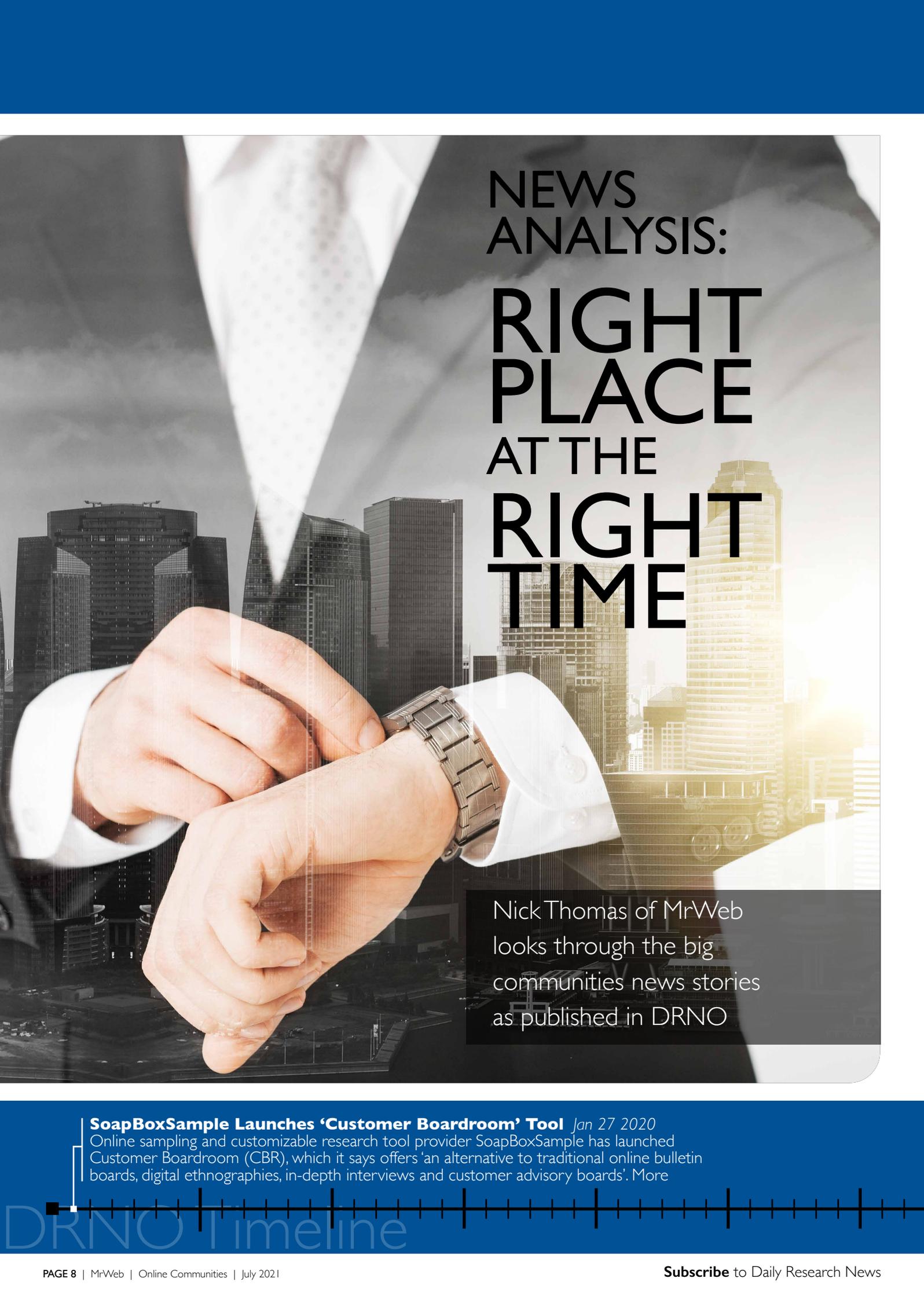
*An ideas person, entrepreneur and senior advisor in the world of marketing, insight and strategy, Andy is a multiple award winner for agency work, conference presentations and research papers. He's a co-founder at Signoi, a digital business harnessing machine learning and AI for insight and foresight.*

Only something around 50% of formerly face to face activity will revert to type.

### KL Launches Co-LABoration Co-Creation Unit Nov 1 2019

US-based online MR community specialist KL Communications has opened a new division called KL Co-LABoration, which will focus on customer co-creation using the company's proprietary CrowdWeaving methodology. More

Oct - Nov 2019



NEWS  
ANALYSIS:

# RIGHT PLACE AT THE RIGHT TIME

Nick Thomas of MrWeb looks through the big communities news stories as published in DRNO

## SoapBoxSample Launches 'Customer Boardroom' Tool *Jan 27 2020*

Online sampling and customizable research tool provider SoapBoxSample has launched Customer Boardroom (CBR), which it says offers 'an alternative to traditional online bulletin boards, digital ethnographies, in-depth interviews and customer advisory boards'. More

We last published an Online Communities special in October 2019, and if we'd had a go then at predicting what would happen in the 20 months before the next one, it probably wouldn't have been this.

All other events and trends have been shoved to one side by the pandemic and the response of governments to it - that's

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What Covid hasn't done is damaged the potential for insight communities: they were in good shape before, and they're in better shape now.

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not to say other stories haven't continued to develop, but each one of them will have been shaped to some extent by Covid-19.

What Covid hasn't done is damaged the potential for insight communities: they were in good shape before, and they're in better shape now. Throughout this supplement you'll see references to the way changes in communication and working habits, along with the upheaval in most sectors, have accelerated the adoption of digital communities, and of digital qual.

## The Shock

This may not have been obvious in the Spring of 2020, when all was doubt and/or doom. In the UK the MRS Chief Executive Jane Frost wrote to the Chancellor of the Exchequer Rishi Sunak warning of the 'immediate and potentially catastrophic impact' of the Covid-19 crisis on the industry, and two weeks later a second letter asked him to 'save one of the UK's world leading sectors'. A long-established industry tracker declared in

April that market research was 'the worst-performing category', as UK marketing budgets 'declined at the fastest rate since the global financial crisis of 2009'.

Globally, ESOMAR estimated in May that the insights world was in line for an \$18.7 billion loss in value due to the pandemic, according to a survey of 2,889 professionals from 127 countries.

The sector's key ftf events were put on hold, 'though it was not until the summer that major meet-ups took the tough decisions - including that of the Munich R+R trade show founders to close their company permanently. By this time, results were coming in from that nightmare second quarter; Ipsos for example admitting it had been 'heavily affected' by the reaction to Covid. The tragic human cost of the disease itself was also apparent in the sector, with Panelbase founder Angus Webb among those taken from us, aged just 45.

## The 'Or...'

However by the summer there were also signs that the industry as a whole was starting to adapt - and arguably the Chancellor looking wise not to have stepped in with a huge support scheme. Not for MR anyway - he has thrown the fiscal kitchen sink at other groups and the economy as a whole, running up eye-watering debt in the process. ESOMAR replaced the annual Congress with the Insights Festival 2020, which took place online from 14th to 17th September; the MRS 'downgraded' its appeal for help. Ipsos announced what must surely be considered a very rapid bounce back and a few people even outside the tech end of research started to conjecture that perhaps there were big pluses for the industry in the changes taking place. Oh, and the Munich event was back on, for 2021 at least, with a new hybrid format courtesy of key staff from among the previous company's co-founders.

Some companies meanwhile had been getting on with it and certainly worrying a lot less than others. In the insights space, this was mostly firms well-adapted to the Zoom world and the anticipated 'new normal' economy - including specialists

### Screen Engine/ASI Partners for Communities Offer *Jan 27 2020*

Century City, CA-based TV, film and video research firm Screen Engine/ASI (SE/ASI) has announced a strategic partnership with insight community company My-Take, to offer clients recruitment of fans and customers into private advisory or VIP consumer panels of 1,000 to 100,000 members. More

January 2020



in community panels. Launches and announcements at this early stage came from the centre of the sector - the likes of QuestionPro; from loyalty community operators adding survey features; and from crowdsourcing and innovation platforms too.

From the autumn, many firms were positioning to make the most of the opportunities of the 'new normal' world, with a mass of appointments, funding wins and partnerships for digital insights firms. Communities specialist InSites Consulting hardly broke stride - before the lockdown it had been buying in Asia, integrating in Australia and boosting its team in the Netherlands; in September it rolled out its 'Culture + Trends' solution worldwide, and by early 2021 it was acquiring again, in Taiwan, and expanding through a partnership in Latin America. In the US, MarketVision was boosting its communities team at the end of 2019 and growing it again in December of 2020; while in the UK, customer insights and communities platform developer STRAT7 ResearchBods announced multiple hires in December 2020.

## Growing Deeper

Our title sponsor Verve has identified a major opportunity in the growth of exploratory qual - and digital qual generally - which you can read about elsewhere in this publication, and the firm has continued to grow and recruit throughout most of the period, adding to its graduate scheme in October 2019 and announcing no fewer than seven hires and eleven promotions in February 2021. In December, Verve merged UK operations with new global strategic partner Potentiate, and in February it announced revenues up an impressive 23% in 2020, to £8.1m.

Funding rolled in for online intelligence platforms like Toluna, as it has more

recently for the likes of London's ContentCal and Amsterdam's Veylinx. Community solution provider Vanilla Forums was winning funds in the very week the pandemic suddenly took hold, and a year or so later has been snapped up by consumer engagement specialist Higher Logic.

UK-based mobile community and data firm Streetbees featured in our Mobile Age supplement in the summer, and announced 110% growth in the first six months of 2020; unsurprisingly such results attract investors - it won further funds and then appointed a COO in advance of a recruitment drive in August. Other firms added senior personnel, notably Toluna, where former Nielsen MD Bruce Haymes became Non-Executive Chairman of the Board of Directors in November, and communities and research tech firm Further with a round of appointments in October.



In the insights space, this was mostly firms well-adapted to the Zoom world and the anticipated 'new normal' economy - including specialists in community panels.

### Maru/Blue Launches Forums Panel Management Tool *Mar 2 2020*

Respondent access specialist Maru/Blue has launched a panel management tool called Forums, through which clients can manage and execute community research themselves or access support from the firm's Insight and Community Management team. More



## Growing Wider

The merger of Conformit and FocusVision, first [announced](#) at the turn of the year, is indicative of a trend towards combining and broadening digital research offerings. The two have since announced they will be known as [Forsta](#). We wonder if that's as in 'be reckoned with', or if it's because they offer Rooms with a View? Great name anyway - tell us the thinking behind it Kyle and we'll publish it.

This trend for rounding out platforms and developing end-to-end solutions is evident in many places, with the new [Toluna Start](#) just one of the most prominent examples - the platform is now available via a [subscription model](#), further supporting continuous client-agency relationships, for which see our interview with Mark Hallums below. Some firms have added new, complementary solutions to their communities - for example real-time video chat from [CMNTY](#), and community functionality plus a rapid insights tool from blockchain-powered data marketplace [Measure Protocol](#). Many have announced partnerships ([Vesta](#) and neuroscience company HCD Research; community specialists [Tribes Research](#) and [Syno International](#); Hollywood's

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[Screen Engine/ASJ](#) and My-Take; or [Dynata and CMNTY](#)). Still others have gone the acquisition route - one of our October 2019 sponsors, US firm 20|20 Research, is now part of the growing global [Schlesinger Group](#).

Aside from Forsta, other companies in the sector have changed or rearranged their brands, including [Toluna](#), last summer, and LRW Group, also fast-growing and now known as [Material](#) - the latter's acquisitions have rounded out its own digital offering very substantially.

## Better Communities

If there's been a move to combine communities functionality with other digital research approaches, there has also been a widespread recognition that more can be done within communities,

to engage respondents, make it easier to feed back in more varied and interesting ways, to give clients easier access to a larger range of options more closely integrated with each other, and to offer them support - where required - to sit alongside their DIY / dashboard use.

Verve has introduced a 'fast-build' community panel service called [Verve-Lite](#), giving access to an always-on group of customers and launched in as little as three days. Canada's [Maru/Matchbox](#) launched a Choice-based Ideation solution for brand R&D, and a [pop-up communities](#) tool; UK firm [Further](#) added concept evaluation and text analysis tools on its Together platform; Canada's Rival Technologies and Reach3 Insights launched a [mobile message-based platform](#) offering 'focus groups on demand' at scale. US-based [Fuel Cycle](#) launched a platform called Ignition, to speed up and simplify the gathering of customer and employee insights. Not to mention pop-up community platform [ex-plor lite](#), from the UK's ResearchBods; SoapBoxSample's [Customer Boardroom](#) tool, billed as 'an alternative to traditional online bulletin boards, digital ethnographies, in-depth interviews and customer advisory boards'; and KL Communications' whole new division, [KL Co-LABoration](#), which will focus on customer co-creation using the company's proprietary CrowdWeaving methodology - much more about the last of these in our interview below with CEO Kevin Lonnie.

## CX Sells

One of the fastest-growing fields associated with research, data and insights is Customer Experience, which is [now](#) no longer CE but CX - much sexier (which is almost certainly the real reason for its growth, never mind whether it's 'vital for the future of business'). CX has also featured large in DRNO in the

### Community Specialist Vanilla Wins Expansion Funds *Mar 20 2020*

In Canada, online customer community solution provider Vanilla Forums has secured an undisclosed amount of investment, which it will use to expand into new markets. [More](#)

past eighteen months, not least because of Qualtrics' extraordinary valuation: at the time of the firm's acquisition by software giant SAP it was already a whopping \$8bn, and since then it's peaked at around double that, making it by many definitions the most valuable research firm in the world, or the most valuable firm-that-was-until-recently-a-research-firm. Now Qualtrics is an Experience Management (XM) company. Thing is, communities specialists rightly see a huge connection between their corner of MR, specifically, and customer experience. What was communities firm Vision Critical is now CX and insights firm Alida, and it's recently upgraded its [Sparg platform](#), added a number of [product innovation experts](#) and targeted [regional growth](#) too. In section 4 of this supplement, you can read about the steps taken by UK-based customer feedback specialist Platform One to integrate its XM and community tools, also covered in DRNO [here](#) - and watch out for a number of other integrated CX / communities offers happening now and soon.

## Specialists and C-Suites

Niche panels and communities also continue to appear, between them adding up to a significant chunk of the overall market. Since the last issue, these have included the addition of 13-to-15-year-olds to the youth panel of London-based [YouthSight](#); the launch of a B2B insight and opinion leader communities firm called [Nostradamus Consulting](#); Maru/Matchbox's new [Technology Advisory Council](#), in Canada; the [Opinion Harvester](#) panel of farmers and farm workers, in the UK; and small business marketing community [SenseCheck](#), launched by former Unilever and Kraft marketer Roger Jackson.

There have been numerous other senior level appointments, many of which you'll

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One of the fastest-growing fields associated with research, data and insights is Customer Experience, which is now no longer CE but CX - much sexier.

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find in links along the bottom of the pages of this supplement. In the C-Suite, we've seen former Harris Interactive UK MD [Susan Vidler](#) promoted to European Chief Research Officer of Toluna; April Downing made CFO and Sejal Amin CTO at Austin, Texas-based customer engagement software developer [Khoros](#), which includes the former communities firm Lithium Technologies; communities pioneer C Space has a new Global CEO in [Jessica DeVlieger](#) and COO in [Polly Maclsaac](#), returning to the company; Alida - formerly Vision Critical - brought in enterprise tech industry exec [David O'Malley](#) as its first Chief Revenue Officer; and in Australia, 'Human Experience' agency Potentiate brought in Voxpopme APAC leader [Jem Wallis](#) as 'Head of Agile Qual'.

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It's good to see that at least this year researchers formed an action group to ensure our sector plays its part: there's a lot we can do to help combat climate change and promote sustainability.

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### **MRS Sends Second Letter to UK Government** *Apr 6 2020*

MRS Chief Executive Jane Frost has again written to UK Chancellor Rishi Sunak, urging 'one simple step to save one of the UK's world leading sectors'. [More](#)

## The Future?

Overall, a busy and positive period for this particular subset of research's own larger community. Something bad came out of left field, and though there may be many variants and indeed other pandemics to come, we wouldn't at this point expect them to dent the long and continuing rise of the community panel. There is, however, at least one crisis coming which shouldn't take anyone by surprise, which may impact severely even on robust parts of the economy, as on all other aspects of human life, and it's good to see that at least this year researchers formed an action group to ensure our sector plays its part: there's a lot we can do to help combat climate change and promote sustainability. Let's hope that by the time of the next Communities supplement we'll see more positive moves from insights folk, and a lot more action from humanity as a whole. ■



# Max indifference?

**It's time to rethink your research.**

We love research but we wouldn't take 90% of the surveys out there. Neither will Gen Z, Millennial, BIPOC or LGBTQQIP2SAA people. So we created Rival. It's research people respond to.

Discover why people respond to us: [rivaltech.com/mrweb](https://rivaltech.com/mrweb)

**RIVAL**

### Maru/Matchbox Launches 'Pop-up Communities' Tool *Apr 17 2020*

Canada-based communities specialist Maru/Matchbox has launched a branded tool called 'Pop-up Communities', which it says can be deployed in just fourteen days.  
More

April 2020

# VIDEO PODCAST

in conversation:

# DAN FLEETWOOD,

Watch the full video at  
[mrweb.com/drno/danfleetwood.htm](http://mrweb.com/drno/danfleetwood.htm)



DAN FLEETWOOD,  
PRESIDENT OF RESEARCH &  
INSIGHTS, QUESTIONPRO



*Interview by MrWeb's Nick Thomas*

### Parents and Start in MR

My mom was primarily a homemaker and my 'real' or paternal dad Chief Engineer on the ferries in Washington, in the Seattle area. I have a stepdad who ran his own company, had to deal with manufacturers and so forth. My parents have definitely played a big role, and taught me a number of things, I'm lucky in that I have a pretty expansive family, and even my grandparents and uncles etc have had some influence on who I am. Primarily I think I learnt the value of hard work, and 'if you start something, finish it'. If you give me an initiative I'll take

#### Schlesinger Group Buys Qual Specialist 20|20 Research *Apr 21 2020*

In the US, international data collection business Schlesinger Group has acquired qualitative technology-led research services provider 20|20 Research for an undisclosed sum. Jim Bryson, founder and former Chair at 20|20, is retiring from the business. More



it on and I'll see it through. When I was a kid and wanted to stop a sport after a week or two, said I didn't like it, they said I had to see it out 'till the end of the season. Everything's going to have ups and down and hurdles, but being able to see it through is important.

## Growing up with Microsoft in my backyard... [tech] felt like something that was innately in me

**NT:** Was the engineering background something that made you lean towards being a techie?

**DF:** No I think that was growing up with Microsoft in my backyard... It was on the news and stuff... it felt like something that was innately in me, I wanted to go into tech. I started in MR by accident I think, got a degree in Marketing & Business Admin, got a job at a Research firm in the Seattle area - an internship, and just sort of fell into it.

I worked first up for Informa Research Group, then for Pacific MR. I was doing full service research, then about 7 or 8 years ago now I realised that I wanted to be more in the tech space and switched over to QuestionPro. I was on the customer success and services side, and subject matter expert for the communities product line - and have just gravitated towards the tech. I've really grown within the company, and a lot of that comes back to the parents thing - taking on initiatives and getting them done.

## DIY and DIT

**DF:** QuestionPro is 4 or 5 different product lines: survey platform, communities, workforce, CX and services, so I look after the research survey platform - there's a self-service component and then more of a research side to it - conjoint, max diff, etc. The Communities platform started as a panel management platform, so we wanted the ability to bring people in, profile them, set them target surveys, that's it - but then we built out the member portal, some qualitative features like topics, idea board, discussion modules and so forth - which I think has key benefits. We're able to have that good profiling system and we're able to target members, more so than if it were just a flashy qual platform - it's a good backbone that everything is built on.

QuestionPro is divided into two spaces, there is a self-service option which is really siloed by licence type; then there's an enterprise solution which offers more support and gives more of the features. But what I've seen more of lately in the marketplace is this DIT (Do It Together) approach where people are saying Hey we need you for software, but we also need you to program it, maybe we need you to do some analysis on it, and that's something that we've seen as a growing trend and something I think will continue, it makes it easier for people that don't want to go to 5 different companies - they can go to one.

**NT:** Are more and more people using DIY, alongside this growth in DIT?

**DF:** Yeah but I don't think the need for researchers and MR companies is ever going away. What DIY is good for is really ease of use, especially if you're a researcher yourself, you don't want someone to program the survey for you, don't want someone to tell you 'This is

the best way'. There's definitely a need for DIY and I don't think either trend will swallow up the other.

**NT:** So you have these different options, DIY, serviced research or they can set up a community - how much of a steer do you give clients and how much do they tend to know what they want?

**DF:** They tend to know what they want, in this day and age, and that's a good thing. Because they know what they want the demos are easier, the solutioning is somewhat easier, although I will say that as we develop new tech and new things, there are cases where we say Yes you have this core functionality, but have you thought about this? - something I think is interesting like a cherry on the top. But people tend to know what they want, especially on the survey side, whereas on the community side, it's

We say to [client side researchers] When people in your company find out that you have [this community], everybody's going to be on you..

been around for ten years plus but there are still some people who say 'Whoa why do I need that, what's the benefit?' And you can point to ease of access for your customers, you can profile them, segment them, and do you want to do qual? 'Yeah we definitely want that'. Well here's an easy way to do it. We say to [client side researchers] 'When people in your company find out that you have these, everybody's going to be on you, because they want ease of access to their community or to their customer base, and a community platform allows that'.

### Maru/Matchbox Launches Concept Connections Tool Apr 24 2020

Canada-based communities specialist Maru/Matchbox has launched a concept test solution called Concept Connections, which combines System 1 and 2 measurements to help businesses understand the differences between what consumers say and what they actually do. More

## Trends, Tabs & Tools

**DF:** What's interesting now in MR is more the knowledge management side of it, and I think we've seen 3 key problems in that space: workflow, the new project intake can be really difficult, cumbersome and complex; then discovery, does that research just go into a repository and die for example, so what can we do to make sure it's shared; and then the idea of building on previous research. So we're working on our Insights Hub KM software, which we're seeing in Beta in a month's time - clients are lined up to use that. We'll have some outside integrations as well so it doesn't just work with QuestionPro.

**NT:** What about methodologies, what's fast-growing in the market?

**DF:** With the pandemic there's been a big spike in the need for online qual and online video - video chat and discussions are something we've wanted to get in the platform for a while, and the pandemic obviously helped to get that on the agenda, as an augment to the communities platform. There are more people coming into online qual and it is picking up speed very fast. Either because people see others doing it and say 'I really ought to try that', or simply because their traditional ftf groups haven't been able to meet.

We've been doing a lot with pricing analytics as well - there are obviously these methods like Gabor Grainger, van Westendorp, conjoint and so forth, and when you package all these things together it makes a really powerful platform. Then of course more of the traditional needs, like I mean everybody loves cross-tabs! - and I don't see that going away from an analytic standpoint. As much as they've been around forever, people still want their tried and true methods. A lot of competitors now have

a good platform but one that's not very expansive, and we are beginning to come up against companies that say 'that's too much of a specialty', whereas we see it as a key benefit that clients want in the toolbox.

Then there are things like AI and sentiment analysis, big words but I think people get lost in that a little bit, because they think it can solve all their problems, but I don't think that's going to be the case. We're working on something so that when someone completes a focus group they don't have to pore through the transcript - what can we do to bubble up those insights and provide that data at higher speed? Really it just comes down to people not having time, even 'though they might want to do the stats and get into the nitty-gritty, they need to get the research done and move on to the next thing.

On the communities side specifically, the big thing is continuing to develop our mobile app - obviously a good augment to the communities offer, but it's just an extension of how people interact with their phones and their normal day-to-day activity. I think at the end of the day we want to improve response rates, and how do we do that? Be aware of what they're used to doing already on other apps and on social media platforms, so continuing to build out the mobile app is key.

Geographical expansion is happening, most recently opening an office in Canada. I think we're seeing that when we put someone in a particular area and have that local presence, we see things expand greatly - so for example we put an office in Germany a few years back, and that region is exploding. We have data centers also in Canada, the EU, Australia, Dubai, which you need with GDPR and other regulations.

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Video chat and discussions are something we've wanted to get in the platform for a while, and the pandemic obviously helped to get that on the agenda

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## Barriers and selling points

**NT:** are people generally using communities to do 'a lot of different surveys' or is there a lot of joined-up use, tracking the same person through many different parts of a journey?

**DF:** I would say the best communities do things over time, and there are surveys as well to augment that. Let's say you did a survey two months ago, and now you want to ask something to everybody that said Yes to question 6, you can easily do that. That's been cumbersome in the past. Ease of regular access is important - we work with Fortune 500 companies where they have to wait months to get a list approved to be able to send out, but once you have people approved for a community, you can easily sit down and survey them.

**NT:** ...so it's helping the internal research department to bypass some of the bureaucracy - the need to get everything signed off?

**DF:** 100 percent, I think that's the key thing, everybody wants to cut the red tape and just go straight in if they can.

### ResearchBods Rolls Out 'ex-plor lite' Pop-Up Platform *May 7 2020*

In the UK, customer data and intelligence provider ResearchBods has launched a pop-up community platform called 'ex-plor lite', providing the same features as its 'ex-plor' platform, but specifically designed as a short-term, self-serve solution that can be launched in just 24 hours. More

**NT:** Is there a reluctance to set aside the initial time... or money, to set up a community - what puts more people off getting started with them?

**DF:** I think it's really time, that's the limited resource people have. We have got people who can come in and help run the communities, but I think the biggest barrier is knowledge and time. Sometimes budget can be a constraint although if they can see the value they can get the budget from somewhere I think, and really the time is the key thing. I would say that if people think they can just build a community and it will run, it's not like that - at least, the best communities that I see are well-managed, there's a plan, we know we're

going to send two or three surveys a month, we know how many topics we're going to do, we have a good points / reward system we've set up, and having a good plan I think is key, otherwise your community will fail, it won't live up to your expectations - I've seen it too many times. So that's what we try to do a lot with coaching and consulting: this is the best way to run your community, whether it's 200 or 10,000 people the size doesn't really matter; but you definitely need that good plan of attack.

**NT:** So do you have clients where you think 'a community would be ideal for your research needs but I'm not convinced you're going to put the time and effort into it to make it work'?



Having a good plan I think is key, otherwise your community ... won't live up to your expectations.



**DF:** I think we do see that, and I think we would always try to find a way to work that out - maybe go back to the DIT approach, we may want to have some control over it - we can usually find some of the best support tricks for that. But there are a lot of clients there that I just think should have communities but just don't!

**NT:** Can suppliers do a bit more to help client side researchers to sell it - eg by giving more statistics on paying off set-up costs, you know, 'in 6 months, 12 months it'll pay itself back...?'

**DF:** I think that might even be the case, we need to provide more information on why this is good. For example people are always concerned about response rates, well a community is a great way to address that, they've opted in, they want to do research, especially if you're a good brand and there's a lot of brand affinity - these will give you high response rates without offering a [distinct] incentive, so there are things you can do.

### Green Launches New Business Insight Firm *May 12 2020*

Julian Green, former MD of Kantar's B2B practice, is launching a B2B insight and opinion leader communities firm called Nostradamus Consulting. The company has brought in two former oil and gas industry execs to advise on the development of its first initiative, an energy-focused community. More



## The CX Pie

**NT:** Let's throw a bit of breaking news at you, you might have seen last night SurveyMonkey changing its name to Momentive... That's because they're going in the direction of more CX in the mix, probably they're looking at Qualtrics' market valuation - I shouldn't speculate - but anyway is that something that you have an eye on - you say you have involvement with CX...

**DF:** We've been keeping an eye on this, there's been a rash of these lately, VisionCritical changing to Alida, Decipher and FocusVision becoming Forsta, and even SurveyGizmo changing to Alchemer, so I think obviously everyone's trying to get a piece of that CX pie, and we're in the middle of it. We have a CX division and Ken Peterson leads that so he's focused on developing the CX platform and product out, and expanding that reach. It does 'though leave an interesting space for pure research in general - are these companies going to continue to focus on that as much? I would say probably not, so we see that as an opportunity. But it's interesting that SurveyMonkey needed that rebrand in terms of going after enterprise clients... 'SurveyMonkey' is a little bit too siloed I think - 'do they just do surveys?' - so I think they needed to rebrand. I can tell you one thing, QuestionPro's brand isn't changing, it'll be QuestionPro from here on out. I think QuestionPro is a perfect name because at the end of the day they're all asking questions, whether you're doing CX or whatever it might be.

Obviously everyone's trying to get a piece of that CX pie, and we're in the middle of it.

## Motto

**DF:** This tends to change depending on what stage of life you're going through... but I think for me the more that I've stepped outside my comfort zone, the more I've been able to achieve. Tim Ferriss I think has this quote - "your success in life can be measured by the number of uncomfortable conversations you're willing to have". Put yourself out there and put yourself in those uncomfortable situations because oftentimes a lot of good will come out of that. I think you realise that most of what you fear never really comes to fruition so even if you do small exercises like going into a coffee shop and asking for ten percent off, that may not seem like a lot but if you're putting yourself out there for those small things then you're more likely to engage in some of those.

"Your success in life can be measured by the number of uncomfortable conversations you're willing to have".

**NT:** Does that ever work!?

**DF:** It works! I've tried it a number of times, sometimes people look at me like 'Who's this guy?!' but sometimes it works, so I think it's worth it, most people wouldn't do that, it's a little uncomfortable, a little awkward... but I think it's key. And then another thing that flows into that is 'how you do anything is how you do everything', so even approaching the small things with a lot of rigour and regard, I think that's how you can approach everything, so no matter what I'm doing ... I'm not going to approach it with a bad attitude, I'm going to at least try to [do it properly] - it doesn't always ring true, but if I preach this to myself, maybe it'll ring true more often than not. ■

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# CASE STUDY INTERVIEW: INNOCENT DRINKS GROWTH FROM THE GREENHOUSE

As Europe's best-selling smoothie maker with a 2020 turnover of €467M, innocent have unquestionably built an inimitable brand since their humble beginnings at a music festival in 1999.

Engaging and involving customers in products has always been an intrinsic part of their philosophy and here we talk to Emma McClintock, Group Insights Manager at innocent drinks, and Melissa Birkett, Associate Director at Verve about how 'The Greenhouse' community panel provides always-on consumer closeness with a group of innocent VIPs.



## Measure Protocol Launches QuickAnswers Solution *May 13 2020*

Measure Protocol, a blockchain-based marketplace for person-based data, has launched a rapid insights tool, 'Measure QuickAnswers'. The solution taps the company's community of Gen Z and Millennial mobile-only app users based in the US, Canada and the UK. More



## VERVE

Energising Insight

### What's going on at innocent right now; what are the big things happening in 2021?

**EMMA:** What we're seeing as we emerge from the pandemic is a revival for the natural health benefits of juices and smoothies as consumers look for a 'quick fix' of high vitamin content and immunity benefits. We're continuing to focus on providing healthy, tasty and sustainable products to innocent drinkers, including the relaunch of our core range of smoothies and the introduction of new lighter recipes with 30% less sugar.

### Tell us about 'The Greenhouse', and the types of things you're doing with it?

**EMMA:** It's really important for us to have a deep understanding of consumer attitudes and behaviours to make sure we keep consumers at the heart of everything we do. The Greenhouse community is incredibly valuable, helping us stay connected to our drinkers and keep in touch with consumer needs and concerns.

**MELISSA:** Greenhouse connects innocent to drinkers across Europe. We have 1000 members across the UK, France and Germany who help with a wide range of projects: from testing new concepts to developing branding and comms and making sure they're all aligned with consumer needs.

**EMMA:** One really interesting Greenhouse project was on our new TV advert 'Little Drinks, Big Dreams' which launched in May and introduces a new brand platform for us. It aims to engage a new generation of drinkers, whilst still supporting our health and sustainability credentials.

**MELISSA:** This has been a great project for Greenhouse:

members were shown a sneak peek of some early iterations of the advert and helped shape the content to ensure it was relatable and true to the innocent brand. From an engagement perspective, the community love to see how influential their feedback is and seeing the final ad aired on TV and online definitely helps with this!

### How does The Greenhouse play a role in innocent's overall strategy?

**EMMA:** The Greenhouse is well established in the business as a core insight tool and is widely well regarded for helping us in our mission to make sure consumers are at the heart of our decision-making. It definitely helps us ensure we align our strategy with the needs of 'real' consumers – making sure our innovations and comms are relevant and up to date. That's obviously hugely important to us.

It also allows us to be more agile and have more touchpoints with the consumer throughout the innovation cycle. Being able to check in and test something with the community, then make tweaks and changes as a result, means we're better placed to keep innovations on track. And in the same way, it allows us to be reactive and respond quickly - helping retain our 'entrepreneurial mindset', which is so important to us at innocent.

**MELISSA:** Communities are ideal for delivering innovation, because customers can be much more closely involved throughout the process of creating, evaluating, refining and testing new ideas and propositions.

The Greenhouse is well established in the business as a core insight tool and is widely well regarded for helping us in our mission to make sure consumers are at the heart of our decision-making.

#### Insights World 'Set for \$18.7bn Covid Loss' May 15 2020

The insights sector is in line for an \$18.7 billion loss in value due to the Covid-19 pandemic, according to a new report released by industry body ESOMAR and based on a survey of 2,889 professionals from 127 countries. More



Emma McClintock,  
Group Insights  
Manager, Innocent  
Drinks

*Emma McClintock is the European insight lead for juice at innocent drinks. An experienced insights professional having worked client side for more than 20 years, Emma has worked in global roles for major FMCG and retail brands such as Heinz and Dulux with a key focus on innovation. She is a big fan of online communities having used them successfully in previous roles before joining innocent.*

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Communities are ideal for delivering innovation, because customers can be much more closely involved throughout the process of creating, evaluating, refining and testing new ideas and propositions

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We have the freedom to call on members when we need them, and the flexibility to quickly choose the right tool and approach to fit the need at that time. In the end this means there's far more collaboration and consensus in decision-making.

The Greenhouse was used recently to run a project to identify opportunities to feed into the development of innocent's juice strategy. Can you tell us about that?

**MELISSA:** We used The Greenhouse to explore perceptions of the juice category via a range of different tasks and activities. For example, members went on 'Store Safari' missions to their local supermarkets to explore the fixture for themselves: they jotted down notes and took photos and videos while in-store, sharing their first impressions of the juice aisles. They also purchased a selection of products to take home, pop in their fridge, read the packaging and, of course, taste test and drink! The in-store photos and videos were shared on the community,

alongside their answers to a series of open questions focusing on which products or brands stood out and why.

**EMMA:** innocent's juice has always been the healthy and tasty choice with an ethical ethos. With our focus being to continue to grow in juice and remain relevant, we wanted to get as close as we possibly could to the moment of purchase and understand what impacts consumer choice.

You also integrated semiotic analysis into the process – how did it add value?

**MELISSA:** It allowed us to thoroughly understand how consumers felt about the juice category - and innocent's offering. We used native speakers (who live and work full time for Verve from their own country) to collect a variety of 'cultural data sources' – things such as video and print ads, brand website copy and imagery, pack visuals, social media data and so on. Using a combination of this and member feedback, we undertook semiotic analysis of the category to uncover what cultural signifiers were creating emotional connections.

#### Verve Debuts 'Lite' Community Panel Service *May 28 2020*

London-based community panel specialist Verve has introduced a 'fast-build' community panel service called Verve-Lite, giving access to an always-on group of customers and launched in as little as three days. More



**EMMA:** It was a very valuable process, particularly because the insights allowed us to be future-facing – taking us beyond that which is rooted in now, to get visibility on what’s progressive and likely to start to emerge.

You’ve had a great reaction to the project – in what ways have you already seen people using the insight?

**EMMA:** It’s been really well received internally – and we’re now rolling out the approach in other key markets. The insight will input into several

workstreams including communications and NPD and will be used by both our global and local teams to develop and improve our offering in the juice category.

Finally, what’s the vision for taking Greenhouse further this year?

**EMMA:** We love the Greenhouse community! It will continue to be a key tool, helping us keep in touch with consumers, enabling us to respond quickly to issues and forming an integral part of our insight plan and innovation projects going forwards. ■



Melissa Birkett,  
Associate Director,  
Verve

*Melissa Birkett is an Associate Director at Verve, and has spent the past 7 years specialising in online communities and digital qualitative research. Passionate about interacting and engaging with consumers to uncover their needs and explore their brand relationships, Melissa is always looking to develop new ways of approaching community projects using ever-evolving tech.*



### Rival and Reach3 Launch Mobile Insights Platform Jul 16 2020

In Canada, research tech business Rival Technologies and sister company Reach3 Insights have launched a mobile message-based platform, through which brands can access 'focus groups on demand' at scale. More

May - July 2020

# 3 MATURING MARKET



MARK HALLUMS,  
SVP GLOBAL DIGITAL  
SOLUTIONS, TOLUNA



## In conversation: MARK HALLUMS

*Interview by MrWeb's Nick Thomas*

Mark joined Toluna in August 2007, his task to focus on the growth and global development of its panel community & technology business. Since that time, the technology business has experienced rapid, double-digit growth year on year, and his roles and responsibilities have now evolved to focus on two core areas across the global business: (i) providing the company's global clients and internal teams with expert research tech application knowledge and (ii) powering the customer success function to help clients achieve their goals and objectives through the Toluna Start platform.

### **'Material' is New Name for LRW Group** Jul 16 2020

US-based insight-led marketing services firm LRW Group has been renamed 'Material', bringing its ten companies into one unified offering. [More](#)

**NT:** Tell us about your parents...

**MH:** My father was an accountant and my mother a district nurse. All they really wanted me to do was what I liked doing - and to keep doing that - no particular career path. They did encourage me to study hard in my exams, encouraged me to go through university against my initial thoughts. They really focused me on 'doing what you really feel passionate about and enjoy doing'.

**NT:** Did you see a lot of their work, the accountancy or the nursing?

**MH:** No not really, the memories I have are still pretty fresh, my father when he got back from the office looking through his paperwork and replying to clients ready for the next day, and Mum was pretty much always in a district nurse's uniform, because she was either

I always felt they were enjoying what they were doing, believing in it as being worthwhile.

working nights or working days. It was a busy house, but I always felt they were enjoying what they were doing, believing in it as being worthwhile.

I remember being told at university that people who do a biology degree always end up being an accountant, so obviously I was the exception!

**NT:** Tell us about your role at Toluna.

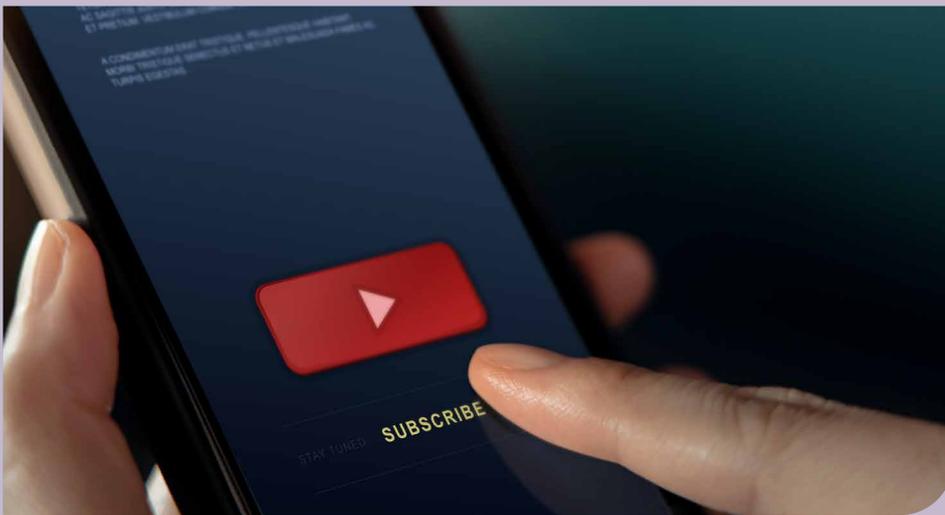
**MH:** I'm responsible for supporting the commercial teams in the positioning of our platform solutions suite, and running the global team who train and onboard new clients, ensuring clients get the greatest value from the Toluna Start suite in its entirety. When I joined back in 2007 I was what was then called a presales and implementation consultant, focused on supporting the sales team, but also with a remit to train and implement, and onboard clients. Now my role is global so I look after the teams in the different regions, with two key aims: helping clients understand what the platform and teams can deliver - 'Presales' - and then customer success teams, responsible for onboarding, training and developing, and working with various stakeholders from the C-Suite through to the insight teams, making sure that at each level people are getting what they need.

## Toluna Start & the Enterprise Subscription

**MH:** Toluna Start was launched last year as the industry's first true end-to-end insights solution, combining our agile research tools and enterprise community platform solutions, and this month we launched our Enterprise subscription. The subscription is really the vision of truly being an end-to-end solutions provider and a genuine partner for the long term. Although we already work regularly with our clients, having established strong relationships with all, much of the work is often "project by project". What we want to focus our efforts for the future on is to create true, long-term partnerships with those clients, helping them with their immediate research needs of course, but also supporting them with planning their future insight needs, and focus that service through the combination of our technology, and our teams.

**NT:** Obviously attractive for clients. I wonder, from Toluna's point of view, has that offer been born out of a frustration with trying to move people away from working on a project by project basis - is it hard to do that?

**MH:** I wouldn't call it frustration necessarily, because building a partnership approach makes it possible for organisations to understand each other and grow together in the way they work, ultimately delivering more value and benefit to both client and partner. There will be some challenges as we move forward, as in many ways we're re-setting our internal expectations of how we're going to be working, but also how our clients, partners and the industry see Toluna. That said, confidence has never been higher, and the positive feedback we have received from our clients is validating that we are providing a way of working that matches their evolving insight needs.



### Toluna Replaces ITWP as Group's Principal Brand Jul 21 2020

The holding company of Toluna, Harris Interactive Europe and KuRunData is adopting the Toluna name as its principal brand, replacing ITWP which will be phased out. Toluna is celebrating this change and its twenty years in business with a new corporate identity. More

## Continuous Partnership

**NT:** Can you tell me about some of the ways in which you already work continuously with clients?

**MH:** One of the powers of Toluna Start is it helps organisations tap into their consumers and talk to them on a continuous basis, learning from them, working with them and developing their customer-centric process with those orgs; but also tap into the broader Toluna panel at the same time, understand what their competitors' customers are doing, why they're doing it, and build that into a much larger insights solution to help them grow and develop.

At an event we ran this month, one of our client partners was speaking about how the insights world needs to adjust to focus more on learning about human behaviour, as opposed to only thinking about testing and focusing on percentages. What he put very eloquently was that insights that are collected need to be more than just an answer to a question, we've got to understand what triggers people to behave as they do. Not just Do you like this one or this one? - absolutely you need to understand the fundamentals - but if you understand the drivers behind that you can create

products and solutions that will be far more successful.

Another example: I was working with a producer of primary protein, a food manufacturer, predominantly own-label, and they were looking to try and forecast for this year's production and associated logistics.

They use an ongoing community panel to talk to their core consumer groups on a regular basis, learning from them and observing ongoing attitudes, opinions and behaviours – plus accessing Toluna's own audiences to dovetail with their insights from the community.

In order to review this year's plans, they modelled out the behaviours shown both during lockdown and as it eased over last summer, to aim to predict/plan what they would need to do this year, and at what time.

Using the power of their always-on audience, plus Toluna's audiences, they coupled their view from 2020 and began a test and learn programme, constantly talking to consumers to ask/see how their opinions were shifting – enabling them to feed those insights in to their internal teams to work effectively with their partners to adjust and manage the flow of produce.

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I think communities are being used more and more effectively in organisations that have considered what they're going to be getting from them

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## Maturing Users

I think communities are being used more and more effectively in organisations that have considered what they're going to be getting from them. In the past, communities were being brought in without a specific objective, which caused challenges with adoption and stakeholder buy-in. What we're seeing now is a focused drive from clients to make communities a core part of their insight strategy. As an example, we recently launched a customer community with a financial services firm where the CEO is personally driving the message that 'we need to bring our customers in and make them part of our approach'. It's not just enough to talk to them occasionally, because we can't continue to evolve our solutions and our products and services to them if we don't understand them and how their needs are evolving.

**NT:** To what extent does that mean getting them involved in ideation and innovation, and to what extent just getting them to react to things that your clients have come up with themselves?

**MH:** There needs to be a mix because innovation and ideation was always one of the core powers of a community. You can sit with people who are engaged with your brand, potentially creating



### Ipsos First Half 'Heavily Affected' by Pandemic Jul 23 2020

Ipsos has posted revenue of EUR 786m for the first half of the year, down 13% from last year's EUR 903.4m. The firm says that after a close to flat performance in the first quarter, the second was heavily affected by the 'havoc' wreaked by Covid-19. More

advocates of your brand, to get feedback on ideas and new solutions that they're trying to co-create. And of course what's exciting for anyone who's part of a community is getting involved, you do need a mix of tasks for them to sit and do because it rightly makes them feel valued - but also asking What do you think? What's your opinion on these things? etc enables a genuinely holistic viewpoint.

**NT:** So coming way back to my question about whether communities are growing as a proportion of your total business, it sounds like the answer is No, but in absolute terms they're growing well - and you might be happy to see it grow as a % of the total as it's one of the most sensible options?

**MH:** An insight community, requires thought, planning and consideration for what it might deliver in the long term, it fits the subscription model well. What's great about having this as a core competence of Toluna's business is we are expert at delivering ongoing programs of work to clients, whether indeed they use Toluna Start for iterative / quick-turn solutions, or whether they're saying actually I'd like to talk to a unique ring-fenced audience of people who I want to speak to regularly, and that positioning of Toluna is extremely compelling to our existing and new client-base.

## Trusting the Insight Team

**NT:** Let me put a quick scenario to you, based on what some others have been saying - and adding what seems logical to me: the more that we work with communities, and that we work with a subscription model, and that we develop ongoing relationships between suppliers and internal departments, the easier it is for client side researchers to do their own thing, to behave in an ad hoc fashion, to take the initiative within their company as to what is studied; and the harder it is for the client companies themselves, their bosses, to control what the insights department is doing - which for some of them is a problem, for some of them maybe less so. That is going alongside an increase in respect for insight teams. Which is connected to the pandemic for the last 18 months, and therefore client bosses are having to trust the insight department more, they're having to leave them to do things rather than giving them projects and seeing the answers from them. Does that make sense / is it something you see happening? And do you see any kind of backlash coming for that?

**MH:** It makes complete sense Nick, that's one of the core reasons why we're seeing so much growth in that ability to ask the questions they want really quickly - described by the term 'a fast fail approach' which might sound negative

but actually it's really powerful, really important..

**NT:** I think it's been used in the IT sector before and maybe it's coming our way now...

**MH:** Re the insights teams being more trusted and relied upon, listened to, that's what we're seeing. I haven't seen a backlash but businesses are challenging insights teams to make more decisions and run by themselves - as they should, it's their job and they're the experts - but also do it in a way that's consistent. That's actually one of the reasons we've been building out what we call automated solutions around methods that can be iterated quickly, such as concept and pack testing... We provide templates designed with best-in-class methodology and outputs from Harris Interactive (part of the Toluna Group) so that organisations can set up and use them quickly.

Because these are linked to the overall Toluna Start platform, which includes an engaging and dynamic survey creation engine, we can support clients who also, for example say; 'Well actually we do our concept testing a little differently to that, and we think the template's great but can we do it this way?' So we build the template for them, usually driven by the insights director; to ensure that whereas teams are running a range of different studies, there is a core that is robust, using the same metrics, but also giving the ability to ask a few questions before and after so they can tweak and expand what they do outside of that template. I only see that being a growth area for us. It's the best of both worlds. So it gives them the flexibility to ask the questions they know they need to ask, with that framework, and that can be done with their community or with the wider audience.

**NT:** ...and that should ease some of the worries the bosses might have about

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What's exciting for anyone who's part of a community is getting involved, you do need a mix of tasks for them to sit and do because it rightly makes them feel valued - but also asking What do you think?

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### Research & Results Trade Show to Close Jul 29 2020

Research & Results, the organiser of the annual Munich, Germany-based trade show for market research, data and insights professionals, has decided to close its whole business because of the impact of the Covid-19 crisis. More

control, if they know it's the same format coming back each time.

**MH:** Quite often what we're being asked to do is in addition to the KPIs and reporting output that Toluna Start delivers by default, is provide the bosses a summary of results vs KPIs, to answer the core questions of "Do we launch or do we not launch, why / why not?"



## New Normal

**NT:** To what extent do you believe that post-Covid the changes that have taken place in ways of working and the 'new normal' will ease off and return partially to how they were?

**MH:** The benefits organisations have found of iterating quicker and talking to people more regularly, understanding that fundamental human behaviour that people display that drives their consumption etc., and also asking tangential information linking in questions around product or service but also around what else they're doing – that will continue, but evolve to be more sophisticated. We've seen a lot more interest and utilisation of understanding behaviour; questions such as , "yes we know you like this brand, but what do you watch on TV, you're a keen fan of the Euros, but do you like x, y and z", to try and build a much clearer picture of the person. I can't see that changing because so many businesses have benefitted from it. Fundamentally the way orgs run their insight strategies will continue to be fast, iterative and driven by the need to understand the person in greater depth than ever.

**NT:** What's in progress at Toluna at the moment - current developments?

**MH:** Our road map is very much focused on the development of solutions within Toluna Start, so that's Toluna Analytics and other outputs; how we can make our dashboards faster and more effective at disseminating data; adding new templates into the system; how to enhance the respondent experience, making the focus on the person, so they can have more fun in the research process.

**NT:** Give me some examples of how you'll do that.

**MH:** It's really in communications, making that environment easily accessible, for easier participation. But it's also for our clients who are using the platform themselves, this is us working with our consultancy teams to really highlight the benefits of running an insight programme in a way that focuses on the person as opposed to necessarily always how many

questions I've got to ask or how many people to speak to or what confidence level I need for that. Clearly you need to consider those elements, but it shouldn't be the only thing thought about. A big focus of mine is helping insight professionals think about what they're going to be driven by: focus our time on unlocking an overall better and more encompassing participation experience to deliver higher quality insight.

**NT:** Does making it easier for participants mean more and more mobile?

**MH:** I wouldn't say more and more, it's already extensively used across all methodologies that we give clients the ability to use. Obviously we have our mobile app that respondents are encouraged to participate through- so on a phone you don't have to click Next, you just swipe through etc.. But also you just can't get away from the fact that some online research studies / methods just work better through a larger screen, a bigger physical area, people can interact better - but again it's teaching, helping clients to set those up in the right way.

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Fundamentally the way orgs run their insight strategies will continue to be fast, iterative and driven by the need to understand the person in greater depth than ever.

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## Do you have a motto?

**MH:** The way I work is to ensure that what I'm doing is having a positive impact on those around me, and honestly if you're not loving what you're doing, do something else. ■

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# THE RISE OF AGILE COMMUNITIES

**Further Launches Concept Evaluation and Text Tools** *Aug 5 2020*

Online MR and technology company Further has launched two tools on its Together platform, one for analysing unstructured data and the other for concept testing. [More](#)

## Agile Communities are becoming the empathetic cornerstone of a new collaborative relationship with customers, says KL Communications' Kevin Lonnie.

Insights Communities have become nearly ubiquitous - established in almost every major organization. Their proliferation, driven by cost and timing efficiencies, affords Insights Departments a significant ROI over comparable ad hoc spend.

Owing to their versatility, they are a major player in all forms of data collection. According to the January 2021 GRIT Report, communities are the 3rd most cited form of qual & quant data collection:

- QUAL / 71% using communities either regularly or occasionally
- QUANT / 75% using communities either regularly or occasionally

Still, for most corporations, Insights Communities are seen as a convenient, cost effective *tactical* tool. Perfectly suitable for quick indicators, but not reliable for major strategic initiatives.

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That landscape, however, is changing. While no-one disputes the cost efficiencies, one can question how much of a community atmosphere they actually foster. The need to move beyond a research transactional based relationship to one based on an ongoing, empathetic relationship is leading to the rise of Agile Communities.

### Customer Empathy as a Form of Competitive Advantage

Empathy for one's customers, while altruistic, is also a key competitive advantage. The need to achieve customer closeness has opened up the doors for agile research. Empathy has become the buzzword of the early '20s. Corporations are aware they are stuck in their own echo chamber and to truly understand people's needs you need to understand their pain points. And you do not get there without an 'interactive empathy tool'.

Any organization that can monetize customer closeness (i.e. empathy) will be able to bring products & services to market faster with higher success rates. Again, customer closeness cannot simply be corporate focused. Based on principles of social reciprocity, an agile community elevates the customer from replaceable widget to valued stakeholder. The currency for the customer is largely intrinsic, with reciprocity born from making a difference for the brands of which they are passionate.



Kevin Lonnie  
Founder, KL  
Communications

*Kevin founded KLC in 1996 after working on both the client and supplier side. He has earned a reputation as being at the forefront of using the principles of design thinking and customer co-creation, and has presented at numerous insights events over the past three years, focusing on the impact of disruptive tools and their implications for product innovation. Kevin is past Treasurer and Executive Board member of the Insights Association, and past President of the Interactive Marketing Research Organization (IMRO).*

#### Booming Streetbees Names COO Aug 5 2020

In London, mobile-based customer insights platform Streetbees has hired former Foursquare MD Omid Ashtari as Chief Operating Officer, as the company plans an expansion and recruitment drive following 110% growth in the first six months of 2020. More



In this new paradigm of customer closeness, empathy becomes the foundation of your customer interactions. Empathy empowers customers to provide meaningful contributions. And the best vehicle for allowing this reciprocal relationship is an agile community.

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The concept of Design Thinking is increasingly taking root in the insights / innovation departments of major corporations. Market research needs to fit with design thinking's speed. As insights professionals, the warning is clear: embrace Design Thinking principles or be bypassed.

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### Agile Communities Are Based on Design Thinking

Agile, iterative learnings are at the heart of Design Thinking. The concept of Design Thinking is increasingly taking root in the insights / innovation departments of major corporations. Market research needs to fit with design thinking's speed. As insights professionals, the warning is clear: embrace Design Thinking principles or be bypassed.

#### **ESOMAR Replaces Congress 2020 with Insights Festival** *Aug 11 2020*

Data and insight industry association ESOMAR has launched the Insights Festival 2020, taking place online from 14th to 17th September. The event replaces the previously planned ESOMAR Congress 2020, due to take place in Toronto in October, and now postponed to 2021 because of the pandemic. More

## Agile Community Advantages Over Ad Hoc MR:

INSIGHT CRITERIA	AD HOC QUANT & QUAL	AGILE COMMUNITY
1. SPEED OF INSIGHTS	Painfully Slow	Built-in infrastructure allows for super-fast turnaround
2. STUDY DESIGN FLEXIBILITY	Rigid Design / Snapshot Learnings	Agile, always evolving, ongoing structure is ready to keep learning
3. SAMPLE ACQUISITION	Slow & Expensive	Cost-efficient (community members are an ongoing, amortizable asset)
4. PROJECT DESIGN	Reactive (why are these results happening?)	Proactive, always on, ability to spot trends at the outset
5. RESEARCH DESIGN	Linear / One-way	Non-linear, members can facilitate/suggest topics for discussion
6. PARTICIPANT EXPERIENCE	Impersonal Data Capture	Empathetic stakeholders are empowered to help shape the future of brands they love
7. PARTICIPANT INVOLVEMENT	Passive & Boring for Respondents	Co-creation elevates customer/brand relationship /brings out members' best thinking

Agile Research is a derivative of the agile development process. For definition, I'll use Jeffrey Henning's 'beg, borrowed and shoplifted' version from the Green Book blog:

*Agile research is a type of market research in which the requirements and solutions evolve through collaboration between researcher and sponsor. It is not phased research but is iteratively open-ended, refining the research until all key questions are answered.*

The fact that agile research is 'iteratively open-ended' makes it especially well placed within the context of an Insights Community where members are engaged for long periods of time. An agile community thus becomes the perfect home for agile research. It also allows members to participate in multiple iteration rounds. Without the community, the researcher needs to constantly find new sample for each

iteration round and loses the contextual understanding of how the new product/service is evolving.

### Co-Creation within an Agile Community

Co-Creation is a powerful function of an agile community. Consistent with principles of social reciprocity between customers and their favorite brands (i.e. a worthy value proposition for both member & company), co-creation allows customers skin in the game. For the lack of a universal definition for customer co-creation, I will offer my own:

*Co-Creation describes an agile, structured environment for infusing customer creativity at the onset of the product/service design process. The process is inherently iterative to allow for*

*collaboration among all contributing stakeholders. Placing the customer at the inception of product development provides a better starting point.*

Co-Creation requires the agile research process, as the infusion of customer creativity needs to be parceled on an iterative basis. It is a subset of the agile research universe. On the other hand, agile research does not necessarily imply a co-creation scenario. It can be done via traditional surveys or online qual techniques. It applies to any research objective that is best served via iterative reevaluation.

Agile research and customer co-creation share the idea that customer inspiration is best portioned asynchronously so that the proposed offering/solution (e.g. concept design, product prototype, etc.) can systematically evolve.

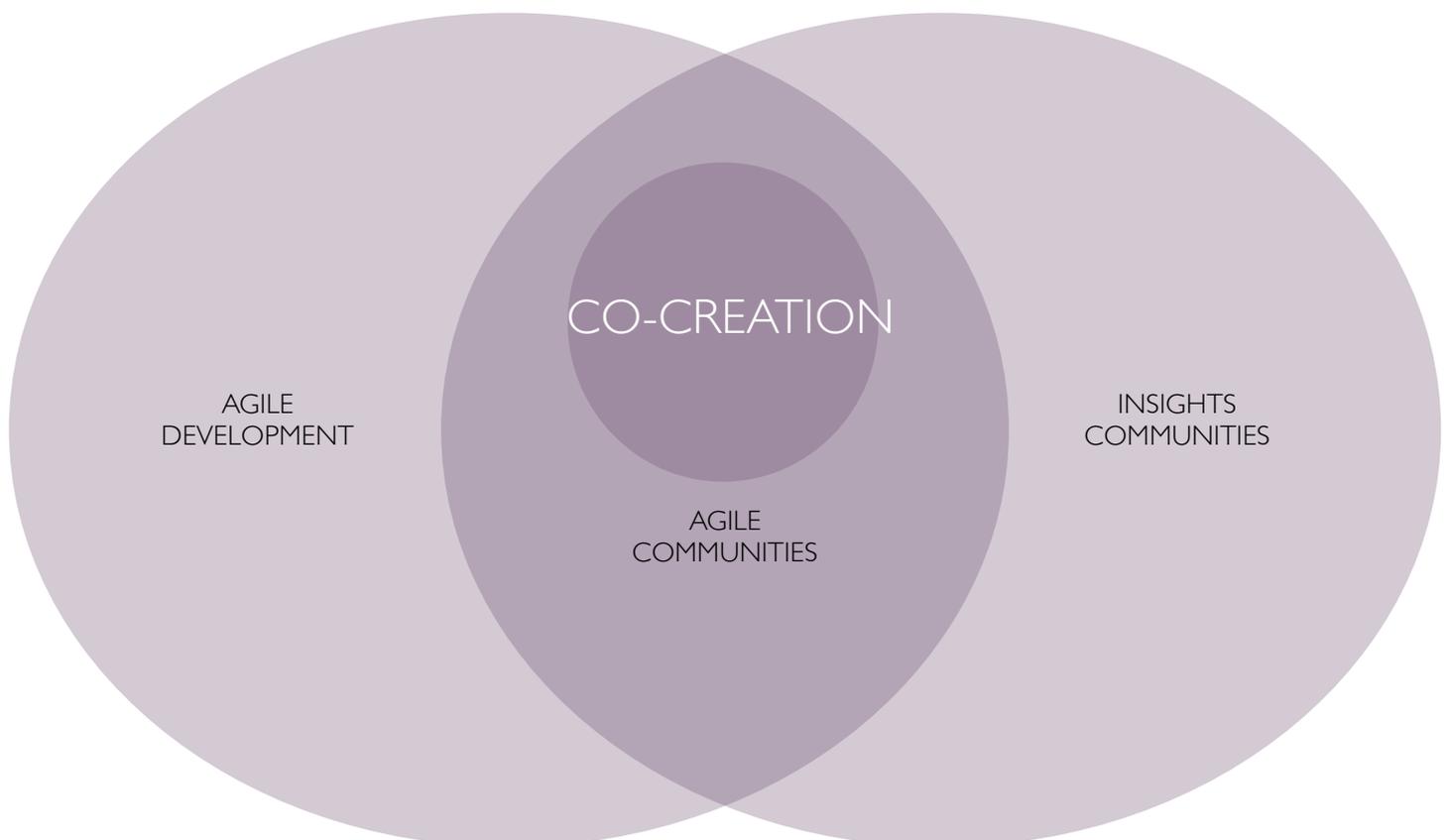
#### InSites Consulting Names New MD for South Africa Aug 14 2020

In South Africa, communities specialist InSites Consulting has promoted Heather Tluczek to Managing Director. She replaces Henk Pretorius, who moves up to Head of Consumer Connections, a global role leading consumer network strategy for the group. More

A key requirement of a successful agile process is continual commitment and time from internal stakeholders. The process gets grounded if the team cannot continue to assess customer feedback and move towards the next iterative approach (e.g. a revised

concept or prototype). The following diagram shows the relative position of agile research and customer co-creation in the product development universe. Co-Creation, as a subset of Agile Research belongs to both the Agile Development & Market

Research circles but is governed by the rules of Agile Development that require multiple waves of collaborative interaction.



## ROI of an Agile Community Measured by Business Impact, Not Cost Savings

Which brings me to my final point, the ROI that can be attributed to an Agile Community vastly exceeds that of a traditional insights community.

Typically, ROI has been measured by the savings over comparable ad hoc research.

But insights & innovation functions are being tasked to impact the bottom line. Agile Communities are perfectly situated to serve as incubation hubs. They could easily become the new epicenter for R&D testing as well as the

go-to source of insights for innovation. As the launching pad for new product/service introductions, the ROI of an Agile Community can be measured by the number of new products/services it helps bring to market. In short, a far more strategic ROI measuring criterion.

What makes Agile Communities and Customer Co-Creation so exciting is that they are born out of the Internet era. The idea of fast iterative development infused by customer inspiration belongs to Agile Development. The fact that they are powered by structured customer insights allows them to overlap and also belong to the world of Market Research.

And while Agile Communities and Customer Co-Creation currently

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Agile Communities are perfectly situated to serve as incubation hubs. They could easily become the new epicenter for R&D testing.

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represent only a fraction of current insight community revenue, they are clearly aligned with 21st century product development principles of customer empathy, collaboration and iterative, rapid development. ■

Long ago - between 2002 and 2005, in fact - MrWeb had another feature publication, called MRWho. This one was focused around 'people and skills' because at the time we still made almost all our money from job ads - but in the 25 issues we published it managed to pack in a lot of miscellaneous stuff under that heading, including some sketches and anecdotes about research life in general. We've pulled out a few and you'll find them on four pages of this supplement. We hope they'll prove nostalgic / diverting for the seasoned insights pro, and of interest to a new generation of researchers as a snapshot of the past.

Nick Thomas

MRWho May 02

## You Think *That's* Senior??

David Spilsbury, IFF Research on 'presenting' to Robert Maxwell



**I was summoned to the Rotunda - the old Mirror building in Holborn Circus - to explain the results of a poll we had done about whether Zola Budd should be allowed to compete for Britain in the Olympics.**

I was sitting in a drab office with a PR guy or two, poring over numbers, when Joe Haines walked in. The room went silent.

At that time Haines, who had been Harold Wilson's Press Secretary some years before, was

**The Editor looked incredulously around him for support from the others in the room. They averted their eyes. "Get out of my sight!" roared Maxwell.**

Robert Maxwell's number two. "He wants to see you now," said Haines.

We went up in a special lift lined with red velvet and with a TV showing the latest business news. There was just one button to press; the lift went directly to the eighth floor.

The door opened and there I was, directly in his office. Maxwell was the first thing that I noticed - hard to miss really.

He was sitting behind a huge desk, shouting into a speaker phone. He was wearing a striped blue shirt with red braces but no tie, and he was enormous.

The office was the size of a tennis court and it seemed to contain dozens of televisions - some of them close circuit. There were several other people in the room: two men on telephones in corners, frowning; a secretary to whom he occasionally nodded; and a queue of three men, all of whom were shuffling nervously on their feet in front of Maxwell's desk.

Maxwell finished shouting at the speaker phone and turned to the first of the queuing men who I recognised as the Editor of the Daily Mirror. "And what am I to make of this?", he asked with a calm yet deadly voice, his affected accent reminiscent of an aristocratic vampire.

He had picked up a copy of the day's Mirror which bore a headline relating to the miner's strike.

"Errr ...", the Editor look uncomfortable. "It seemed to be the most important news story of the day and ..."

"And what about Ceausescu?" Maxwell snapped. "The Trade Agreement with Romania? Every other \*\*\*\*\* paper is talking about the strike and you gloss over an exclusive! "

The Editor looked incredulously around him for support from the others in the room.

They averted their eyes. "Get out of my sight!" roared Maxwell. The Editor turned to walk away, his face flushed red. Maxwell dealt with the next two men in a similarly brusque manner. The first asked "How should we vote?" "With our friends," came the succinct reply.

The next man was simply asked by Maxwell: "Is it on?" The man nodded, and then he was gone.

"So what's next Joe?" asked Maxwell, his tone lightening.

"Ah, yes, the pollster!"

He actually smiled. "Come over here." I had been waiting by the lift entrance. I walked across the room with a shrug.

"So what's the news? Is she in or is she out?"

"She's in," I said, assuming that he was asking about the Zola Budd poll. "60% of people think she should compete for Britain." I noticed that there was an open bottle of champagne and a huge box of chocolates sitting on the corner of his desk.

"And what did the rest say?" This appeared to be his little joke. "That she shouldn't," I said.

"Bastard Daily Mail," he said matter-of-factly looking towards the window. "So I don't suppose we can make much of a story about it - a shame really.

Not that I would wish to stand in the way of a young idealistic girl who wishes to change her nationality to be a part of the country she loved." The irony was intentional. He turned to me: "Thank you for bringing me the news."

The room suddenly went silent. The people stopped what they were doing, turned, and stared at me in surprise, then went back to their business.

Haines accompanied me to the front reception. "You're very privileged," he said, almost resentfully. "He doesn't say 'thank you' to just everybody." And with a spring in my step I hailed a cab for my journey back to the office. The fact that I had completely forgotten to finish briefing the people who needed to know having slipped entirely from my mind.

One prime source of anecdotes in those ftf days was 'famous people I have interviewed'.

We could have done a whole series with Gordon Heald of ORB (Popes, Kings, Presidents) and indeed he supplied a great piece on an interview tour with Madeleine Albright, but here my old boss Dave Spilsbury told us about the day he reported - briefly - to the now infamous owner of the Daily Mirror.

# VIDEO PODCAST in conversation: JON GUMBRELL,

Watch the full video at  
[mrweb.com/drno/jongumbrell.htm](http://mrweb.com/drno/jongumbrell.htm)



Interview by MrWeb's  
Nick Thomas

JON GUMBRELL, FOUNDER,  
CEO AND ARCHITECT OF  
PLATFORM ONE

Jon is CEO of Platform One and a serial entrepreneur in the insight and customer feedback sectors. As a founder of ID Factor, Verve Partners and then Platform One, Jon has consistently championed innovative technology solutions for businesses looking to become more customer-centric.

**Maru/Matchbox Launches Tech Advisory Consumer Panel** Aug 28 2020

Canada-based communities specialist Maru/Matchbox has launched a consumer panel called the Technology Advisory Council, developed to help clients understand how 'tech-savvy' consumers feel, behave and think towards new trends, concepts and innovation. More

## Starting Young

**JG:** I was at Loughborough University Business School in the late '90s studying a 4-year management science degree with a 1-year industrial placement. The degree was heavily oriented to stats and software development. In my 2nd year I moved in with my girlfriend there - she was also at the Business School - and we had two PCs, but decided we only needed one. So I decided to see how they worked, mix them up and make one really good one and one not so good, sell the not-so-good one. I learnt how to build PCs, how to configure them and then put an ad around campus for the other PC and was overwhelmed by the response - maybe 20 or so people were interested in buying it - it was an eye-opener and I saw a big opportunity.

I decided to buy some components and build PCs and sell them on. I did that and it started to really take off, I was building one or two a week, so I decided to talk to the Head of the Business School about forming a company and using it as my placement year. To my surprise they agreed - no-one had ever done this before in the Business School. It got pretty successful the following year - by the end of it we had 7 full-time employees and were shipping maybe 50 PCs a week - nationwide, but we were called UK Campus Computing and we were going around different campuses and doing it in student union buildings and so on. The following year competition started to become very intense, margins were driven down so it was not very exciting, and the School said we couldn't do another year, so I chose to finish up the degree.

After university I worked for the NHS's SureStart, building a system making weekly progress reports to the government, but was introduced to a lady called Misha Tramp who at that time ran a research consultancy called Intrepid Consultants, which did a lot of CX work for Microsoft... it paid incredibly well so I decided to give in my

I decided to buy some components and build PCs and sell them on. I did that and it started to really take off, I was building one or two a week, so I decided to talk to the Head of the Business School about forming a company and using it as my placement year.

notice at SureStart and work as a freelance statistician. I tripled or quadrupled my salary overnight.

Intrepid's clients were looking at bringing several of their CX trackers running on CATI to online, so I saw an opportunity here, and had previously met Askia at a show and knew what their software was capable of. I persuaded Misha to take a chance on me by giving me a live project to work on and do a transition on, she agreed but only if I had alongside me a guy she knew from the industry, and this was Paul Robinson, who at the time headed up the Ops team of Sample Surveys down in Kent. This went really well and out of this the iD Factor was born, with myself, Paul and Intrepid as the shareholders - still late 2002. Paul stuck around for a year or so and then decided he'd had enough of the MR industry. He'd already cashed out with the sale of Sample Surveys to Synovate at the time, had some proper change in his pocket and decided that he was going to change his life - and went to teach kids maths... I learnt quite a lot from Paul, the biggest thing I think being how to set up and organise an operational team.

## iD Factor, Verve and Platform One

In late 2003 or 2004 when I first crossed paths with Andrew Cooper, he was running a fairly small company called the Mobile Channel, there were 4 or 5 staff... later rebranded to Research Now. The iD Factor specialised in online research and panels, we had a kind of very early community panel, Tech Tank, a very tech-focused panel - and also a consumer panel - so the tech we used behind those was actually built by a London-based agency, and they in turn on the tech back-end stuff were using a small Sri Lankan software house which led to me setting up a development house in Colombo [full story of this in the video version]... quite exciting. Late '05 I was approached re the iD Factor and decided I was going to sell the company to a direct marketing firm called TMN. So I left the business and decided I would take a bit of time out. I had always loved Italy so I decided I would go and buy a house in Italy, renovate it and stop working for a while.

In 2008 I became a founding partner of Verve with Andrew, and we were later joined by Peter Chopra and Mike Hall. My remit here was to build out the ops and technology of the business. In doing this I started looking at all the different applications on the market for community panels and panel management, and how I was going to potentially integrate things. I created several applications over the coming years and integrated them, but I saw that none of the suppliers had a true vision of where the market was going, which was basically a single unified platform - I guess Vision Critical was probably the closest to that but they were still more panel surveys.

I had been with Verve for a few years, it was now 2012 and I decided I was going to build this. Verve didn't have the appetite for it at the time, but I had close relationships with Askia and also Mike Hall so I was talking to them and basically

### Toluna Launches End-to-End Platform 'Start' Sep 10 2020

Consumer intelligence platform Toluna has launched an end-to-end solution called 'Toluna Start', which will now form the core of its business. Users can access the firm's panel of more than 30 million members, uncover and share real-time insights to help fully understand the consumer journey. More

we formed a company together; Platform One, with a couple of other shareholders, Claire Bickerton and Abeetha De Silva. Abeetha is the guy who now heads up our Sri Lankan development team. We set up with Askia - I've known Jerome (Sopocko) now for many years and he's been a good friend, and I've often used him as a sounding

board for ideas and problem solving. We set the business up with the ambition to build a unified SaaS community platform from the ground up, with a little bit of help from having Askia's scripting engine deeply integrated into it. We formed this in December 2012.

## Bringing in CX

This was when I got introduced to a guy called Paolo Righetti - Paolo at the time was the CEO of the research consultancy arm of Teleperformance, which is a company most people haven't heard of, it's call centres - they employ 340,000 people so it's quite sizeable. He had several large-scale CX programmes running on some homegrown software at that point and the problem we had was they weren't architected well. This is a problem a lot of companies have when building software, they'll build something for one client and then add another client and another one, before you know it you're supporting 10 or 15 different versions, the code base is totally out of synch and it's a mess / unmanageable. We ensured we were never going to go that way with Platform One from the start.

So... with Paolo and Teleperformance we entered into a commercial relationship to extend our community platform to become a fully-blown XM platform...and the team went from 25 to 50 developers in that one year. What we actually built was the first incarnation ever of a full-blown CX and community management system all in one. [Laughs] I know another company recently advertised that they were the first

but we had this all fully running live in 2019, running for a large-scale client. We've been live for several years now with the CX side and we've got some pretty significant clients. We don't run any projects ourselves, we're purely software, we have resellers, for example Verve, Askia, Teleperformance are resellers of our tech, depending on the use case you may need a team that's going to set things up in the first place - eg Verve with communities or Teleperformance with the CX programme - and they add a service round it.

An XM programme is an enabler of organisational change towards customer-centricity. So we decided that the single platform was the way it was going to go, but with that you have an XM programme running which however is automated, they're largely light-touch once they've been set up - and then you've got the community side. I like to think of it in a phrase Potentiate coined, T-shaped insights, which is basically broad and deep: so the CX programme is broad and the community is deep. Bringing those together in a single platform allows you to see issues occurring at the macro level and then you're able to dig down using a community to find out what the real problem is, before re-enabling your CX programme to actually address them.

What we actually built was the first incarnation ever of a full-blown CX and community management system all in one.

## Self-Serve / Redesigning UX

Once you've put a community in somewhere, people want to put in their own surveys, their own discussions, or want to build their own reports out on it - that's a significant trend and in 2019 this was an issue for us. We had built the platform around the primary use case of resellers being agencies who were putting in the resource to do that kind of setup and configuration - they pretty much didn't care about the user experience and the user interface - so we hadn't paid that much attention to it and in 2019 it was a bit messy. So we had an away week, all the senior architects who were going to work on the design... Now we have a DIY option we can enable within the platform, so depending on who we're selling to, it cuts down some of the project types available, and reduces some of the access to the really technical aspects of the platform unless developers (within resellers) want to get involved in the nitty-gritty, in which case they still can - it's all role-controlled.

Another thing we decided was to move to the Google methodology of design-led development - a radical change for us. We basically have 5-day design sprints with all significant changes, and the output's been revolutionary. Now we have pretty much all our clients involved in the design process - it's amazing what you miss, and what you gain from having your clients on board there.

June is the end point of our next-gen platform where we have everything from survey creation, discussion creation, sampling, distribution, dashboarding - all fully DIY now. We have CX integrated with the community, when you're looking at a customer card you can tell whether that customer is in the community, you've got a community history within that as well. One of the really powerful features we've got coming is a balanced recruitment

### MRS Finds More Optimism, but Urges Investment Sep 21 2020

UK professional body the MRS has noted a slight positive shift in the expectations of companies in the post-Covid world; and has downgraded its earlier call on the government to 'save the sector' to a more modest appeal for investment in infrastructure and innovation. More

I think every XM programme, whether it's CX or whatever should have at least one community, or they're missing a trick.

mechanism: you can balance the community to your customer base without having to ask them any questions, and for any CX record you can automatically check if a quota's available for a community with that characteristic, and automatically invite them with a single click at that point.

**NT:** What about people who don't want to run a community but want a CX programme, or vice versa - does that ever make sense?

**JG:** I think every XM programme, whether it's CX or whatever should have at least one community, or they're missing a trick. Thing is at the moment the places where they sit within the business are often quite different so a community will sit within an insights team within an organisation, while a CX programme will sit within Marketing.

**NT:** ...and famously they don't talk to each other so you've got a problem...

**JG:** Yeah! We find it easier adding a community to a CX programme than it is adding a CX programme to a community. This I think is where the mid-market and smaller business will gain from this, because they're a lot more connected up internally, and the use of a single platform is exciting for them,, especially when it's at a price point that's not eye-watering.

## The Q Word

**NT:** Qualtrics are now an XM company and apparently trying to integrate that thoroughly with communities... are they doing anything very different to the rest of the world, and what's your reaction to their success..?

**JG:** They've got an incredibly good sales engine behind them, that's for sure! Their platform's obviously good... it's almost gobsmacking how the valuation has gone, but they have '000s of clients on the platform, so they've got the potential to sell and cross-sell, and you can see where that value is coming. A survey solution is significant revenue, while a CX solution is a sticky thing, because once you've integrated it's hard to get a new vendor in.

**NT:** Are they doing anything different to what other companies do in the way of integrating the two?

**JG:** I think actually Medallia is in my mind the Rolls-Royce of the CX space, even 'though

they are assisted-serve or full serve on their model, they do what they do very well, at scale - there are companies that do fantastic things for clients, with their software but they're limited in scale.

**NT:** Has that taken people in the sector by surprise, what's happened to Qualtrics, to the extent that they are now trying to catch up with the integration of CX and insights?

**JG:** It's basically moved out of the MR arena hasn't it. They've put a tech valuation on a business that's in the marketing space. Qualtrics' platform is built quite differently to ours - they don't have the deep ability to sample... it's not really built off a member base, so our application is built around the customer - everything is built around a customer record. Qualtrics' is more around a listing, so each time you can associate things with it but the application's not aware of the relationships in it.

**NT:** There's more integration in what you're doing than in what they're doing?

**JG:** Yeah, definitely.



### Global Roll-Out for InSites' Culture + Trends

Sep 23 2020

Fast-growing communities specialist InSites Consulting is to roll out its 'Culture + Trends' solution worldwide. More

September 2020



## Growth in 2020

**JG:** For us, the pandemic has had very little impact on what we're doing. For us the biggest change has been on the support side - reduced the efficiency of teams who used to be in the office. From a financial point of view we've been growing throughout and this year we're looking to have maybe 40 or 50 percent growth. Our headcount at the moment is around 60, and it should be around 75 or 80 by the end of the year. In terms of what else has affected us, we've had a couple of clients in financial difficulties so that's affected us indirectly, we've had some communities cancelled - the travel industry - an airline community. One of our biggest projects, for an XM programme, was run with a large company that deals with governments around the world and does visa processing for them, so we were live with a platform ready to roll out to 15 different client countries on this and we've got one significant install on it and then basically it's been put on hold - hopefully that will come back on-stream later in the year if people start travelling again.

**NT:** ... people are so much more used to communicating digitally. Do you have potential clients coming to you saying

'we've realised we need a platform like this' because of the change?

**JG:** Yes, so far this year either directly or indirectly we've added 10 large-scale communities to the platform.

**NT:** Where do you see the business being in three years' time?

**JG:** We should have a big presence in the US as well. Our aim is to have several hundred installs worldwide. At the moment we've got US, Canada, Australia, Europe and UK data centres, so we've got global coverage and can offer clients basically any data location. I see us being a significant force within the US.

**NT:** ...and your longer-term plans for the business - you've talked about a couple of people 'getting out' at different stages today - eg Paul early on ...

**JG:** Yes we'll see how the business goes in the next couple of years and make a decision then I think.

**NT:** Any yearning to become a maths teacher?

**JG:** No!

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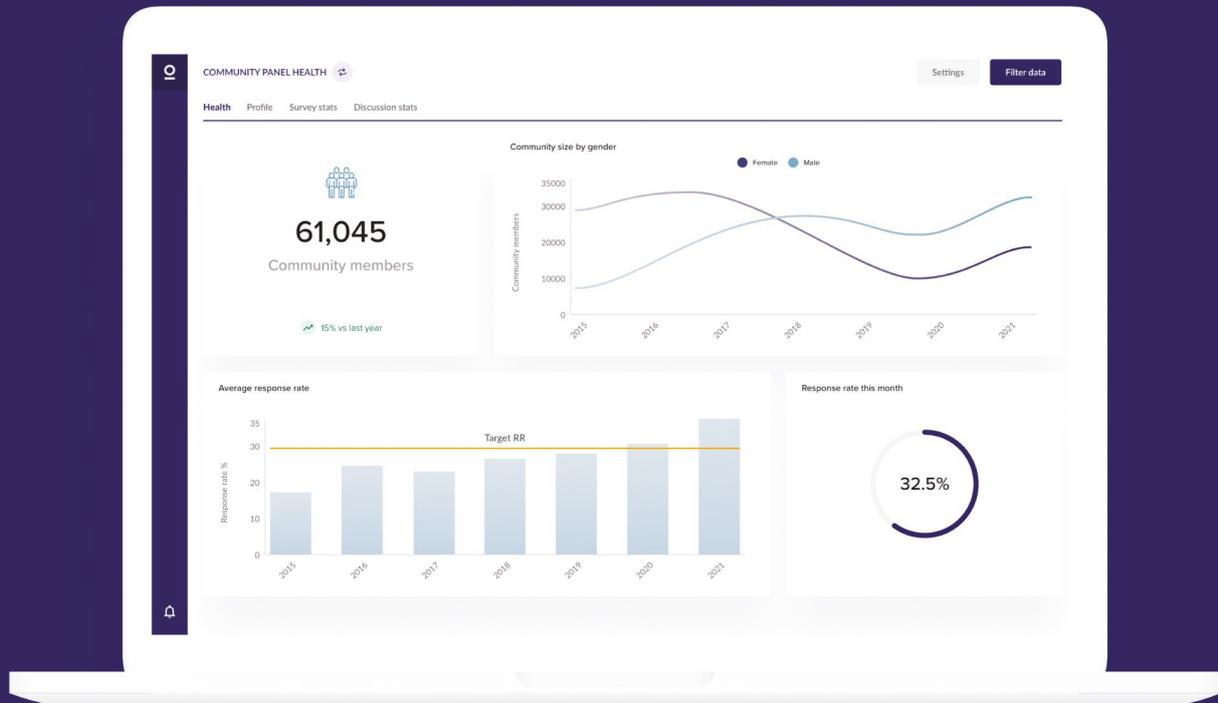
We should have a big presence in the US as well. Our aim is to have several hundred installs worldwide.

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## Motto

**JG:** No motto, but two beliefs worth mentioning I hope: one is clearly that employees are your biggest asset, and building a culture that allows them to thrive is essential. We always had a work-where-you-want, how-you-want policy: trust is everything. We have very, very low employee turnover, 100% retention of all our senior staff. The other belief I have is fair exchange, customers should be delighted with what they buy, and feel that the price point at which they buy it is fair for what they're getting - this could mean leaving something on the table in comparison to your competitors but at the end of the day it's significantly more beneficial. ■

# Powerful, enterprise-grade software minus the eye-watering price tag



## AN INSIGHT COMMUNITY & EXPERIENCE MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE ECOSYSTEM



Build a fully automated experience management programme with two-way dialog at its core



Dig deeper with an always-on insight community. Mix qual with quant to understand why



Quickly make sense of member posts with our NLP-powered moderation and qual analytics tools



Identify macro trends and task individuals with key business improvements, leading to real change



Drive positive action with a single visualisation hub. Experience, operational and community data



Control the flow of information with hierarchical, role-based filtering

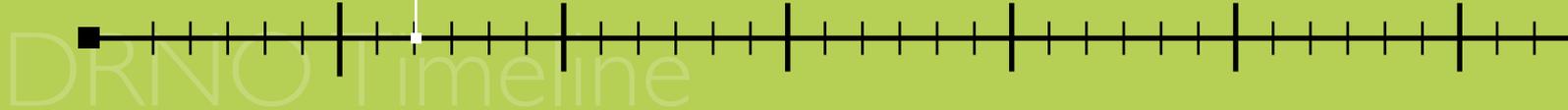
platformone

[www.platform1.cx](http://www.platform1.cx)



# A SINGLE PLATFORM FOR CUSTOMER-CENTRICITY

**CX Focus for Renamed Vision Critical** *Sep 23 2020*  
Customer insights firm Vision Critical has changed its name to Alida, and aims to disrupt the global customer experience (CX) industry, taking on the likes of Qualtrics and Medallia. More



Communities and Experience Management platforms should really be inseparable: one giving you the deep dive, one the broad coverage - sometimes described as 'T-shaped' insights. Each should feed constantly into the other. Yet they've evolved separately and attempts to cobble them together can be crude: better to design one platform that does both, from the ground up. Enter Platform One - here's the lowdown from its COO Peter Flower.

As businesses strive to place the customer at the core of their decision-making, a huge number of platforms have evolved with the ability to track interactions with customers, identifying clearly what is happening, and when. At an incredibly broad level, these tools allow us to monitor customer interactions closer than ever before, quickly identifying and tracking macro business trends and intercepting bad experiences closer to the point at which they occur.

What is often more challenging is the ability to dive deeper into these experiences, answering more detailed questions. Why have customers come to feel this way? What specifically can be done to improve on these experiences? Questions which Insight Communities are incredibly well positioned to answer.

To overcome this challenge, we have seen businesses looking to separate solutions, resulting in fragmented data and an incomplete picture of the full customer experience. Leveraging multiple technologies in this way can be cost prohibitive for many, or simply a logistical challenge too far.

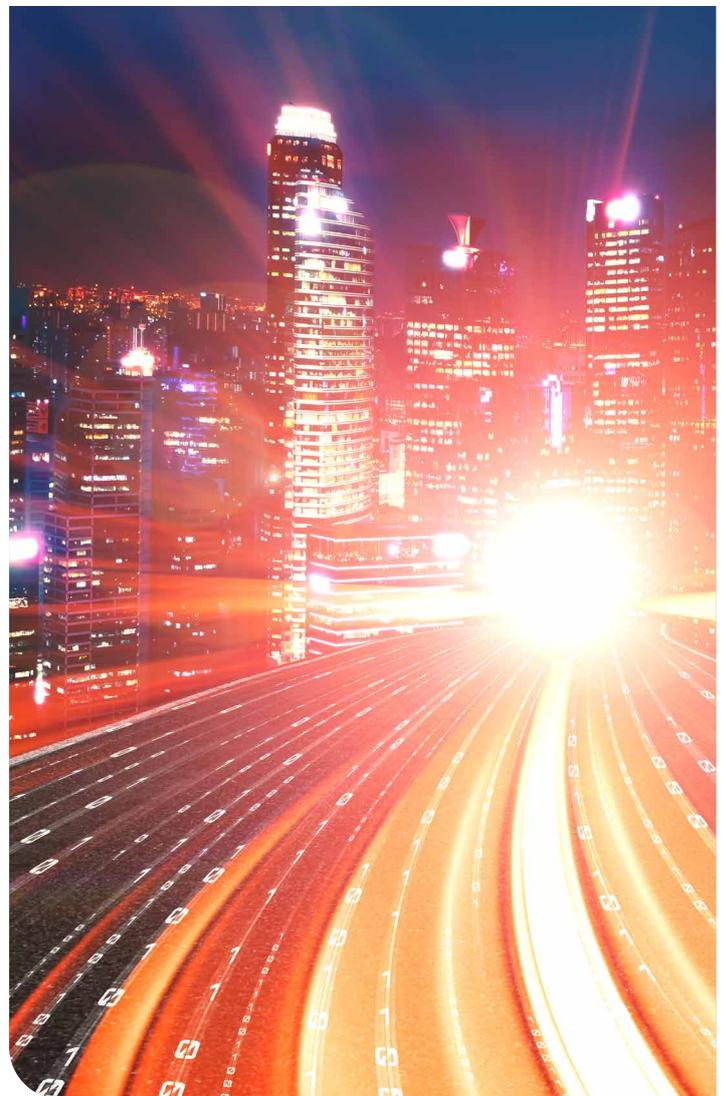
At the same time, as business processes continue to become more agile, and time pressures mount on teams delivering data and insight, individuals are being challenged with delivering increasingly rapid access to data for immediate decision-making.

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Time pressures mount on teams delivering data and insight, individuals are being challenged with delivering increasingly rapid access to data for immediate decision-making

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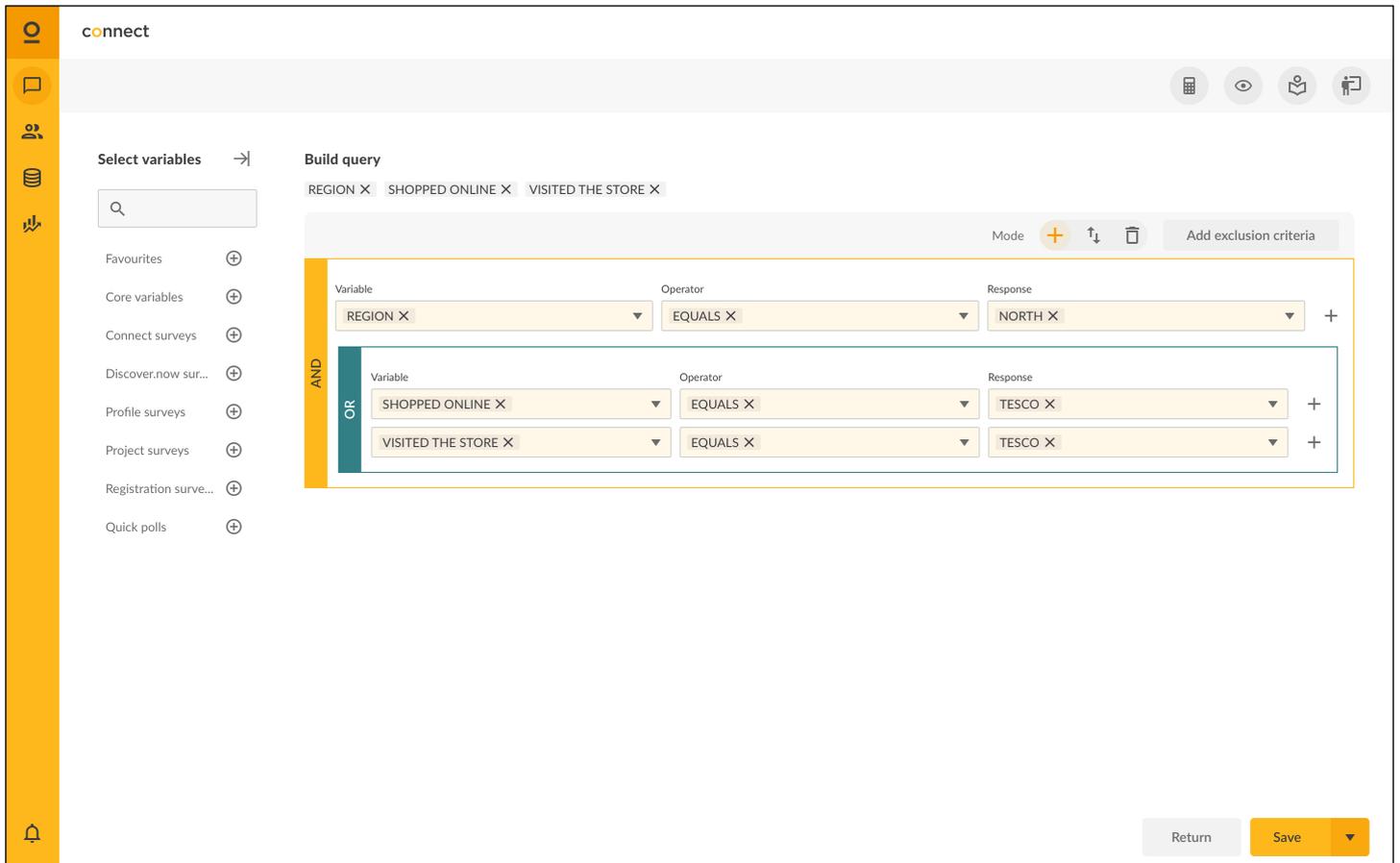
This has led to an increased appetite for assisted serve and DIY models, rising demand for in-house technical skills, and more pressure on less technical users to leverage research technology to deliver data and insight faster than ever before.



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**Platform One Combines XM and Community Tools** Oct 13 2020

UK-based customer feedback specialist Platform One has combined its insight community and experience management tools into a single application called 'Vision', to help clients identify and recruit community members based on experience touchpoints. More



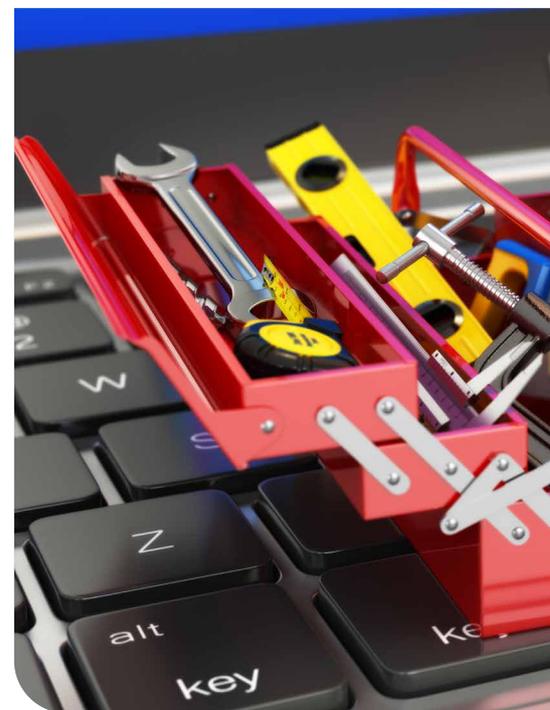
## Optimising for the DIY user

With Insight Communities providing the ideal platform to answer a broad range of business questions, there is increased pressure on teams to adopt a DIY or assisted service model, so as to deliver answers to both quick tactical questions and large strategic initiatives from a single application.

A number of common challenges present themselves when looking to optimise for a DIY user: How can you avoid feature fatigue amongst users looking to run simple processes? How can you manage the trade-off between the need for ease of use and the technical nature of the more complex processes which are available in the platform already?

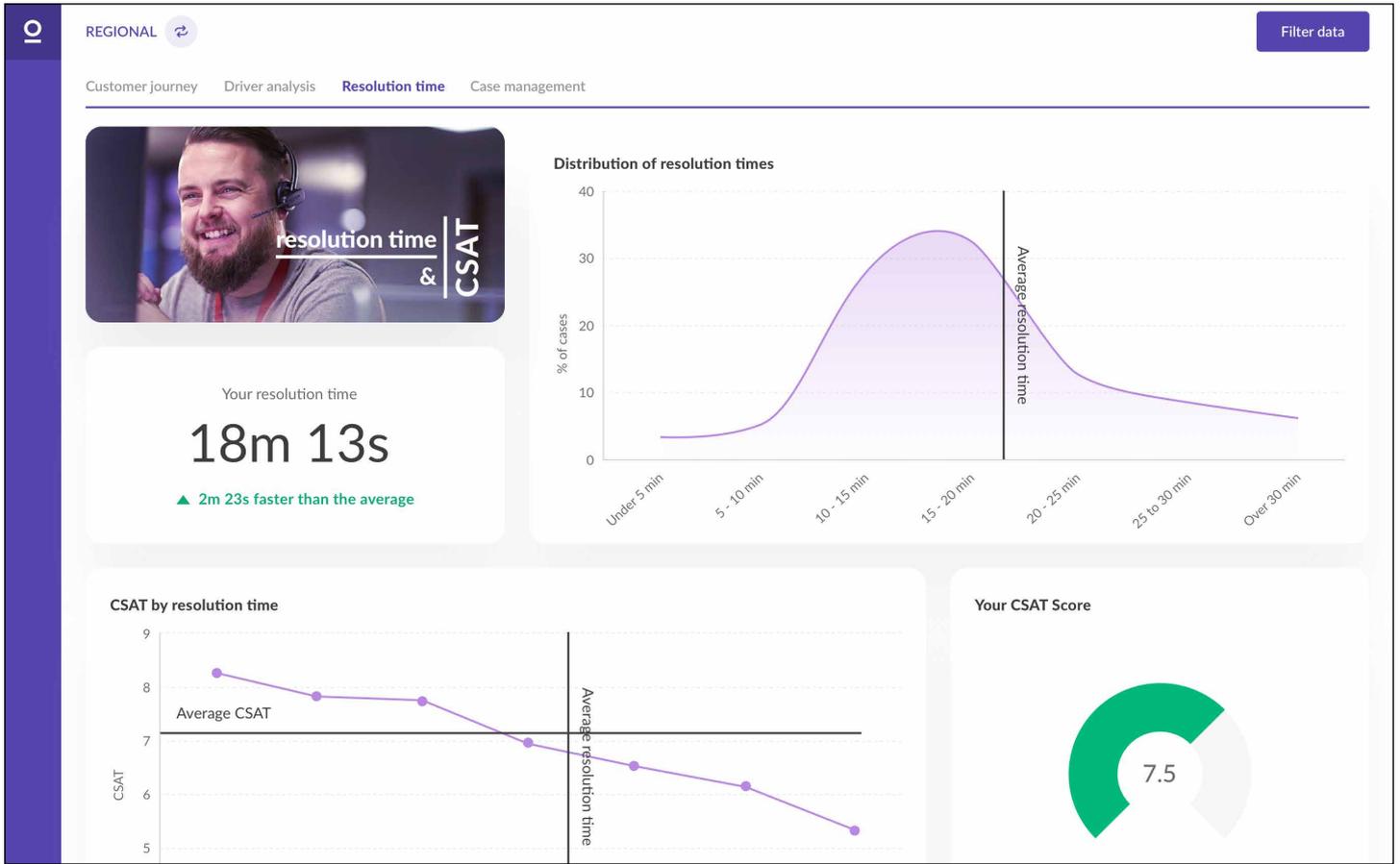
Led by our Chief Design Officer Claire Bickerton, Platform One has been following the Design Sprint methodology developed at Google Ventures, and has embraced the concept of rapid design, prototyping and testing new concepts alongside our customers. Designs have been based on feedback from a broad number of platform users, with varied technical backgrounds, who are in turn heavily involved in the testing process to refine concepts before development.

The result: while the core feature set which has enabled our clients to deliver comprehensive and complex programmes is still central to Platform One, innovative and creative ways have been found to approach the process challenges which have historically been more technical. A DIY specific user role now offers a more streamlined feature



### Research & Results Co-founder Launches succet21 Event Oct 13 2020

Heinrich Fischer, one of the founders of recently closed MR trade show Research & Results, has announced the launch of his new event 'succet21', which will take place next April. [More](#)



set for users looking to run more simplified programmes.

Whilst more commonly known as an Insight Community specialist, Platform One was architected as an Enterprise Feedback Management tool from day one.

Combining the breadth of a Customer Experience program with the depth of an Insight Community

Whilst more commonly known as an Insight Community specialist, Platform One was architected as an Enterprise Feedback Management tool from day one, and a suite of experience management features including automation, data and closed loop case management went into production in 2019.

Most businesses nowadays have vast data assets available to them, and integrating

**Further Expands Senior Team** Oct 20 2020

Communities and research tech firm Further has appointed former Kantar Consulting Head of Global Qual Research Operations Sarah Taylor as an advisor. In addition, Claire Marshall joins as Finance Director, Clare Warren as Marketing Director, and Maria Colarusso as Client Support Executive. More





Peter Flower, Chief  
Operating Officer |  
Platform One

*Pete serves as the COO of Platform One, bridging the gap between customers and the experienced development and integration teams at the business. With deep expertise in Insight Communities, Panels and Experience Management, built over the past 14 years with companies such as Research Now (now Dynata), Verve, and VIGA (now Savanta), Pete has a passion for providing customers with exceptional experiences, finding innovative solutions to business challenges through the effective use of technology.*

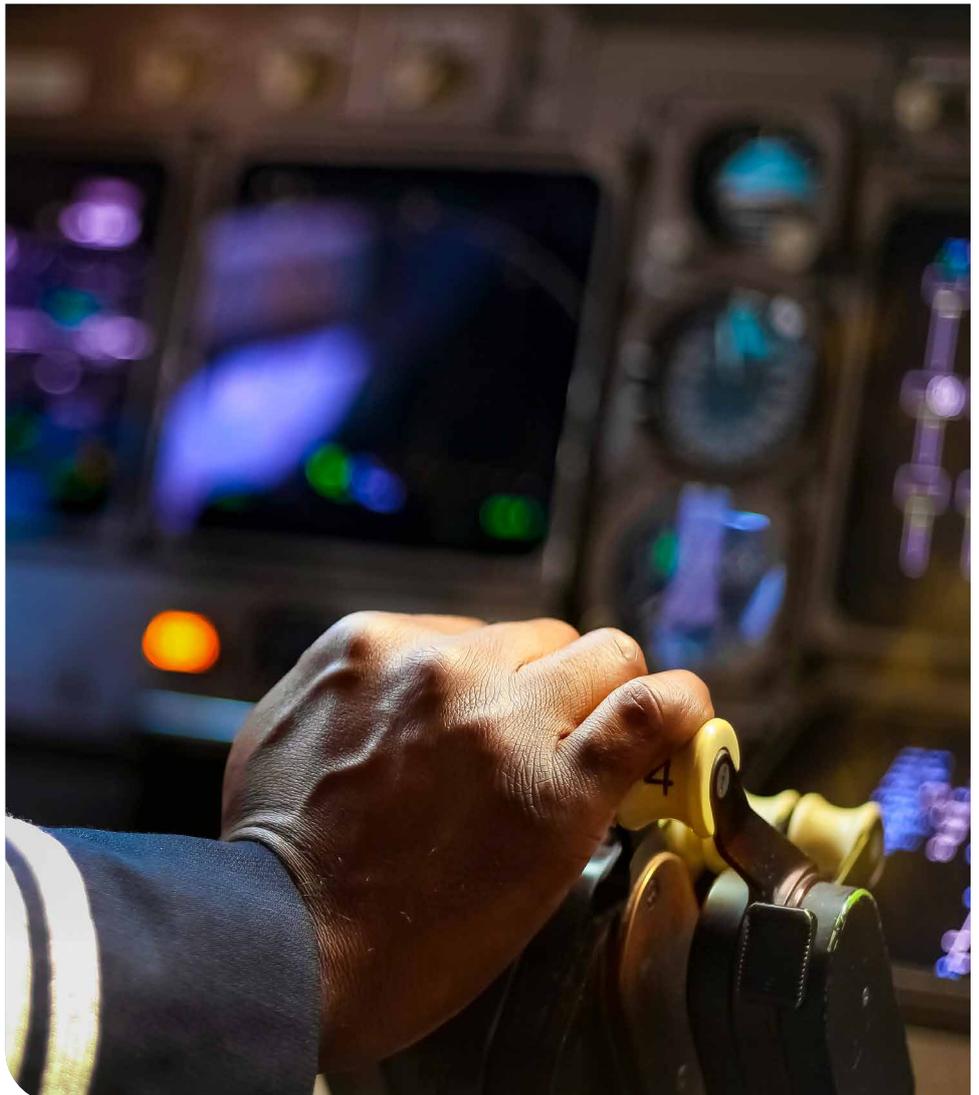
these sources together into a single dashboard, alongside data captured in the platform from our quant and qual research tools, raises a number of important considerations. A variety of stakeholders will have access, the information which is most relevant to their role will vary, and there will be rules governing who can access specific data within the business. How do we ensure this is strictly controlled?

The Platform One approach uses three separate data layers which can be fully managed by a permission hierarchy. Merging data from both community and experience management into a single dashboard, the content delivered to individual stakeholders can then be controlled down to an incredibly granular level, delivering key insights alongside your continuous monitoring programmes.

We are often asked about recruiting for

a community from an existing experience management programme but come up against a common concern. Can this recruitment method create skews to representation in the community? Later this year we will be launching a balanced recruitment tool which will enable customers to build a continuous, automated recruitment flow from their experience management programme, modelled to their current customer base, or any desired customer base they specify.

What next for Platform One? The design process we have started will continue as we strive to make the platform even more accessible to a broad user base. We truly believe that all experience management programmes should have at least one community, and are committed to making this possible for businesses of any size. ■



'Love & Hate' appeared in every issue of MRWho, and normally consisted of two anonymous pieces written by researchers in roughly the same job role but with opposing views of its attractiveness. The following was written by one person, as a Christmas piece, but it may leave some nostalgic for the early days of online research.

## Love & Hate Online research



### Love...

Oh Genie of the Lamp, grant this poor researcher his three wishes, set him free from the drudgery of his job, and I shall set you free in return!

*Sounds like a good deal. Can I be out in time for Christmas?*

No problem. Well first of all, there's the quality of my data. I'm struggling to get real depth and honesty from respondents these days. I wish I had a data collection method that allowed sheepish respondents to feel more anonymous, and gave busy execs the time to consider their answers.

Then, I'm fed up with how slow everything is. It takes me six weeks to collect and analyse data for my clients, which is fine for some of them, but for others it means the information's way out of date

by the time they even see it. I wish it was instant!

And, lastly, my profession is undervalued, and clients don't seem to have the budget to pay us for thinking time. I wish there was some way of making the whole process much cheaper, then we could keep more of the dosh for ourselves.

*This is really three wishes in one. Here's a thing called the*

*Internet. It so happens that doing surveys over the Internet is cheap, but it also lets you plan and complete surveys overnight. You can use it to collect answers remotely and the novelty of it will mean people type lots and are keen to participate, but they can also take their time.*

*Easy peasy. Ping! Granted, and I'm off! Here's my number - let me know how it goes.*

### Hate...

Genie! Thanks for coming back three years later as a highly paid consultant. I need just one more wish.

*Hmm, cost you an arm and a leg, but go on.*

Well, it's this Internet thing you gave me.

I started off getting some extraordinarily good quality data - people typing reams on open-endeds, and response rates to pop-up surveys of 80%. By combining site stats and survey feedback, I could compare intentions/reported behaviour with actual behaviour - marvellous! In one case, a client asked us to provide some specific web usage tracking data, and it transpired that some of the respondents monitored had been visiting some rather distasteful web sites - you'd never have found that out by asking them what they did in their spare time!

But now Internet surveys are producing some of the worst and most meaningless data I've seen in my career - percentages based on handfuls of opt-in interviews; extrapolations to universes where we have no idea why those who didn't take part chose not to do so or how they differ; suspect new product take-up rates gleaned from overused panels, and so on.

And the speed! I might have known.... We all know what happens when one part of a process gets very fast - people assume all the other parts must speed up too. But time taken at the questionnaire development stage cannot be rushed: the success or failure of a good online project rests on a lot of double checking at the scripting stage.

At least when fieldwork took six weeks and you spotted a mistake after a week, you could change

it in time for the next five. With online it's all over before you notice, and clients then think you can just do it again. Clients with Internet research are like spoilt kids with expensive toys at Christmas - they don't know how to use it properly and you can see they're going to break it. It would be much better if you could keep it and play with it yourself.

And the cost! I told you this was a cut-throat industry where practitioners are scared to ask for a decent wage. But now buyers are already re-evaluating their research and saying to themselves, however subconsciously, 'Hmm, fieldwork costs used to be 50% of it, but now exec time is up to 80%! We need to cut some of this wasteful exec time...' The thinking time and the added value are being slashed from budgets. Commoditisation - ugh.

Genie, my three wishes haven't made me any happier!

*So often the way... but we don't guarantee they'll make you happier.*

I know, I know, but can I please have just one more?

*Well, all right, it is Christmas, and I can catch up with my shopping online later. What'll it be?*

Please can we uninvent the Internet and go back to how it was before?

*Ah... can't do uninvention, sorry - any more than you can just put us back in the bottle. You'll just have to make the best of it...*

CASE STUDY

# HOW VERVE'S COMMUNITIES ARE HELPING JOHN LEWIS'S TRANSFORMATION

John Lewis is transforming its business for the post-Covid world, with customers - and its community panel - at the heart of the change. This has meant using communities for more in-depth, exploratory studies than ever before, moving into territory previously reserved for focus groups and other face-to-face work. If that was a gamble... it's paid off, says Verve's Richard Preedy.

**Strong Sectors and Regions Help Ipsos Recovery** *Oct 23 2020*

Ipsos has posted revenue of EUR 468.6m in the third quarter of 2020, down 6.2% on a reported basis but just 3.3% on a like-for-like, constant currency basis despite the impact of the pandemic. The group says this reflects 'a renewed stability since June', with recovery month by month. [More](#)



JOHN  
LEWIS  
& PARTNERS

**VERVE**

Energising Insight

The John Lewis Partnership owns and operates two of Britain's best-loved retail brands - John Lewis and Waitrose. Started as a radical idea nearly a century ago, the Partnership is the largest employee-owned business in the UK and amongst the largest in the world, with over 80,000 employees who are all Partners in the business. Profits made are reinvested into the business - for customers and Partners.

In October 2020, the company announced a five-year Partnership Plan.

The Plan is part of a significant transformation to adapt to changing customer needs, face into the challenging retail market and recover from the repercussions of the pandemic, and its ambition is clear: to fully orientate around the customer and become the 'UK's go-to brands for customers who want quality, value and sustainability'.

***"This is a bold plan to grow our business and get us much closer to our customers."*** Nina Bhatia, Executive Director of Strategy & Commercial Development

This combined Partnership Plan, bringing the John Lewis and Waitrose brands much closer together to focus on the customer, is also being reflected in how its insight communities are developed.

Soon, Verve will be launching a combined community panel to support the wider businesses' understanding - extending the scale, capability and reach of the existing John Lewis community panel to serve the diversity of the Partnership and broader strategic change.

Since its inception in 2016, the John Lewis panel has delivered robust quant and rich qualitative insight, underpinned by a method-agnostic approach where activities are selected based on the required outcomes, rather than the choice of one tool over another. This philosophy has been key to the success of the community panel across multiple teams and workstreams within John Lewis.

With highly engaged members, the community panel has proved effective at delivering across a range of business insight needs:

- Concept and creative testing: collecting rich and robust data in pressured timeframes, such as providing feedback and validation from target segments and customer value tiers into campaign pre-testing.
- Valuable in-the-moment feedback on key events. This includes year-on-year tracking to benchmark changes in customer behaviour, attitudes and experiences in John Lewis and competitors, through exploration and measurement across the Peak period of Black Friday, Christmas and January sales events.
- In-the-moment customer insight on new initiatives, achieved by sending members into store on in-person missions to explore men's styling experiences, new Fashion Launches, the evolution of the Food Hall and 'Live from myJL' events.

Reflecting its growing status in the business, the community panel has also been leveraged increasingly as a starting point for high-profile programmes: most recently supporting a strategic journey to re-evaluate the John Lewis brand and wider proposition, a key element of the Partnership Plan.

Through the community panel, Verve has been able to help John Lewis explore new territories designed to keep the brand relevant, forward-facing and attractive to existing and new target customers. This programme incorporated interconnected workstreams, taking an iterative approach through which community panel customers took part in detailed quant evaluations and qual exploration of brand territories and potential value propositions.

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The Plan is part of a significant transformation to adapt to changing customer needs, face into the challenging retail market and recover from the repercussions of the pandemic, and its ambition is clear

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**'Significant' Growth Funding for Toluna** Oct 29 2020

Consumer intelligence platform Toluna has secured a 'significant' round of financing, which it will use to fund planned global growth initiatives. More

October 2020

*“In some ways, I went out on a limb choosing to explore potential brand territories with consumers via a community – the typical way to do it would be with focus groups. But it wasn’t just Covid-19 that led us to an iterative, digital approach: my gut was telling me that a more considered, longer-term approach would allow us to give the concepts the proper time and consideration that they deserved. As a result, we were able to take consumers on a journey with us and really got under the skin of their nuanced responses – the insights were far richer and more detailed than what we could have achieved in a focus group.”*

**Becky Tong, Insight Manager**

Initial research combined deep-dive community projects and immersion sessions, while subsequent stages additionally deployed AI-based semiotics tools to decode semantic meaning and sentiment of territories and communication statements.

*“I actually think that this approach is better suited to foundational research than other methodologies –*

Through the community panel, Verve has been able to help John Lewis explore new territories designed to keep the brand relevant, forward-facing and attractive to existing and new target customers.

*participants have time to immerse in the concepts and get comfy, we’re able to access their less rational responses, and give stakeholders direct access to those details if they need them. This particular project was transformational – not just due to the insights we generated, but because it validated my belief that these challenges are best met with a longer term, iterative approach (which, more often than not, is online). We’ve replicated this approach to tackle a number of strategic research projects over the last*

*year and I imagine we’ll continue to do so. I’m certainly emboldened and encouraged by my recent experiences with digital quali.”*

**Becky Tong, Insight Manager**

We have long believed digital qualitative approaches – borne out of community panels - offer the depth, richness and flexibility that makes them perfect for delivering insight for strategic objectives. Add to this that they’re faster and more cost efficient, and it becomes hard to see



**Launch for b2b Feedback Platform SenseCheck** Nov 2 2020

Former Unilever and Kraft marketer Roger Jackson has launched SenseCheck, an online platform allowing b2b small businesses to give and receive anonymised, honest feedback about each other’s marketing plans and campaigns. More



Richard Preedy,  
Verve

*Richard is joint head of the research team in the UK. He joined Verve in 2014 and has 15 years of research experience from running large-scale global brand, experience and innovation programmes. He works across a range of categories, including financial services, lifestyle and tech brands to deliver customer communities and broader strategic research projects. He has a particular interest in how customer-brand relationships and service delivery are evolving in the digital age and how this technology can deliver a fuller understanding of consumer behaviour and underlying needs.*

why they wouldn't be fully embraced in the way that John Lewis is doing.

The new combined community panel will bring further exciting opportunities for supporting the transformative Partnership Plan going forward: from enhanced CRM data integration designed to understand changing loyalty behaviours, to customer immersion and closeness that further helps to democratise the availability of insight throughout the business.

It's an exciting time for the John Lewis Partnership, and an exciting time for everyone at Verve to be working on

community panel insight that will help to ensure John Lewis works with its customers every step of the way. ■

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Digital qualitative approaches offer the depth, richness and flexibility that makes them perfect for delivering insight.

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**Upgrades for QuestionPro** Nov 5 2020

Austin, Texas-based online survey and research services firm QuestionPro has announced new features and tools including Zoom-integrated focus groups; data mining and collaboration features; and a churn analysis tool on its CX platform. More

November 2020

# VIDEO PODCAST in conversation: TIM MARTIN

Watch the full video at  
<https://www.mrweb.com/drno/timmartin.htm>

Tim Martin jointly heads up Verve's UK research team, having previously opened the Verve Chicago office. An expert in retail research with more than 14 years working with FMCG and retail brands, his experience includes exploring customer journeys, triggers and barriers to purchase, branding, concept testing and loyalty. Tim passionately believes true insight is about connecting multiple data points to provide a rounded view of the consumer.

*Interview by MrWeb's  
Nick Thomas*

## **UK Researchers Form Climate Action Group** *Nov 23 2020*

British insight professionals Dr Nick Baker, Jem Fawcus, Denise Hicks, Louise McLaren & Russ Wilson have launched the Insight Climate Collective, a group calling on the industry to come together and play its part in tackling the environmental crisis and promoting sustainability. More

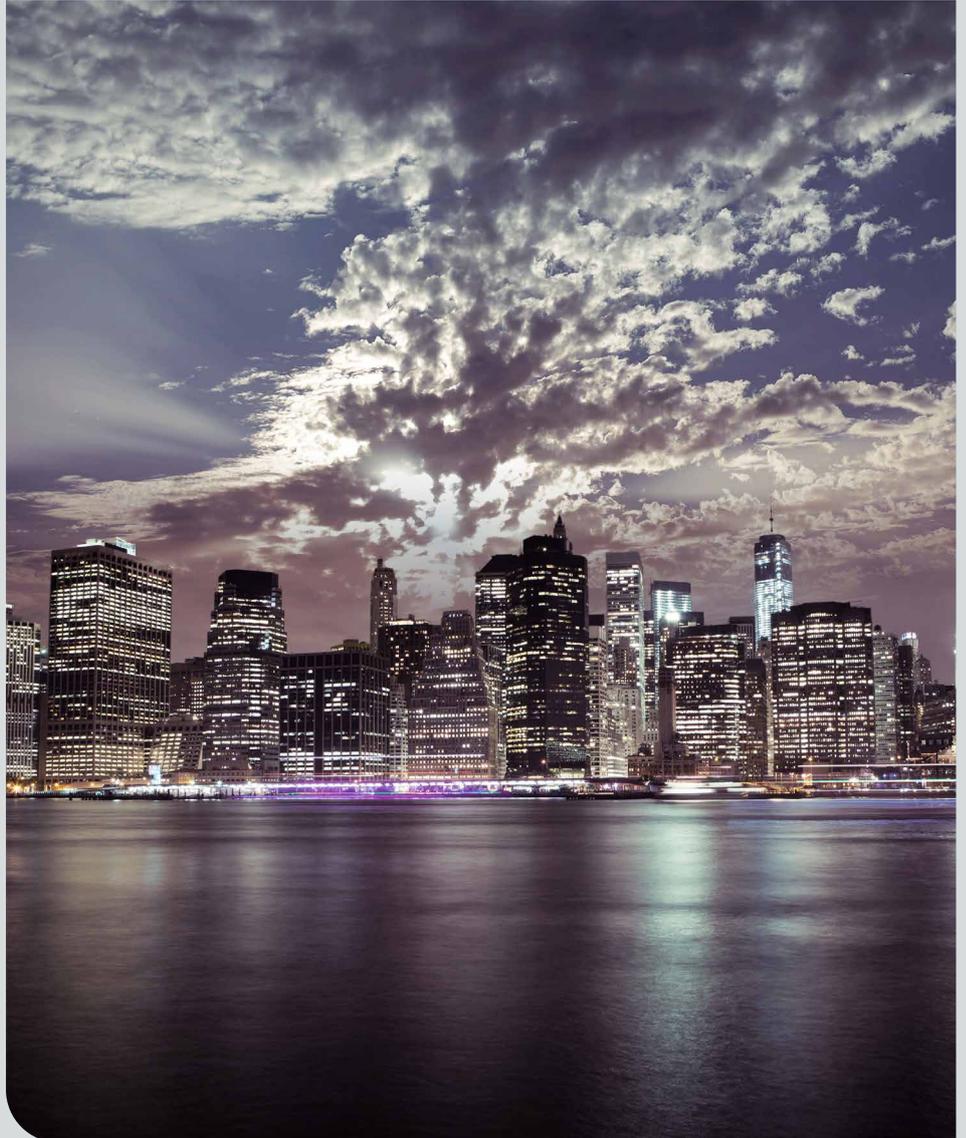
## Getting Here

**TM:** I'm from Yeovil in Somerset where the big employer was Westland helicopters - and my dad worked for them. My mum was a physiotherapist, for the NHS for a bit and then went private. Growing up I was always exposed to lots of new experiences, and they were always very keen to push me forward for new things. I think that's created a natural level of interest for me, in lots of different things, for which market research is very well suited: you get to see lots of different clients, different industries, categories, and different priorities, and you get to be immersed in what they're doing. That's key for me in terms of why I find the job so fascinating.

I studied politics and history at Manchester University, and for the dissertation spent a lot of time going and researching historical material, which I loved - so I was interested in the research side of things, but I wanted it to be something fresher and more current, and a friend from my course was talking about MR so that's how I ended up in MR.

**NT:** When you started at Verve, can you remember how big a factor was 'working with communities' - did you have any experience of it specifically...

**TM:** I didn't have any specific experience but I loved the idea of companies really putting customers at the heart of their decision-making. I think also I could clearly see the need for research to go digital, and Verve are forward thinking in that space.



## Big In America

**NT:** What does your job as Joint Head of Research entail?

**TM:** It's a wide-ranging job. I joined to

work on the Boots account, one of the bigger ones at Verve, and that led to a number of opportunities - the main one was that we successfully pitched for the Walgreens community panel in America, so after a couple of years in the UK I went and set up an office in Chicago, recruited a brand new team over there, teaching them about the way we do things at Verve. We then went about setting up the world's largest community panel - currently 400,000 Walgreen's customers, all linked with transactional data from their loyalty cards, so it's an incredible insight asset that we're very

We then went about setting up the world's largest community panel - currently 400,000 Walgreen's customers, all linked with transactional data from their loyalty cards...

### Major Upgrade for Alida Sparq Dec 14 2020

CXM and insights platform Alida has upgraded its flagship Sparq digital insights platform with twenty new or enhanced features, based on feedback from its own clients. [More](#)

Nov - Dec 2020

proud of.

**NT:** 400,000 members! Tell us more about the Walgreen's panel.

**TM:** It's a fascinating client. The main value that we see from it is not only the front-of-store data that you have from Walgreen's but also the pharmacy data: all panel members sign a HIPAA waiver which means we have all their prescription data. Walgreen's also sell [the community] as an insight tool for their suppliers, so we work with big brands like Pfizer, Reckitt-Benckiser, Kellogg's, all of those big brands to understand what the Walgreen's consumer thinks of their products and how it can be better utilised within that convenience space. We do the same for Boots in the UK, we not only work on Boots' business priorities, but also those of all the brands that sell in the store as well.

**NT:** Are any of those people like Kellogg's etc companies you work with separately?

**TM:** No, so it's exciting again because it's broadening the repertoire of clients that we work with. If it's done in the right way we can really help individual categories work well together. In Walgreen's for example there was an issue with ready-to-go drinks, so we brought together Pepsi, Coca-Cola and Dr Pepper to jointly fund a project and actually helped the category grow. So, you can look at it on an individual product basis - how does this product resonate with the Walgreen's customers - but also at the category level, bringing lots of different suppliers together to fund the work, so that the category itself will grow.

## Panels Without Frontiers

**NT:** Are Verve mainly US and UK or do you have other things going on elsewhere?

**TM:** A lot elsewhere actually. Those are our two main research hubs, and we have an operations team in Iasi in Romania, but so many of our clients are doing international research now... Samsung is the biggest example of that, where we've got communities in about 15 European countries but again that goes to other areas of the world too - like the US and South Korea - when the briefs demand it. We also work with companies like Innocent and Shell which have a lot of European reach in terms of the work we do for them. Boots have international brands like No.7, Soap & Glory... It's important that we do a lot of work in Thailand and China where they've got a presence - that's one of the great ways that we have used digital tech to expand the scope of the work we do, because reaching international consumers is so much easier these days.

**NT:** Would you have a lot of nations mixed within one community, or do you tend to separate them out into one region or another?

**TM:** They generally sit on the same platform so it's easy for us to sample them and use them in similar projects but they will often have a different journey - the community platform they see is in-language. Samsung is a good example of that - we have some pan-European communities where they're all mixed in the same community, but also we have some that are just in native language as well - but they will all sit within the same platform, so it's efficient in terms of setup, sampling and project execution.

## A Shot In The Arm

**NT:** Can we step back and take a look at what's happening in the (insights) industry at the moment, especially the last 18 months since we published the previous supplement: split if you like between things driven by Covid, and anything that was happening anyway!

I have never seen research represented in board and executive meetings as much as it has been in this past year



### Verve and Potentiate Merge in the UK, Partner Globally *Dec 15 2020*

Communities specialists Verve and Potentiate have merged in the UK, as part of a global strategic partnership between the two firms. Terms of the deal have not been disclosed.  
[More](#)

**TM:** Yeah, the very obvious answer is that the whole industry has been much more open to digital approaches over the last 18 months... and particularly from a qual perspective. People have accepted the benefits of online quant for a long time but there has been a reluctance to take that step into the digital qual space - we are seeing that clients now have been forced to take that leap of faith. Pop-up communities, digital depths, online diaries, missions – they're all techniques that we've done for years that people are now seeing the benefits of. It's an area that we've started investing heavily in - now some much bigger exploratory pieces are coming to us because people have seen the benefits of it, and I think we'll see a lot more of the hybrid kind of brief coming in, where the main part is a digital qual approach, but then mixing that with some ftf rather than being ftf-led.



One of the biggest changes across research generally in the last 18 months is that it's had more prominence within businesses. It's more important than ever that clients know what their customers are doing and thinking in this space, and with my clients I have never seen research represented in board and executive meetings as much as it has been in this past year.

The world is changing so quickly, that teams and boards are saying "What are our customers thinking \*now\*?". We saw a number of our clients changing [elements of] their service proposition on a regular basis so they needed to keep on top of what consumers needed. It was really refreshing to see that they needed that insight from us on such a regular basis, and this is where communities really came into their own. My team know about their communities and the customers on them really intimately so we notice even small shifts in attitudes or behaviour. [This means] we could really call that out to our clients, and start to get ahead of the game.

At the beginning of the pandemic we saw a lot of U&A type studies coming in, just so clients could see what consumers were doing; but then that really helped us inform future briefs. We started to see a lot more innovation briefs or really big exploratory qual pieces, because our forward-looking clients realised they needed to work their way out of the pandemic to come out in a strong place.

**NT:** ..and indeed we are 'coming out' of the pandemic, it seems now, touching a lot of wood - you've had your jab this morning by the way, I believe, feeling OK?

**TM:** [laughing] Yes, still bearing up.

**NT:** I'm interested that people are now starting to talk about the different phases within the pandemic period - the first



TIM MARTIN  
HEAD OF UK  
RESEARCH, VERVE

**Maclsaac Back at C Space in COO Role** Jan 7 2021

In the US, Polly Maclsaac has returned to online community specialist C Space as Chief Operating Officer, allowing Phil Burgess to relinquish his operations responsibilities and focus on his role as Chief People Officer. More

Dec - Jan 2021

c.3-4 months of shock when business didn't really do anything, then maybe 6 months when there was a sort of stuttering start, then more on hold, and now they're trying to prepare / do more developmental work. Is there a rise in brainstorming, idea generation projects now?

**TM:** Yes, completely right, we saw those initial studies of customer mindset and how consumers were reacting, then we've seen those studies of what consumers were going to be looking for in the new normal, but the other thing we've seen is a lot more briefs around CSR – so, what should our clients be doing to help customers, communities, the country – and where should they fit in terms of their social positioning. [We've used] both quant and qual work to help clients position themselves around what consumers expect, and what's authentic for their brand as well. It's really important for it to be a credible position you're taking on these things - so that it does feel natural.

## Looking to the Future

**NT:** Can we look at the research and data sector as a whole and where it's going and where communities are going within that?

**TM:** I believe that in the last 12 months, the importance of having a regular monitor of what customers are thinking and doing has grown significantly - so we've seen significant growth in the community space as a result. Not only for long-term communities but also pop-up communities - so bringing 30 or 40 consumers together for a 3- or 4-day period, to really understand them across a specific subject.

Companies see the benefits of having an agency that's part of their team - it is a cliché that's often rolled out, but I genuinely feel that in the last 12-18 months we've become closer to our clients because we have worked with them side by side in terms of understanding their customers and their

needs moving forward.

**NT:** Everything used to be done on a project basis - quote for something with a specific amount, do the study, come back with the results and that was it - but obviously as you say it's moving away from that towards working closer - how far down that road have we got do you think?

**TM:** Obviously when we run communities we have individual briefs that are sent to us and we deliver on a project-by-project basis, but what we then do is have quarterly or biannual reviews where we can take a step back and look over all the projects we're doing, all the forums that we've run, all the ad hoc mini-polls, all the ad hoc projects we've been briefed to do. We look at overarching themes and that's when we start to identify trends and different opportunities for clients.

**NT:** What in particular is being worked on at Verve that we can look out for?

**TM:** The big opportunity for us is the exploratory qualitative space - those really big strategic pieces of work that lay the foundations for a client or a category moving forward - and we are developing our offer. We've been doing it on an ad hoc basis for the last three or four years, what we want to do is take everything we've learned from that space and have a really strong offer associated with that, so that more of our clients can see and experience the wealth of knowledge we have in that space - and this is the prime time to do it.

Companies see the benefits of having an agency that's part of their team - it is a cliché that's often rolled out, but I genuinely feel that in the last 12-18 months we've become closer to our clients.



## Motto

**NT:** Do you have a motto?

**TM:** No, but when we were in Chicago, we were based in a We Work space and their motto is Love What You Do, and I think that sums up how I feel about things - I think that working in an MR agency, your clients want to see you being passionate and enthusiastic about their brands. That's something I like to adopt and it's not forced.

Your enthusiasm for delivering great insight for your client really shines through if you genuinely enjoy it. ■

09

MRwho

Skills >

09

from page 08

**Skills: Business Development**

**Selling Research**

'Almost Famous' appeared in the last half dozen issues of MRWho and attempted to shed some light on the reasons for the relative lack of great market research-focused novels, films and TV shows - contrasting with the likes of lawyers, doctors and artists. Here are two examples, with apologies to our overseas readers for the mostly British cultural references!

## Almost Famous

Market research is under-represented in the media, art and literature: but documents recently discovered by MRWho in the wreckage of a building in Baghdad, and due for publication in our next few issues, prove that this is the result of a number of unfortunate twists of fate and last minute decisions.

Here for starters is the text of a letter apparently written by Charles Dickens' publisher in 1859.

Dear Charles

*Thank you for your latest draft of 'Tale of Two Cities'. I think it is mostly there, and should be another cracker, but I think your readers will find it difficult to empathise with this market researcher fellow Carton. Apart from the fact that none of them will have heard of this relatively new profession, I find his mode of speech, by turns woffly and unnecessarily precise, very irritating. For example, in the last scene his attempt to conduct a show*

*of hands around the guillotine and his long speech with charts merely detract from the great sacrifice he is making (I do indeed like the 'exit poll' joke but I think it's out of place). I'd also ask you to read again that last sentence, and ask yourself if it wouldn't be more punchy if it were less scrupulously accurate.*

*'A substantial majority have agreed that it is a significantly better thing I do now than I have ever done; and a far, far or slightly better rest I go to,*

*than I have ever known'.*

*Of course I am grateful for your dropping the bullet points and the prompted and unprompted supporting percentages, but I still can't help wondering if we might get a more memorable summing up from someone of my original choice of profession. You are right of course that the character is far too scrupulous, and far too nice to be a lawyer, but this is fiction after all.*

*Yours etc. ...*

*Ed'*

## Almost Famous

Market research is underrepresented in the media, art and literature - but documents recently discovered by MRWho in an old police phone box in London, and due for publication in our next few issues, prove that this is the result of several unfortunate twists of fate and last-minute decisions...

Here is a fragment of a letter from the producers of '8 out of 10 Cats' to the bosses of [whichever channel it's on - fill this in later please - ta, Ed] written in the summer of this year and torn up after the first episode aired.

*!..A number of follow-ups are on the drawing board if there is perceived to be a general hankering after more MR-based programming:*

*It's A Knockout*

*One team has to stand on the street with clipboards, and the other has to get past them without answering any questions or appearing rude.*

*Endurance*

*The classic Japanese horror game show with a twist. Instead of lying in baths full of maggots or having the sun's rays cruelly magnified on their nipples, contestants **have to stay***

*awake during a whole conference session with no liquid refreshment. Alternatively, they have to present 60 meaningless quallie charts to a hostile audience of sceptical bankers, or are given 500 pieces of sample from a big IT client and have to find the one obtainable number before they pass out from frustration.*

*Panorama*

*Replace the expensive, risky journalists-go-to-war-torn-province-with-cameraman format with the much cheaper and more rigorously argued, if stultifying, statistics-based PowerPoint documentary.*

*Big Brother*

*Interviewers are locked in a telephone room for six weeks and given impossible tasks to do by someone in authority. We witness their hopes, dreams and confessions, the fulfilment of their physical needs and the carrying out of their bodily functions, the growth and collapse of relationships, and their deterioration from decent human beings into ghostly, drooling pariahs with only one aim - to stay the course and come out the winner...'*

*So - pretty much like an ordinary telephone room, then. (Sorry if you saw that one coming.)*

## VIDEO PODCAST in conversation: KEVIN LONNIE

*Interview by MrWeb's Nick Thomas*

*Watch the full video at  
[mrweb.com/drno/kevinlonnie.htm](http://mrweb.com/drno/kevinlonnie.htm)*



### **Confirmit to Merge with FocusVision** Jan 7 2021

Research software firms Confirmit and FocusVision have announced plans to merge. The deal is dependent on receipt of regulatory approvals and expected to complete in the second quarter. Terms have not been disclosed. More

## Getting Bored Easily

**NT:** Tell us about your parents & their influence on you...

**KL:** They both had a big influence, my dad was an electrical engineer who spent his career working for the government, often doing interesting things in faraway places, installing radar, and we'd never quite know where he was. I actually followed in his footsteps and went into college to do engineering, since I had no idea what I wanted to do. After one semester I realised I'd made an egregious error and got out, ended up just taking random business courses as well as psychology courses, so I ended up with a double major in Business Admin and Psychology at the end of my undergrad years, and in my final semester senior year I took a course in marketing research which I felt put everything together - it had elements of psychology, elements of business and even some of the disciplines of engineering.

**NT:** What about your mother?

**KL:** My mother was always a stabilising influence. Soft spoken... but outspoken. Like if I ever brought a girl to the house, at some point my mother would just say 'You know Kevin gets bored easily' - and I was like 'Mum what are you doing??' and she would say 'You do... and they

I took a course in marketing research which I felt put everything together - it had elements of psychology, elements of business and even some of the disciplines of engineering.

should know that soon, and they can react accordingly' - which was typically to head for the hills. But also I took that on board: a minimum of words, with great authenticity.

They were flexible about what I did - just get your degree, and then get a job! First job in the industry I was a mall interviewer for a company called Market Facts, and I was pretty terrible at it... but fortunately my boss liked me and brought me inside - since I had failed miserably as an interviewer. I lived in a New Jersey suburb, and I worked in New York City for about ten years, got the lay of the land there.

and more data to the point where I was actually very uncomfortable. One guy was literally falling asleep at the table. Afterwards I talked to my boss about it and I said 'That was horrible', and she said 'What do you mean, it was fine', I said 'How do you consider that fine?' and she said 'Everything we said was right!' And I was like 'Well yeah but we bored the cr\*p out of them! They didn't listen to a word we said!' So that was my epiphany - to start my own business, 25 years ago, and that's why I called it KL

Communications instead of KL Research - I was still traumatised by the fact that if the insight doesn't actually resonate it was all wasted time... I've been working for myself ever since. No-one will hire me...

**NT:** Yes that sounds familiar - and also the longer you've been working for yourself the more difficult it becomes to even contemplate doing what someone else tells you again. You know how horrible bosses are because you are one, so yeah...

**KL:** I wouldn't wish me on anyone.

**NT:** If you look at the KL web site nowadays it's pretty much pure insight communities, but presumably that wasn't the case 25 years ago?

**KL:** Right - that predates communities - but we got into them pretty much from the off, 20 years ago, and we were an online research firm from the beginning - in the days of AOL and You've Got Mail, we were early on in that area. I was never a big fan of phone surveys, you didn't get people at the best time, people weren't being honest about how long it was going to take, and so on.

One guy was literally falling asleep at the table. Afterwards I talked to my boss about it and I said "That was horrible", and she said "What do you mean, it was fine".

## Finding a Niche

**NT:** Tell us about the decision to form your own company.

**KL:** I had an epiphany, basically. In NYC I was working for a large research company and I got to be the Director of Quant Research, and we were producing results for an ad agency. These creatives gathered, and we bludgeoned these poor guys with chart after chart and more

### InSites Partners with Provokers for LatAm Expansion *Jan 12 2021*

Online community provider InSites Consulting has partnered with Latin American-based qual and quant insights and consulting agency Provokers, expanding its offer in the region. [More](#)

January 2021

**NT:** Would you agree that communities have been a slow-burner compared to some techs that have had lots of hype?

**KL:** I would agree with that. The GRIT report has said it's a new and innovative tech for ten years, but I think they've come to realise that it's almost ubiquitous. When I first got into it I think there were maybe 6 providers in the US, and there's well over 100 now, and also the business model has changed, most providers are more tech-oriented, more SaaS-oriented, which makes sense because that makes them much more scalable. And it used to be 'Why would a corporation have a community?', and now with cost efficiencies etc... 'Why wouldn't you?', so I think it's probably the exception rather than the rule to find a corporation that doesn't have an insight community now.

In terms of the niche that we tried to pursue: we weren't coming out from SaaS, we're actually a bunch of researchers, hiring a bunch of platform developers (...and we hope at some point we understand what each other is talking about). We decided to differentiate on more active forms of engagement with customers - we know the buzzword is empathy, being customer-centric and customer-caring, and we created our co-creation module about 6 years ago. That's called CrowdWeaving, and it's offering clients something that they can't get elsewhere.

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We created our co-creation module about 6 years ago. That's called CrowdWeaving, and it's offering clients something that they can't get elsewhere.

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## CrowdWeaving

**KL:** It came from this idea of playing up to the audience. There was a famous US comedian a long time ago whose name was Jack Benny, and they asked him how he'd managed a 50-year career, and he said 'When I came up, everybody talked about playing down to your audience, so I figured I'd play up to mine'. Spinning that forward, it's a bit like most traditional MR



plays down to the audience - we send surveys, essentially the ideation takes place elsewhere, all we want to know is whether they like [an idea], and we're not asking them for a lot of involvement, so what CrowdWeaving attempts to do is to say to clients, 'OK what's the business challenge you have, to which you need answers?' - and we're going to put it out to customers and explain it a lot more than you'd think they'd be willing to take the time to understand. Then we'll ask them to try to solve it independently. I'm not a big fan of brainstorming sessions because I think the group immediately tends to move towards synthesis and accept an idea, so I like the idea of independent ideation, but then we move

towards a collaborative approach too - using the social reciprocity that people are used to engaging with, like in social media - so people start to develop original ideas, it becomes gamification. We're sharing all this with the client at the beginning because one of the first times we did this we went through the whole process before we talked to the client, and the internal creative team was very much put off, they were

being usurped by the customers - what do customers know anyway? - So we thought OK we've got to talk to them immediately and position it, and say Think of the customer as a muse that is acting to help your creative thinking, and then you hear what they're doing trying to solve things, and use that as inspiration to try and solve the problem. There's also CrowdSourcing which means you ask your customers to actually come up with something and then go to market with it, and we're not asking them to do that, but we are asking them to identify ways to either market a product, or maybe products that don't exist, and then get our clients to a better starting point, so it's a tool to help the ideation and

### C Space Names DeVlieger New CEO Jan 22 2021

Online community specialist C Space has promoted Jessica DeVlieger to the role of Global Chief Executive, replacing Charles Trevail, who will continue to lead parent company Omnicom's Interbrand Group around the world. DeVlieger is based in Boston. More

creative process, and you know hopefully more products will succeed with this method than with the traditional, more reactive insights.

**NT:** You mentioned gamification - are there a lot of proprietary methods that you use within CrowdWeaving?

**KL:** Yes, well part of it is that you have an idea, see how it's ranking, defend your idea, you can see comments people are making - often they can be brutally honest criticism, the kind my mother used to provide - so you can say 'I've made this change, I'll put it back out there and see if it can rise up again in the ranks', so there is fun from the participant point of view to try and win the challenge, and they'll win some money for that too. There might be like 100 ideas, for the second phase we'll try to get down to about 10, occasionally the client will seed some of their own ideas into this, because they have some normative data. But the main point is not necessarily the final idea but the things that the process exposes - what are the pain points that exist, what are the ways that they could approach this that they hadn't considered. I'll give you an example of one early on - a community of frequent flyers for Delta Airlines. These people have a love hate relationship (with the airline) because you know that's the hub they have for the city

There are times when the crowd is actually quite smart, because they feel the pain more than the person in the ivory tower.

they're in and they have no choice, and one fellow on the community was very unremarkable, was barely staying in and we were ready to kick him out a couple of times, but he responded to this. I think he might have been delayed at an airport at the time, but he spent quite a bit of time and submitted schematics...

The challenge was, if you're booking multiple flights like a business traveller, what should the web site look like, the navigation path, how intuitive should it be to make it easier to book these, as opposed to the current site which they knew was lacking. Essentially what this one guy came up with was the direction that Delta ran with, and it was completely different than the direction they were going to go. Who's better to know this than someone who's in the middle of it all now? There are times when the crowd is actually quite smart, because they feel the pain more than the person in the ivory tower.

**NT:** Do they work best with a certain number of people?

**KL:** Yes typically about 100, so obviously that's the advantage of online, being able to accommodate that kind of number of people, it's asynchronous - you know, you would never attempt that with anything live, so it's a win-win because 100 folks allows for a lot of diversity of thinking. Everybody knows a great idea when they see it, but you would never beforehand pick out who was going to come up with that idea. I'm not a big believer in screening for creativity - you know sometimes folks do that, but there's a lot of research from sociologists that contradicts that, saying No you want to be able to not define the universe going in.

**NT:** Very topical - you might argue that if you're the one screening for creativity, you might get some unconscious bias coming into it.

## Branding the Hell

**NT:** What were the trends in the communities space happening two years ago, and then how many of them have been completely blown away by [Covid]... can you address both parts of that?

**KL:** I'll give it a try! I think the trend 2 years ago was in everything going SaaS, automation, using AI and pretty much standalone type use of the technology, which makes perfect sense from the perspective of our business model. There is the tendency for clients [to think]... the full service suppliers are way too expensive, I don't want them any more - so it comes down to value, and I think the DIY model is difficult... the words I'm hearing a lot more now is demand for 'Flexsupport' with DIY - we will step in and offer as much support as you need rather than just leave you hanging. That I think offers a sweet spot for all parties concerned... [Also] you have to have a full repository of traditional and non-traditional tools that someone can use, and at the end of the day you have to offer the best value. We're starting to see more and more firms using the agile design methodology, bringing it to communities as a way to differentiate them.

One other thing I would say is that we really try to brand the hell out of these communities now, make sure internal stakeholders are aware of it - how far is it reaching, is it making a difference, is it the go-to thing. From a business perspective that helps because it means we're really sticky and the odds are they're going to keep renewing. This means having a fun name for it, and hopefully it becomes synonymous, like a Kleenex, 'let's have this go through Fun or Map or whatever', I want us to be thought of as like the Rome of insights you know - everything goes through the community. That's another thing I think has changed to the benefit of communities. They used to be

### Growth and Multiple Appointments for Verve Feb 1 2021

UK-based community panels specialist Verve has announced a 23% increase in revenues for the year ending 31st December 2020, to £8.1m. It has also hired Lucy Wetherhill, Claire Andrzejewski, Parker Mincey and six other new faces, and made eleven promotions. More

Jan - Feb 2021

for a quick hit read, but all the main stuff has to go through heavy duty, tactical, strategic, well-rigoured approaches, so communities were almost fluff, they weren't considered an accurate enough barometer of success; and more and more I see we do the work in the community and there is no other research being done, and the decisions are based on that. I think in the last year that has accelerated.

**NT:** I've heard people say in this supplement that we have a bit more clout in the boardroom since the onset of Covid. Have you noticed that?

**KL:** I have, I have. It's a question of separating the wheat from the chaff. How certain insight departments have always been regarded, the ones who are well-regarded have only moved up in importance, and why, because they're the conduit to the customer, and in the pandemic world customer needs are changing and they need to know about that. I also see this convergence of insights and innovation, more in some companies than others, and I think the insights teams that play in that space are more highly regarded and more likely to have access to the C-Suite, because they're impacting the bottom line.

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The ones who are well-regarded have moved up in importance because they're the conduit to the customer, and in the pandemic world customer needs are changing .

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## Space and Siloes

**NT:** pick a recent project...

**KL:** We were working for a major space/aeronautics agency. We had done a white paper in collaboration with Columbia University here in NYC, and I guess they came upon us from that. The challenge this particular division had was that they were very siloed. Apparently the way of doing things in this organisation from its creation was that there would be some sort of champion who had a great idea, and they would bring together as many people as necessary to solve the problem (ie work on the idea) - Land on the Moon! - or whatever the case may be. In this particular case they were looking for something different, looking at the world's aquifers which are drying up, and seeing if they'd be better able to identify these using all the new satellites that are monitoring up there, as there are terrestrial signs that these things can pick up - literally if the water is being sucked out of the earth. Now we're in a situation where we don't really have a team leader... we have engineers, we have scientists and technologists, and I don't know if you ever saw the Big Bang Theory but these guys have a pecking order between themselves and they like the other group but they don't particularly speak the same language, so how do we get these three disparate group to all be part of the same ideation process.

...and also, we don't really know what



the hell they're talking about 98% of the time because everything's over our head.

**NT:** Who's 'We' here, the people from the space / aeronautics agency who are calling you in??

**KL:** Yes, the people who have asked us to help with the customer co-creation challenge - even they didn't understand. But the client was ready to stand by the process: let's ask the scientists to solve it individually, the engineers to solve it, the technologists to solve it, and then look at the way they did it and see what each can bring to it. Except that they couldn't - obviously the engineers are very practical, their thing of course included just one spreadsheet after another, schematics; the scientists were all very theoretical, there was like one chart, of a tree or something... So it was a fascinating project to work on, but amazingly enough we did get the groups to coalesce on a shared way of solving the problem - that was one we worked on last year; still in progress and we hope there might be some more work from that one. Obviously that's different from customer research, that's in a b2b situation, but the idea of breaking down siloes, getting people to talk and collectively come up with something that individually they couldn't do, was a lot of fun.

## Motto

**NT:** Do you have a motto?

**KL:** There are times when we are trying to get to the next level and I sum up by saying 'remains a work in progress' - and I try to put myself in the same boat, we are in this overarching agile iterative development, that doesn't end, and wouldn't it be boring if there was a finish line, so it's always a matter of just getting a little bit better at the game, not getting too frustrated, understanding that progress is being made and we're going to surprise ourselves with some of the things that we're able to do. So yeah 'Work in Progress', that describes me, that describes KLC, it's changed a lot in 25 years, and I try to do it more from a 'poll persona', what my clients are looking for; what my employees are jazzed by. You know I've long abandoned any great vision for the skills that I have, a lot of the ideas I get are actually generated from client needs, so they are my inspiration.

**NT:** Is any idea really new, after all...?

**KL:** Yeah, the idea of someone working in isolation and coming up with this epiphany moment, that doesn't really exist, so all I can do is put people together so that we do get that collaboration and make good decisions. ■



## Contact Us:

 (732) 224-9911

 [www.klcommunications.com](http://www.klcommunications.com)

 [inquiry@klcommunications.com](mailto:inquiry@klcommunications.com)



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## About our **agency**:

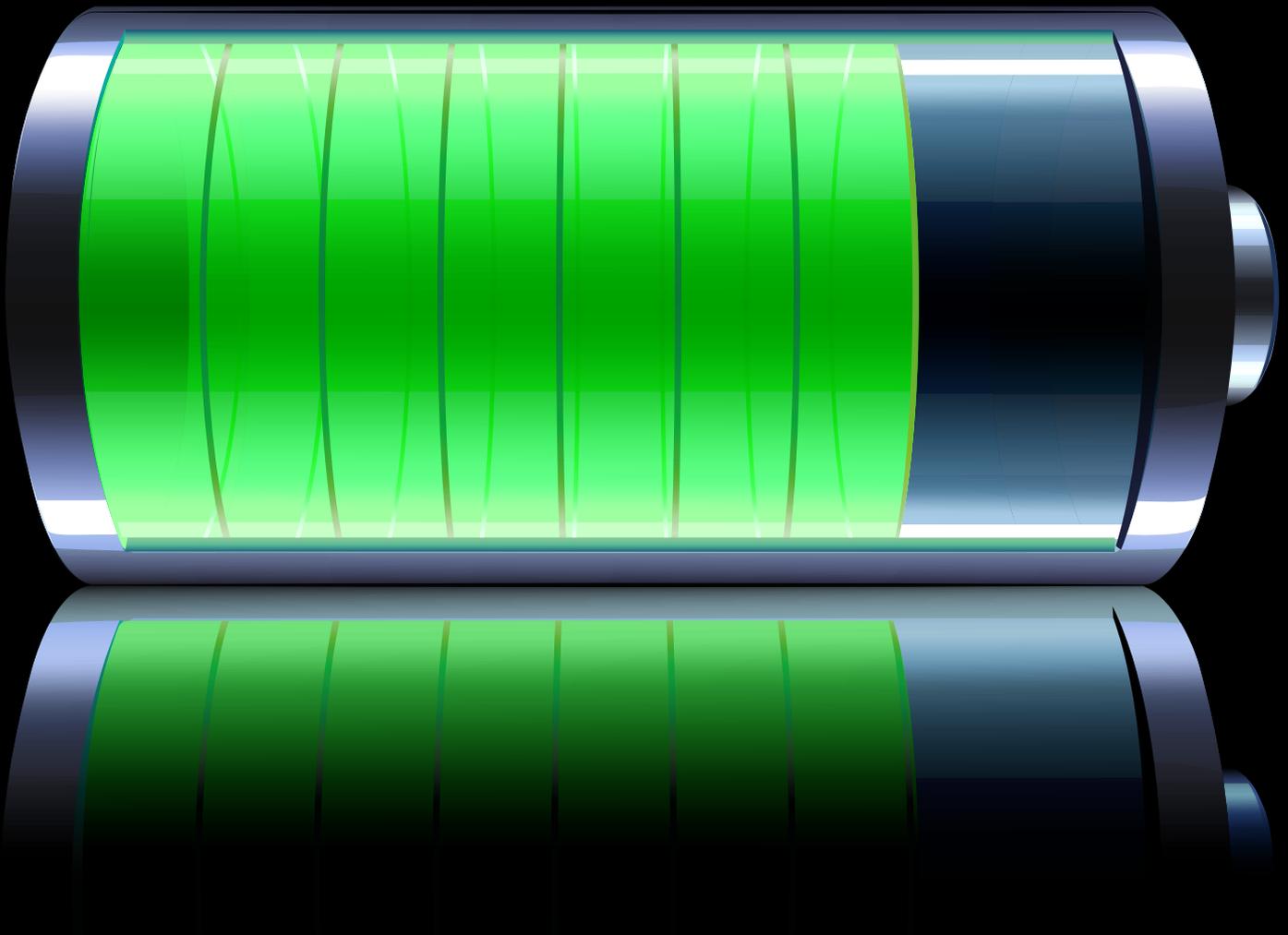
For more than 25 years, KLC has connected brands with their customers through their online community and co-creation expertise, empowering clients to uncover insights that power real-time business decisions and accelerate innovation.

Our online communities give brands on-demand access to their customers and create an ongoing dialog using our suite of research collaborative tools. Also, through our proprietary CrowdWeaving™ solution clients can leverage their brands while co-creating with their ideal customers.

As a collaborative research firm, KLC offers both full and flexible service models and has worked with some of the world's leading brands across all industries such as Aflac, Delta, Sony, Hormel, Verizon, Nestle, Time Warner, ConEdison and more.

# CASE STUDY: ENERGIZER HOLDINGS

Battery giant Energizer needs rapid and regular feedback in a fragmented market where loyalty is low: ideal territory for QuestionPro's community management platform, says Dan Fleetwood, President, Research & Insights.



## **Veylinx Raises Funds for European and US Expansion** *Feb 18 2021*

Behavioural insights platform Veylinx, headquartered in Amsterdam, has raised \$2m in a pre-Series A round of funding. The money will be used to expand its teams across Europe and the US, accelerate product development, and launch a new platform. [More](#)

# Energizer

## Highly fragmented market... low brand loyalty

Energizer, one of the world's oldest and largest battery manufacturers and power solutions providers, now operates in a highly competitive market where brand loyalty is low and brand attrition high. With a very high variance of feature set to price, there is scope for customers to look elsewhere to get 'value'. Collecting timely feedback from customers and potential customers is critical for such businesses. Prabhakar Sundaram, who heads the global customer insights division at Energizer Holdings, was looking to develop a highly engaged research community of customers and promoters to collect reliable insights.

The organization already faced challenges such as how to co-create with customers, reduce churn and cultivate sticky customers. Now there was an additional issue in the lack of longitudinal tracking to understand issues such as the change in user preferences, and pricing sensitivity - and one more thing: Energizer was looking to bring all their consumer research under one platform, giving them better insight for relevant stakeholders to aid with quick and actionable decisions.

## Choice of QuestionPro Communities

The primary goal was to develop a highly engaged research community of customers and promoters for continuous discovery, and Energizer picked the QuestionPro platform. Key to this was the ability to combine qual and quant

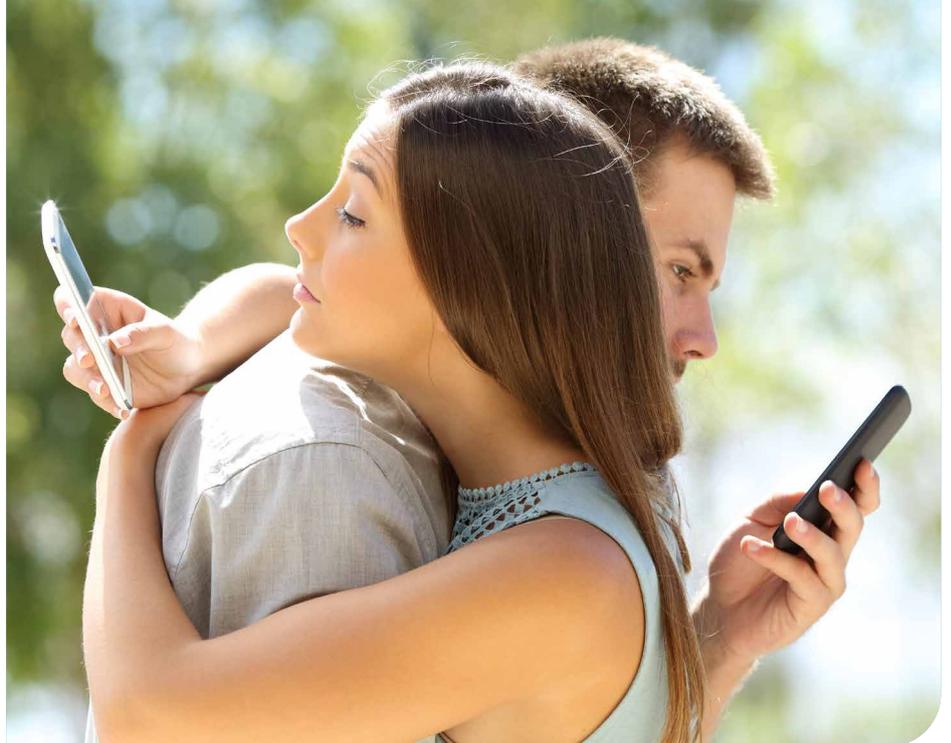
research and insights collection in a simple and intuitive but powerful platform that combined surveys, polls, and other methods like online focus groups for the brand's top promoters. The ability to scale rapidly was also vital for the client's multiple stakeholders.

The online community has over 10,000 members across geographies, regions and demographics and continues to grow. With over 100 projects completed annually, the insights collected from the community have been vast and diverse. The introduction of the platform has allowed Energizer to run quick turnaround and high-frequency studies and conduct longitudinal studies by leveraging gamified rewards, brand testing, post-usage testing, and collecting actionable qualitative and quantitative insights.

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A highly competitive market where brand loyalty is low and brand attrition high.

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### InSites Buys Taiwan-based MR Agency Answer Feb 23 2021

Communities specialist InSites Consulting has expanded its Asian footprint with the acquisition of Taipei, Taiwan-based Answer. Terms of the deal have not been disclosed. More

February 2021



## Dan Fleetwood President, Research & Insights Platform, QuestionPro

*Dan Fleetwood is President of Research and Insights at QuestionPro, one of the industry's leading providers of web-based research technologies. He plays a key role in defining the technology and innovation that QuestionPro provides to continue to be a leader in the insights technology industry. He has 15+ years of market research experience and is passionate about the role that software plays in helping businesses. Dan believes that software can help companies get better feedback, uncover actionable insights, and ultimately develop better products and services.*

*Dan attended both the University of Washington and Central Washington University and holds a Bachelor's of Science in Business Administration and a Bachelor's of Arts in Communications.*

## Ongoing research for continuous discovery

Opportunities to engage with customers are highly diverse due to the nature and business of Energizer Holdings: the company is constantly looking to gather timely feedback in a multi-competitor market with extremely low brand loyalty. Not just that, Energizer aims to continually accelerate research through in-depth product feedback, feature suggestions, concept review, and post-usage testing across their diverse range of teams and divisions.

Brands and researchers often think of online communities as a checkbox item as part of the research strategy and not necessarily a value addition to the insights management. This is a shame, though, as developing the community model and making your promoters work with and for you is a powerful and essential tool. Creating the community is easy, but managing it takes a lot of effort, and when done right, it can transform the speed and the quality of actionable insights.

According to a recent study, two-thirds of companies employ online communities to receive first-hand feedback to make informed decisions. Larger enterprises are more likely to have communities, with 74% indicating they have one.

## Faster time to insights with a simple five-step process in the community

Onboarding existing and potential customers to a community are the easy bits. Keeping them engaged so that they offer timely value is where the challenge lies. QuestionPro helped the team to recruit, maintain and build a community of customers and brand promoters. A significant part of the engagement was conducting small research activities frequently and leveraging them for continuous discovery.

With the help of a simple five-step process (see panel), customers and promoters were directly onboarded into the community management platform, studies run and insights shared with the relevant stakeholders. The community helped with everything from offering traditional research solutions like market segmentation to more complex tasks like price sensitivity analysis, market share simulation, user behavior and trends, and A/B testing.

Due to the scale and reach of Energizer's products, there is a constant need to stay atop market trends, purchase behavior, competition benchmarking and more.

Energizer was able to identify trends well before they become problem areas for the product teams, using a combination of quick surveys, easy polls, video focus groups for in-depth qualitative analysis with natural language processing (NLP), a

### **HCD Partners with Vesta for Neuroscience Suite Launch** *Apr 1 2021*

In the US, online community software platform Vesta has partnered with applied consumer neuroscience company HCD Research, to create a suite of emotional and psychological research tools to capture non-conscious feelings. More

A five-step process that QuestionPro helped Energizer put together to manage the community better:

1. Recruit the right audience to join the community
2. Engage members with surveys, discussions, polls, and video focus groups
3. Collect Insights from target groups using purpose-built tools
4. Reward customers for their participation with gamification and tangible rewards
5. Impact the business by applying the insights collected

white-labeled app for smart survey deployments, and idea and feedback collection with rich media. Using gamification and rewards, concept reviews, and post-usage testing became a seamless and integral part of the research process for continuous discovery and improvement.

### Faster time to insights - increased engagement in the community

Short surveys can be used for rapid



Creating the community is easy, but managing it takes a lot of effort, and when done right, it can transform the speed and the quality of actionable insights.

interactions / quick turnaround studies. Longer surveys can build in features like heatmap testing, usability testing, and advanced qualitative research, feeding into advanced modeling studies.

Through higher engagement, Energizer got insights 200% faster and increased engagement by over 55% week-on-week.

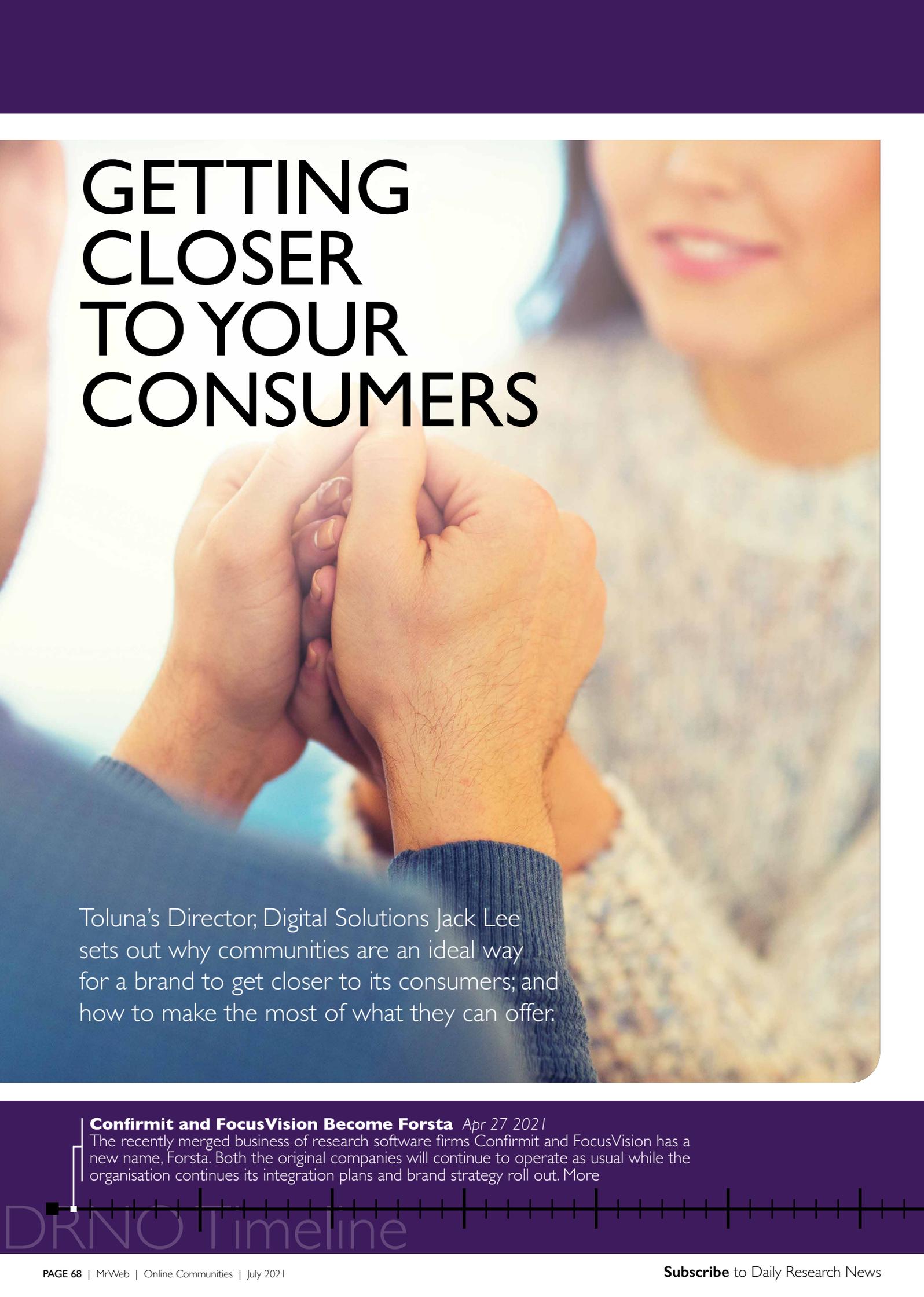
Energizer will continue to use and leverage the community platform to meet its business objectives. With the intelligent use of this community, research costs will go down even lower, and the time to get to insights will be much more efficient and faster.

Prabhakar's verdict? 'The pace of support and insights that we get from the QuestionPro Research team is remarkable. I see them as a very natural extension of our internal Research team - especially with a can-do attitude that makes them stand apart from any of our other partners.'

#### Khoros Names New CFO and CTO Apr 16 2021

Austin, Texas-based customer engagement software developer Khoros has appointed April Downing as Chief Financial Officer, replacing Samuel Monti; while Sejal Amin joins as Chief Technology Officer, replacing Dan Doman. Khoros was built following the merger of social media marketing software company Spredfast and social media management and online community solutions provider Lithium Technologies.

April 2021



# GETTING CLOSER TO YOUR CONSUMERS

Toluna's Director, Digital Solutions Jack Lee sets out why communities are an ideal way for a brand to get closer to its consumers; and how to make the most of what they can offer.

## **Confirmit and FocusVision Become Forsta** *Apr 27 2021*

The recently merged business of research software firms Confirmit and FocusVision has a new name, Forsta. Both the original companies will continue to operate as usual while the organisation continues its integration plans and brand strategy roll out. [More](#)

Insight communities are ideal for getting closer to consumers and keeping pace with fast-changing trends, more important than ever during these unprecedented, unpredictable times.

## So why is it important to stay close to your consumers now?

Amidst the Covid-19 crisis that has engulfed our world, consumer needs and behaviours have been changing rapidly and unpredictably. Despite the rollout of vaccination programmes, the pandemic is likely to impact the consumer landscape for some time to come. Due to this continued uncertainty, being aware of what consumers are thinking and how they are behaving in-the-moment will help you understand how to stay relevant with them, and pivot your business successfully for the year ahead and beyond.

## How can an insight community help with consumer closeness?

Insight communities provide brands with a digital environment to speak quickly with their consumers and strengthen relationships with them. This goes beyond the typical one-way conversation that's possible in ad hoc research, where you are asking your consumers for feedback. With communities, you also provide feedback to your consumers on how their opinions have been helping shape the decisions you've been making. This two-way dialogue is far more effective at relationship building.

Communities can also facilitate a wide range of conversations, for example

through discussions, live chats, depth interviews, polls or surveys, and this variety helps keep things interesting for the community members. Furthermore, this means more ways to understand your consumers. Here are some examples of how some of our clients have been using such consumer insights gathered from engaged community respondents:

- A leading telecoms provider has been using its community with us to optimise their website and app; fine-tuning the marketing mix of new offers & services and validating customer journeys
- For a global publisher, community research has had direct impacts on books in stores: helping publications teams to make decisions on cover art and blurb, and marketing teams to best position their titles.
- A leading betting specialist has redesigned its websites and developed a new subscription service from community insights.
- A major airline was looking to refine the 'at airport' and 'in-flight' experience, particularly in the context of a very competitive and experience-led sector. As well as being able to assess the requirements from different profiles of flyer (business classes, flight length, aircraft, height/weight) the community also enabled the client to make recommendations on future design and service packages, identify main pain points and wow-effects and focus on key drivers of comfort and well-being.
- A food manufacturer in the UK has been using its community of meat consumers to reduce time to insight and to generate huge cost savings vs using panel providers. This improvement in speed and resource has allowed it to keep up with the pace of the fast-changing consumer landscape, as well as developing stronger retailer relationships.



**Jack Lee**  
Head of Online  
Communities and Digital  
Solutions Director at  
Toluna

*Jack brings 12 years of operational and commercial community panel experience - he has worked with some of the most recognisable brands spanning a wide range of sectors, including technology, telecommunications, CPG, finance services and charities. Jack's expertise spans the community lifecycle; with specialist knowledge of community setup, recruitment, member engagement/retention, stakeholder engagement and community platform technology*

### Communities Partnership for Tribes and Syno *Apr 30 2021*

Community specialists Tribes Research and Syno International have agreed a partnership whereby Tribes will migrate all its communities to Syno's platform. The latter includes a survey tool, data lake and research automation products. More

April 2021

As you can see, the agility and engagement a community brings can lead to proactive, informed actions that help build a more positive consumer experience.

## How can I get maximum ROI out of a community?

Whilst there is initial investment required in setting up and recruiting for your own community, with sufficient research volumes, the initial investment is offset by research cost savings. We frequently see clients executing 2-3 times more research in a year: there is no need to pay for sample costs each time, as relevant audiences are already pre-recruited on your community. This readily available pool also means greater agility - you'll be able to speak to your customers much faster than having to find them through panel providers, or having to wait for lists pulled from your CRM team.

We are seeing a lot more clients in recent months wanting to take on the smaller DIY projects to get answers back more quickly, but still wanting full-service support to ensure credible and actionable results for those more complex key projects. We've been helping them cater to these variable support requirements with a flexible service model that caters to DIY, full service and anything in between, where clients can purchase a bundle of credits up front, and use them for research / community support as and when they need it. Furthermore, our recently launched SaaS platform Toluna Start provides far more than just communities. Many of our community clients have been using it for agile access to wider audiences beyond their own, through our global influencers panel of 36 million integrated into the same platform. Alongside this and quant & qual tools, this platform also provides them with automated survey solutions for brand health tracking and comms, concept and pack testing. This, combined with the extensive, flexible community and research expertise available on-tap, have

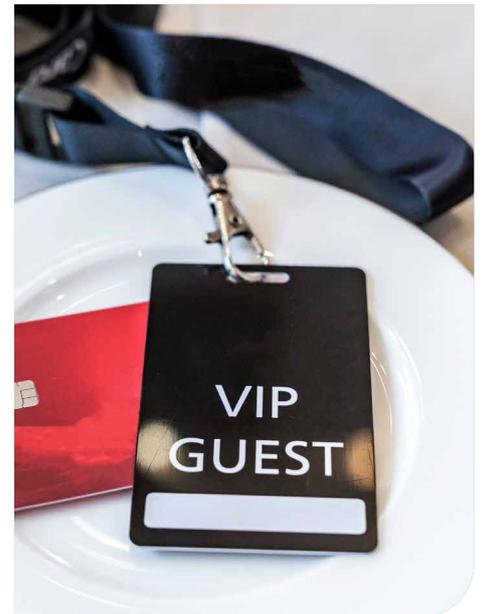
You should ensure you're building and maintaining a positive two-way relationship with members, giving them regular feedback into actions you've taken as a result of their feedback, and setting crystal clear expectations from them on what to expect from the community and its activities.

been giving our clients a truly scalable, end-to-end solution to meet their evolving needs.

## I already have a community. Do you have any advice on how I can get closer to the people in it?

There are number of elements to look at when maximising community engagement. It is important to have a clearly defined engagement plan and schedule; one that balances the optimal frequency and variety of relevant activities for the members alongside meeting your research needs. You should ensure you're building and maintaining a positive two-way relationship with members, giving them regular feedback into actions you've taken as a result of their feedback, and setting crystal clear expectations from them on what to expect from the community and its activities. Be sensitive to the current climate - little tweaks to your comms such as adding 'stay safe' to the end of emails helps address this.

Having a rewards system that encourages contributions is another key aspect of engagement - monthly prize draws for gift vouchers are the most common form of rewards on a community, although there are many ways you can reward members without spending a penny. You could select and recognise a 'member of the month' who has provided particularly valuable contributions, or create 'VIP' members who can access



sneak peek content on the community before anyone else. We have worked on communities before where the client would invite these 'super-engaged' members to come into the client's offices to be part of a co-creation session, as well as recording a video about their experiences of products, to treat them as an extension of the brand team and help bring the insights to life for stakeholders.

Ultimately, an engaged community is one where the members are enthusiastic and interested to participate in its activities. Addressing the points above helps achieve this, although every community and its membership is different, and you may have your own unique considerations and challenges around engaging your audiences. We've barely touched the surface; please do get in touch for a more in-depth consultation.

Stay safe! ■

In 2003-4 you couldn't open a paper without reading a rave review of the LOTR films, or move for the merchandise, so we make no apologies for turning it into a couple of focus groups. If you haven't seen the movies, a) it may not mean quite so much to you, and b) Why Not?

## Two Groups of Nine

*MRWho sweeps the Oscars with a conversation overheard in the smoking compartment of a train just pulling out of King's Cross on a wet Wednesday night:*



*'John! Sit over here mate! So how was your group?'*

*'Not bad, not bad. Bit of a weird one 'though. We booked nine and nine turned up, for starters - in fact a tenth turned up sometime afterwards, seemed to be following them. We tried to shut him out but one of the original nine, senior citizen with a beard, said 'No! Let him in - he may have some part to play' - in a very grand voice and we didn't like to argue. In fact he did play a part - finished off my rating scale quite nicely.'*

*'Ah yes, the five point semantic scale, so you got it?'*

*'Yup, good range of responses - I'll have to shorten them a bit. I've got it here:*

**1 One out of 5 - 'Put it away! You do not know what you ask! - that was the commanding guy.'**

*'Blimey, he won't be an early adopter then?'*

*'Too right. And then the 2 out of 5:*

**2 'Oi don't rightly know Sir. Some things just aren't meant to be'.**

*Nice chap, very helpful - rambled a bit 'though when I prompted him, was still talking about 'there arr zum things wurth foitin' for' when the tape ran out. Anyway, great start huh? And then the 'neither nor' response - this one was rather a wishy washy character, every time I asked him something he'd get a faraway look in his eye, and when he saw the product he turned to the 2 points bloke and said:*

**3 'I suppose someone must carry it, 'though it is a heavy burden'.'**

*'Not exactly what the client was looking for so far then?'*

*'Well no, but the product polarises opinion - nobody seemed to have an indifferent attitude to it. Look at the number 4:*

**4 'Give it to me! I will not see it destroyed!' [neither would I, I told him - only bloody stimulus material we've got and we need it for the quant briefing next week]. But he went on: 'It must be used for good! Etc etc.'**

*'Sounds like a bit of a troublemaker.'*

*'Hmm. Rather pushy and sulky, kept interrupting the others.'*

*'Keen 'though. If that's 'four' I don't like to think what the 'five' was ...'*

*'Well, the guy who came in late actually jumped clear across the table*

*and the lady who runs the facility had to carry him outside [she doesn't take any argument I can tell you] where he sat snivelling and beating the ground in the test kitchen until he'd calmed down. But before she got hold of him he provided me with my number 5:*

**5 'We wants it.'**

*'Huh. Not even grammatical - but it's punchy, and you're right, you've certainly got the full range of reactions there. Better than mine ...'*

*'Of course, the other group last night!?! How did it go?'*

*'Well, I certainly got the short straw. We also recruited nine and nine turned up. Miserable bastards, all refused to take their coats off, and all seemed to have colds, talked in croaks and whispers. No sign of a bloody rating scale - they all said exactly the same thing when they saw the product - hissed and stretched out their hands. Mine would have looked like this:*

**1 'Yessssss'**

**2 'Yessssss'**

**3 'Yessss...'**

*'Oh I get the picture. Short answers ... 'give us the money, where's the buffet?' Professional respondents, out on a jolly. All got taxis I suppose?'*

*'Black cabs, hmmm. But it was anything but jolly. Whole atmosphere went cold when they walked in, and worst of all the*

*recording doesn't seem to have worked properly - all come out fuzzy. He's going to think I made it up about the hissing.'*

*'Wasn't yours client-observed then?'*

*'No. Said he wasn't interested in this one, wanted to watch yours. What time did he turn up?'*

*'He didn't. Still not met him face-to-face. Sent me some remote camera thing like a glass football, which we left in the middle of the table, but the tall chap with the beard threw his coat over it when they came in and they all said they wouldn't do it observed. So I rang the client and he said to go ahead without.'*

*'So ... what's the verdict you reckon? These things going into mass production?'*

*'I have a feeling not. Think the client will be bust before you can say Knife, to be honest.'*

*'What makes you say that?'*

*'Badly in need of rebranding. Company name old-fashioned and sounds too much like 'Murder' I said, people won't wear it.*

*I suggested 'Synistra' with a 'y', or even two 'y's but he wasn't having any of it. Don't know why he's bothering with the research if he's not going to listen. Didn't his last agency say he'd been pushing them around for years?'*

*'Mmmm. Treated them like grunts they said.'*

*Who was his last agency again?'*

*'I believe it was ORC International ...'*

# 7. SKILLS & CAREERS



## BACK TO THE FUTURE

by Nick Thomas

### Higher Logic Buys Community Platform Vanilla

May 6 2021

Consumer engagement specialist Higher Logic has acquired Canadian online customer community platform Vanilla, for an undisclosed sum. [More](#)

One feature of the last 18 months has been a focus on the short-term. The personal goals of much of the world were simplified: just get through it, get the people you love through it, concentrate on the things you can enjoy now - simple pleasures. Work goals too: hang onto your job, if under threat; keep your business alive and minimise job losses and long-term damage, if you were a boss, in most sectors at least.

Some companies have been thinking about 'positioning themselves for the post-pandemic world' for a year or so (see News Analysis article in section 1 above), but as of March this year there seems to be a much more general trend towards 'getting on with it'. Recruitment activity is a leading indicator of this, and once the extent of economic disruption became clear in 2020 it's not surprising that it tanked: the fact that it's returning to something like normal is a clear sign that there's a feeling (right or wrong) that the worst is over, and long-term thinking is back.

New normal or old normal? Frankly it's a bit of both: undoubtedly much has changed forever, but there's something very 'old normal' about the shortage of good candidates, once again a feature reported by multiple specialist recruiters in the MR space. Briefly, last year, we had too many people looking and no jobs to offer them - and indeed that happened after '9/11' as well, but just as briefly. It doesn't seem to take very long for people to start thinking about the further-off future again.

## Same Old Candidate's Market

'Demand for candidates is back to normal - or even higher at the moment' says Deborah Lewis of insight & analytics recruitment specialist Resources Group.



Lewis is UK MD, but says the firm's Australian and Asian clients are also busy planning and hiring again. Also old normal is the balance of vacancies by seniority - demand highest as ever at the SRE and Research Manager levels. Again, if anything it's even more of a candidate's market at present due to a lot staying put: even where their confidence in finding something has returned, loyalty is for the

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The shortage of candidates gives jobseekers bargaining power.

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### ContentCal Wins Funds to Launch Intelligence Platform *May 7 2021*

London-based content marketing platform ContentCal has raised \$6.2m in a Series A round of investment, which it will use to develop a proprietary content intelligence platform, make new hires, open a US base and expand its UK headquarters. More

moment a big factor - many are looking to repay employers who got things right in the tough times last year. There have been rounds of internal promotions, and where job offers are being made current employers are making more counter-offers to keep good staff.

Is the renewed activity just a false start? There was a slight and short-lived uptick in activity last year in the late summer and early autumn, but this time, says Lewis, it feels like it might continue. There's nothing in this supplement to contradict that - Communities are growing at as fast a rate as ever or slightly faster - and on MrWeb we're posting more job ads month by month. There are masses of opportunities out there at the tech end of research, but also growing numbers in the mainstream.

## Tech Skills

The shortage of candidates gives jobseekers bargaining power and may help to gloss over small gaps in their skills base: in particular, communities specialists and other digital research firms are still very much willing to consider those without specialist experience of methods or techniques. The move to digital may have accelerated, and researchers are

of course wise to bring their skill set up to date wherever possible, but it's still the case that if you're a candidate with a good grounding in classical research and a willingness to learn, these companies are interested. You might argue that this is only for as long as there's a candidate shortage, but as above, that might just be forever. Furthermore, there's a sense in which technology is a barrier between ourselves and the real world - if you're fed up with swapping Zooms for face-to-face contact, you'll know this and you're not alone, but there's also a parallel in the business world: I would personally see at least a smattering of ftf experience as a plus, alongside technical skills, and in preparing this issue I've found plenty in agreement, from Deborah Lewis to Kevin Lonnie.

In fact I can't put this better than Lonnie, so here's his view of what to look for in a candidate for a communities role:

'Some of my co-workers are very skilled in one aspect and not so much in the rest, that's cost-effective but it may not be for the best. It's just because they need to know what's available - we don't want to be in a situation where the client says 'I want to do two online focus groups' - we want to say 'Well what are you looking to solve, and why do you think online

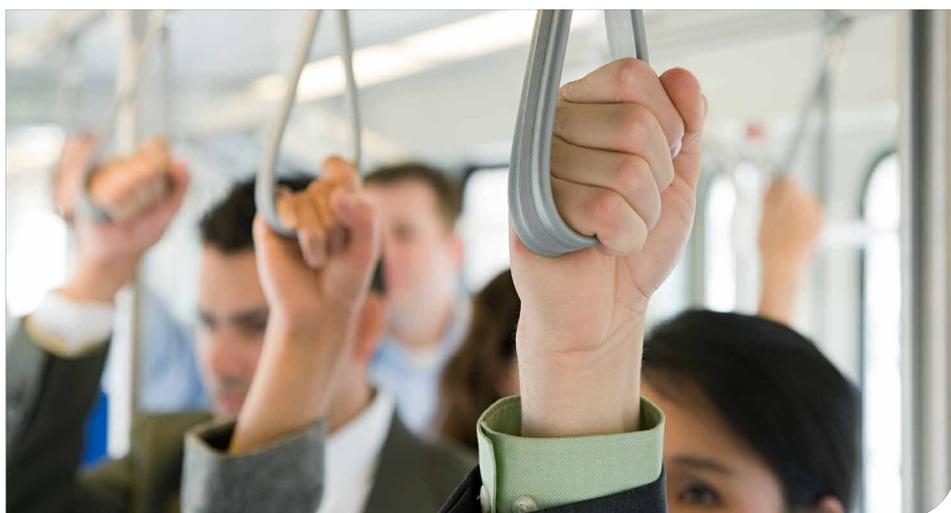
groups are the smart way to go?' To say that with confidence they need broad experience: You really can't solve any business issue if you don't understand the issue, what is the hoped-for resolution, and what your options are, from a quant perspective etc... I can't say I'm looking for specific skillsets because the world has gotten so automated. [Specific tech skills yes, but..] then it's a question of can this person connect the dots, analyse what was found and then navigate to recommendations. And do that quickly. So I'll just go back to this: we want smart people that are curious, and I can work around the rest'.

## WFH

Other changes in working habits need to be considered: the most obvious is flexibility to work from home for two or more days a week. Researchers whose employers insist on a return to 5 days-a-week in the office will be aware that others are offering more flexibility and may look around, though many would argue that at least some time in the office each week is healthy for both the individual and the company. However, Lewis says not many companies seem to have a strategy in place yet for post-Covid working patterns - they are 'still consulting'. In part, this may be fluid until it becomes clearer whether vaccination programs have left people immune to all variants or whether social distancing remains a long-term policy.

## Bright Future

So are we back to thinking about the future? Apparently yes, companies in the MR sector are once again recruiting not just with replacement but with growth in mind. Are we also back to the same old story of not having enough good candidates? Maybe that too, but there are positive signs in increased focus on



**New Toluna European CRO Role for Harris UK MD Vidler** *May 18 2021*  
Online community and survey tech provider Toluna has promoted Susan Vidler to the role of European Chief Research Officer, from her most recent role as UK MD for Harris. The firm has also promoted Olivia Senneville to Executive Vice President, Finance. More

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## Companies in the MR sector are once again recruiting not just with replacement but with growth in mind.

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research at high levels of client firms, which may encourage entry to the profession; and in insights companies' renewed commitment to investing in talent, flagged up by Tim Martin of Verve:

'We've seen in the pandemic that I think two thirds of those made unemployed have been people under the age of 25, so it's important that the industry embraces the idea of bringing on the next generation. One of the things we're really proud of in Verve is the Graduate recruitment program set up and established over the last 3 or 4 years. We've had people come into Verve as graduates who are now ADs - it's so important that we keep it fresh and interesting and bring great knowledgeable, enthusiastic young people into the industry'.

MrWeb continues to list ads for MR and analytics positions from graduate up to CEO, and those ads now appear in searches on the sites of our partners, ESOMAR and Women In Research (WIRe). We hope to see numbers rising steadily in the next 6 months!  
[www.mrweb.com/jobs](http://www.mrweb.com/jobs). ■

### Thanks to:

Deborah Lewis  
 MD - UK, Resources Group  
[dlewis@resourcesgroup.com](mailto:dlewis@resourcesgroup.com)  
 0207 242 6321



## It's a jungle out there

Hundreds of suppliers, dozens of techniques, thousands of jobs.

We know the research industry inside out: start with us.

[www.mrweb.com](http://www.mrweb.com)

### Toluna Launches Subscription Model *Jun 7 2021*

Toluna has launched what it describes as 'the industry's first and only Enterprise Insights Subscription', giving clients 'limitless access' to its Toluna Start platform, expert personnel and insights from its global panel community. More

## AUSTRALIA

### Research Director - Unlock Strategy

Melbourne

\$AUD 130-150,000 + benefits  
Resources Group

### Qualitative Research Consultant - Entrepreneurial Agency

Melbourne

\$AUD 60-75,000 + SUPER + BENS  
Resources Group

### Senior Market Research Analyst / Account Manager

Sydney

\$AUD 60-75,000 + super  
Resources Group

### Qualitative Research Strategist - Unlock Human Truths

Melbourne

\$AUD 80-100,000 + superannuation + benefits  
Resources Group

### Consultant - Behavioral Economics / Behavior Change / Market Research

Sydney

\$AUD 85-100,000 + SUPERANNUATION  
Resources Group

### Qual Strategist - Brand Strategy and Consumer Insights

Melbourne

\$AUD 100-150,000 package + bonus + benefits  
Resources Group

## EUROPE

### Senior Account Director

Geneva, Switzerland

CHF DoE  
Catalyx

## USA / CANADA

### Research Account Executive

USA / work from home

\$ competitive  
QuestionPro

### Research Customer Success Manager

USA / work from home

\$ competitive  
QuestionPro

### Senior Account Director

Chicago, IL, USA

\$ DoE  
Catalyx

### Research Manager

Los Angeles, CA, USA

\$ salary TBD  
LRW - A Material Company

### Senior Research Manager

Toronto, Canada

\$ competitive + benefits + stock options  
Reach3 Insights

### Research Associate

Toronto, Canada

\$ competitive + benefits + stock options  
Reach3 Insights

### Research Manager - Technology

San Francisco, CA, USA

\$ competitive + benefits + stock options  
Reach3 Insights

### Senior Research Manager

Chicago, IL, USA

\$ competitive + benefits + stock options  
Reach3 Insights

### Research Manager

Chicago, IL, USA

\$ competitive + benefits + stock options  
Reach3 Insights

### Associate Director - Life Sciences Market Insights

Watertown, MA / Remote Working, USA

\$ salary TBD  
InCrowd

### Associate Director, Dual Quantitative and Qualitative

Chicago, IL, USA (or surrounding areas)

\$90-100,000  
Verve

## UK

### SRE / RM, Communities - Digital Research - Innovation

Central London / Home Based

Up to £38,000 + excellent benefits  
Pollen Recruitment

### Senior Strategist, Qual Insights - Brand, Experience, Innovation Consultancy

Central London (Working flexibly)

£40-55,000 + Bens  
Spalding Goobey

### Content and Research Executive

Hatton Garden, London / remote working

£28,000  
Pulsar

### Research Director, Qual - Lifestyle Brands, Trends and Innovation

Central London (plenty of flexibility to work from home)

To £70,000 plus benefits  
Pollen Recruitment

### Senior Research Executive, Qual - Broad Range of Sectors

Central London

£28-34,000 + benefits  
Spalding Goobey

### Qual SRE - Mixed Commercial

London

£29-34,000

Hasson Associates

## UK

**Associate Director, Qualitative - Healthcare**

All Locations - Flexible (UK)  
£ Competitive  
Ipsos MORI

**Strategic Insight Specialists**

London  
£42-58,000  
Hasson Associates

**Field Manager, Part-Time - 20 hours per week**

Richmond, South West London - Remote Working  
c.£18,000 (Full-Time equivalent)  
c.£30,000 per annum  
Gracechurch Consulting

**Quantitative Research Manager**

Hybrid working option (UK)  
GBP DoE + Bonus  
Verve

**Associate Director or Research Director - Retail**

UK Based / Hybrid Working - (Potential for flexible working)  
GBP DoE  
Verve

**Senior Account Director**

London  
£ DoE  
Catalyx

**Qualitative Research Manager - Lovely Blend of Public and Commercial Clients**

Central London (Currently homeworking)  
£33-40,000 plus strong benefits  
Resources Group

**Qual Research Director - Brand and Creative Development**

Central London  
£65-70,000 + strong bonus and benefits  
Resources Group

**Graduate Market Research Executive**

Manchester Based (UK)  
£ DoE  
Harris Interactive UK Ltd

**Research Manager**

Ealing, West London  
£ DoE  
Harris Interactive UK Ltd

**RE, Technology, Media, Telecoms and Entertainment**

London  
£ DoE  
Harris Interactive UK Ltd

**Senior Digital Project Manager or Digital Project Manager**

London  
£ DoE  
Toluna

**Director, Product Marketing**

UK Based  
£ DoE  
Toluna

**Account Manager, UK Market Research Team**

UK Based  
£ DoE  
Toluna

# Work with VERVE

Over the past 18 months, our model of always-on, agile insight has shown how a digital approach can deliver inspiring, commercial insight in challenging times. We've continued to grow our revenue and client base; testament to our great technology-based approaches and fantastic team.

We don't do indifferent - we really do give a damn about getting things done for our clients, with our clients. We want to be regarded as an extension of their team because that's when we can deliver the smart, commercial insight that matters most.

Right now, we're expanding the team across all levels to support our growth - so if you want a stimulating, rewarding career with lots of opportunities, come and join us

**Check out our latest vacancies with flexible and hybrid working options: [www.addverve.com](http://www.addverve.com)**

SAMSUNG

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Boots

prime video

# VERVE

Energising Insight

# 8. DIRECTORY



## Who we are...

Platform One offers a set of flexible, powerful tools to run Insight Communities, Online Panels and Experience Management programs for both Customers and Employees.

With flexible licensing models, you can run a Community or Experience Management program in isolation, or fully integrated, taking advantage of our advanced toolkit:

- Community and project management for quant and qual research
- Sampling, data and member management tools
- NLP powered qual analysis for online discussions at scale
- Automation and data management tools for experience management
- Closed loop feedback tools including alerts and one-to-one case management
- Outer loop for tracking impact of broad change management initiatives
- Centralised data visualisation for all data sources

## Who to contact?

[sales@platform1.cx](mailto:sales@platform1.cx)  
<https://www.platform1.cx>

**platformone**

## Experience toluna\*start

Start knowing

The world's first  
end-to-end consumer  
insights platform.



## Start Knowing

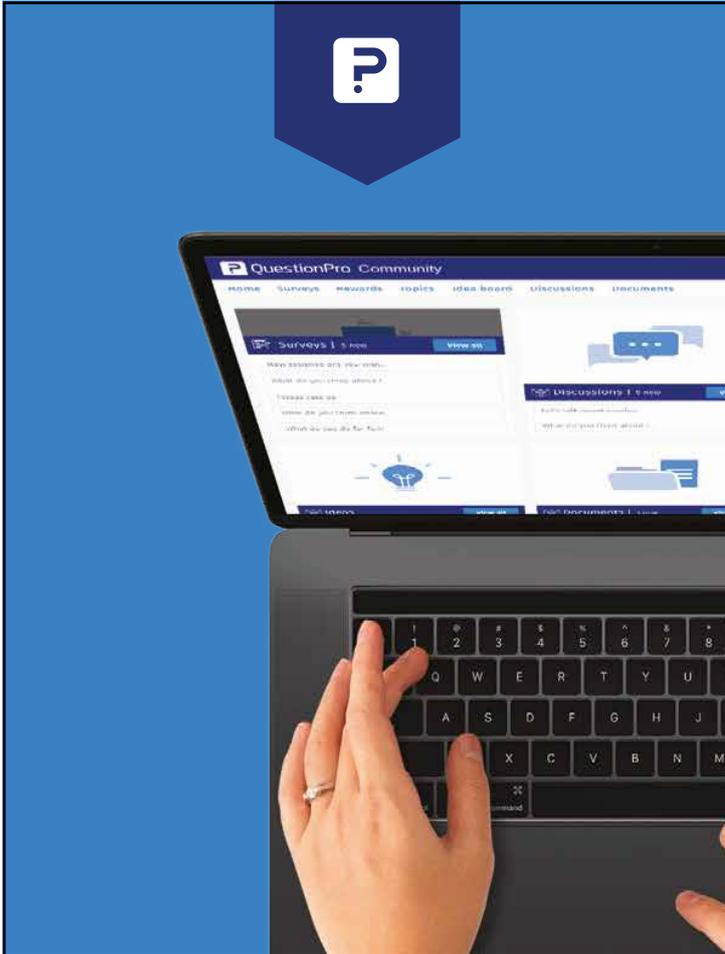
Toluna delivers real-time consumer insights at the speed of the on-demand economy. We do what no other insights company can. We combine innovative technology, award-winning research design, vertical expertise and a panel of over 30 million consumers.

What does this mean for you? It means you can get more research done in less time with less budget. It means you can design a research program that meets your needs, whether that's self-service or full consultancy. It means you can trust your insights because quality is baked into every part of our process. And it means you can do it at scale.

## Who to contact?

Navdeep Heer,  
Marketing Manager, UK,  
[navdeep.heer@toluna.com](mailto:navdeep.heer@toluna.com)

**toluna\***



### ONLINE COMMUNITY SOFTWARE

Understand your customers needs and expectations and make intelligent business decisions based on insights from real-time analytics. All in one place.



All-in-one dashboards to capture real time data.



Centralized community web portal with engagement tools



Gamification and rewards to promote participation.



Qualitative solutions with desktop and mobile enabled platform.

Learn more at [questionpro.com/communities](https://questionpro.com/communities)

☎ 1-800-531-0228    ✉ [sales@questionpro.com](mailto:sales@questionpro.com)



# VERVE

Energising Insight

Experts in community panels and smart digital research

Inspiring insight, vividly brought to life.

We're passionate about putting customers at the heart of our clients' businesses, empowering them to make better decisions.

[hello@addverve.com](mailto:hello@addverve.com)  
[addverve.com](https://addverve.com)

### We offer...

- More agile innovation
- More joined-up CX understanding
- More frequent insight about your brand and comms
- Deeper behavioural knowledge
- A multitude of tech-enabled, contemporary research

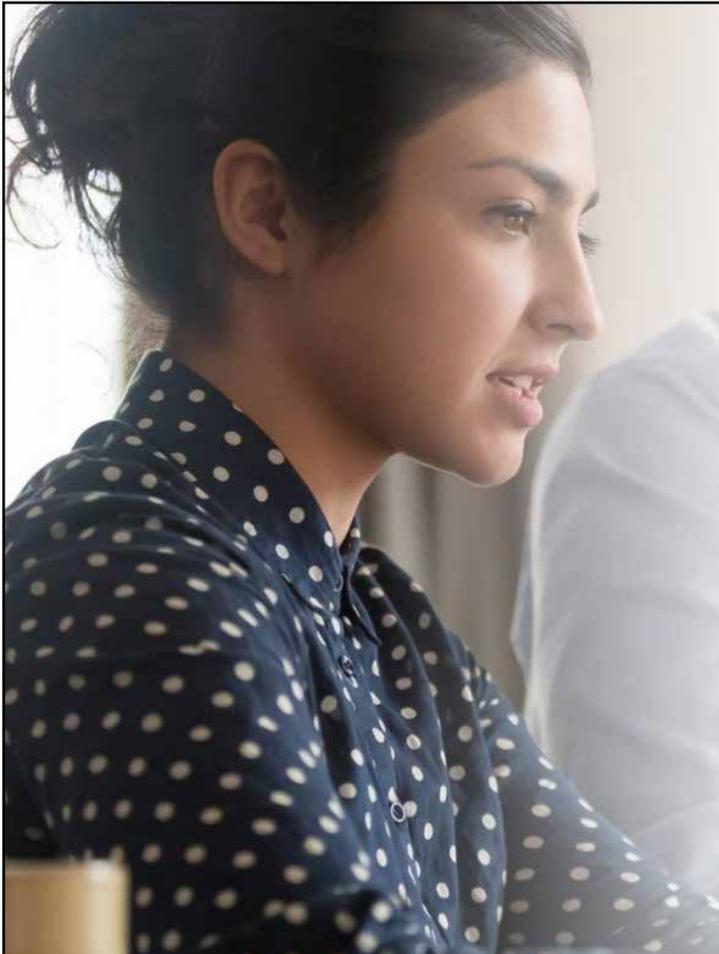
### How do we do it?

- Community Panels for long-term engagements
- Pop-up Communities for projects
- Integrated data to help you learn in a more rounded way
- Insight communication that drives more action

Get in touch to chat about how we can help energise your insight!

[hello@addverve.com](mailto:hello@addverve.com)  
[addverve.com](https://addverve.com)





## Who we are...

Build relationships with the people who matter most - your customers.

Creating a better customer experience starts with a company's effort to reach out and learn. Knowing your customers is important, but having them involved every step of the way through a private online insight community is a completely different ballgame. Through ongoing conversations with your customers in a collaborative group setting, you can tap into their needs and bring the right solutions to life.

Collaborate on a 24/7 built-in infrastructure for customer engagement and conversation, while utilizing traditional and cutting-edge community research tools including polls, forum discussions, surveys, CrowdWeaving® Challenges, and more.

## Who to contact?

(732) 224-9911  
www.klcommunications.com  
inquiry@klcommunications.com



# BACKWORD

Once again it's been an education putting this supplement together - any worries I had that not enough would have changed since the last Communities issue were quickly dispelled - obviously it's been an unusual 18 months or so, but it's just as much to do with the dynamism of companies in this flourishing sector.

It's fantastic to see new firms coming forward interested in sponsoring, and our thanks go to the five doing so this time as well as our apologies for some rather last minute chasing of content. Most particularly, though, I have to thank Vicki Britton, Communications Director at Verve who has been incredible in terms of both energy and patience, and without whom this issue would probably be set for publication in September at the earliest. Chris at Fullpoint Design has also shown his usual forbearance and speed in creating what you see before you, as

well as considerable design flair - contact him on [chris@fullpointdesign.com](mailto:chris@fullpointdesign.com).

All of our special issue publications - this, 'Mobile Age' and Data Viz - have a permanent home now in our MRT features section ([www.mrweb.com/mrt](http://www.mrweb.com/mrt)). The series is well and truly established, and next we're planning to look at Neuroscience, after a false start earlier this year: contact us on [ads@mrweb.com](mailto:ads@mrweb.com) if you want to be a part of it.

If you're not already a subscriber to DRNO (<https://www.mrweb.com/drno>), the MR world's daily paper, you should be - and we'd love any feedback on it and on the special issues so far, on [hello@mrweb.com](mailto:hello@mrweb.com).

Thanks for reading!

Nick Thomas, MrWeb

# NEXT ISSUE 'BRAINS & BODIES'

mrweb

# NEUROSCIENCE, EYE TRACKING AND BIOMETRICS

AUTUMN 2021

ir by department

Logistics costs

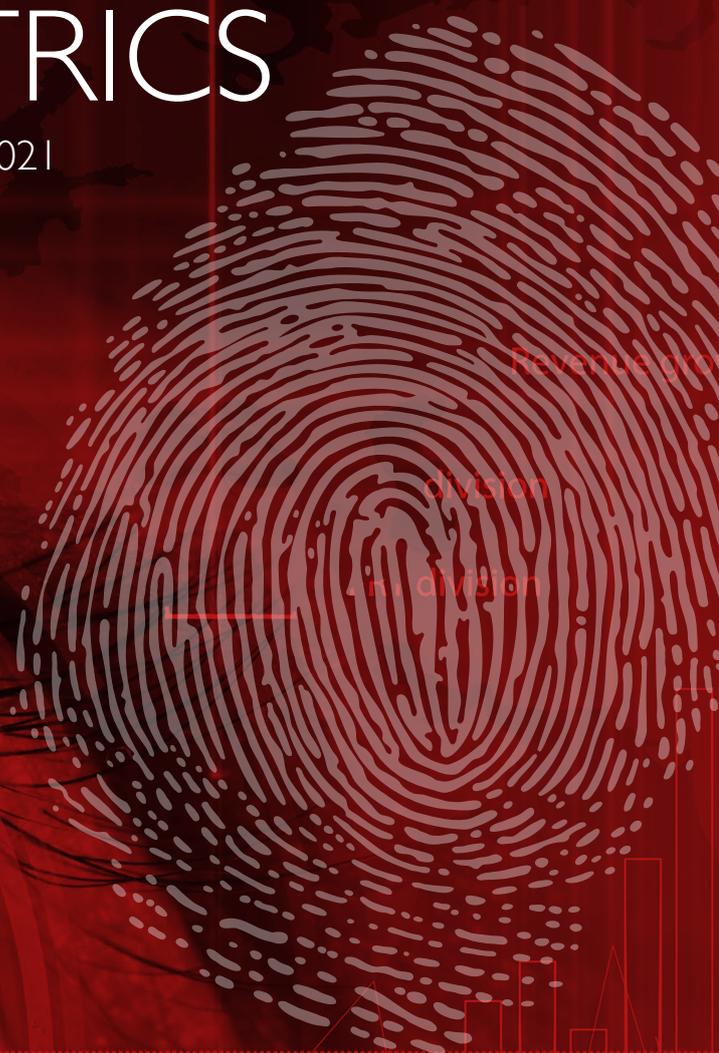


IT costs



nts by quarter

Quarter IV



Revenue gr  
division  
H division



- ARTICLES
- PODCASTS
- INTERVIEWS
- VACANCIES

254	274
754	273
144	364
874	657

