

## Get some GRIT: Perspective on a Research Industry Report

Sarah Faulkner, [Faulkner Strategic Consulting](#)

Each year, [Greenbook](#) publishes the GRIT Report, a summary of market research industry trends based on a global survey of client and supply-side researchers. The findings are always insightful and help me better understand which trends in research are really in play today and what's coming next. Here are a few highlights from the most recent report that I think are particularly meaningful, along with some color commentary from my own experiences.

### What really matters in consumer research?

- The number one answer here is “trust in the results”, which covers a multitude of underlying factors. It implies a strong relationship among partners, high-quality sampling and survey techniques, and expert analysis. I would argue that the other highly-rated items: sample/panel quality, proven methodology, and participants' engagement, are all just drivers of the first.

### Which trends are hype and which are game-changers?

- According to the survey, global researchers are most excited about automation, big data, and storytelling from the latest crop of market research buzzwords. I agree with automation—as noted in a [previous post on industry trends](#), there's a place for automating processes that are repetitive or don't require much interpretation. The trick for smart researchers will be knowing where and how to best use it.
- Buckets of e-ink have already been spilled on “storytelling” recently, but for research specifically, I see it as a cry from the end-users of research to make results more engaging, easy to understand and act on, and sticky for their organization. Specific ways to execute that include: a high level of synthesis in reporting (weaving together multiple data points into a cohesive narrative), the use of infographics and other graphical approaches to make data easily digestible, and the integration of direct consumer perspective (e.g. videos, pictures, quotes, etc.).
- In the “hype” category, researchers place: AI, marketplaces, VR/AR, and attribution analytics. I can't help but wonder if AI (artificial intelligence) lands here because people don't know exactly what it means in a research context. If that option were to be renamed machine learning, I feel like it would shift into game-changing territory. Practical applications include: text analytics and sentiment analysis, algorithm-driven online “qualitative” interviewing, and automated facial coding/emotion analysis.

### What are client's unmet needs from research suppliers?

- Number one on the list is “recommending business actions based on the research”, which I think is driven by two factors. One, most supplier-side researchers writing these reports have never worked on the client side so they may not know what an actionable business recommendation really means, or at least, how to frame it in a way that will be compelling within the client organization. Report writing is also typically handled by more junior employees in large research firms. A senior person might swoop in to add

recommendations and present the report, but if they didn't do the deep analysis, are they really in the best position to do that?

- The second reason for this gap is that many client-side researchers don't invest in developing the business knowledge of their supply-side partners. If the client is working with a massive multi-national research firm, it frankly may not be worth their time given high levels of turnover. In my previous corporate roles, I've trained junior supplier partners many times only to have them be transferred to another business by the time they were getting proficient in my category!
- A good solution to this need is building strong, consistent supplier-client partnerships. Personally, I think this is easiest to accomplish with an independent research consultant (I would say that, wouldn't I?!) or a smaller, more boutique research firm. There should be a direct correlation between the amount of time a client invests in educating a supplier about their business and the quality of their business recommendations!

You can learn more by reading the full [GRIT Report](#) (free to download). If you're in the market research industry, I also encourage you to [sign up](#) for the GRIT Panel to participate in future industry surveys and receive advance copies of the reports in your inbox.