

research [r]evolutions

# Solving the innovation problem: Redefining market research innovation



October 2012

## research [r]evolutions

When Vivisum founded the Research (R)evolutions community, we sought to identify trends that are shaping the market research community today and understand how those trends will influence the industry tomorrow. After extensive interviews from our membership of market research executives, we believe this is a time of evolution. As such, market researchers must adapt in order to thrive in a dynamic environment. This series of whitepapers will help illuminate the trends driving this evolution, and how market researchers can advance in their careers by increasing the value of market research.

Research (R)evolutions is a virtual knowledge-sharing consortium created and facilitated by Vivisum Partners. The goal of this consortium is to identify the best practices that enable market intelligence executives to increase the value of their market research and advance in their marketing careers.

Consortium members are engaged in a dialogue to uncover insights around three key topics:

- **Success drivers:** Identifying the practices, processes and tools that enable organizations to increase the value of market research.
- **Innovation:** Understanding the innovative research methods and internal initiatives that enable research professionals to advance in their careers.
- **Vision for the future:** Establishing a vision for the future and exploring how market research organizations should prepare for the future.

For additional details or to secure your membership today, contact Dan Callahan at [dan.callahan@vivisumpartners.com](mailto:dan.callahan@vivisumpartners.com).

# *Solving the innovation problem*

*Innovation is a loaded word in the market research world. Organizations are constantly seeking ways to innovate, and market researchers are often under pressure to be more 'innovative'.*

However, it is important to ask why this innovation is so desirable. In many cases, innovation is the Ferrari of the market research community: alluring even if it serves little practical purpose. Defining innovation as the 'shiny new thing' runs counter to its fundamental utility – improving something that is not working properly. Before trumpeting the virtues of constant innovation, market researchers and their internal stakeholders must be honest with each other about what needs fixing.

The constant push for innovation can cause some tension and anxiety among market researchers. The problem is fundamental to any industry – companies want to be innovative but do not tolerate wasting money on projects that may fail. The "failure is not an option" culture is, in a sense, positive. Companies wish to maximize the value received for their money, and market researchers strive to provide actionable insights to their clients. However, the unwillingness to accept bumps along the road places added pressure on the market researcher. Under this duress, they are less likely to attempt to innovate.

Over the course of our interviews with Research (R)evolutions members, we observed that market researchers often define "innovation" as using new data collection methods. While organizations are placing greater emphasis on this type of innovation, some Research (R)evolutions members are skeptical about the value of methodological innovation. Many feel that methodological innovation presents more risk and adds little marginal value to a project. As some market researchers see it, the problem is not the absence of insights. Rather, it is their organizations' inability to act on those insights.

## ***Innovation 101***

*"Innovation" as commonly defined by the market research community is perhaps misaligned with the market research value proposition. Methodological innovation can help improve the quality and quantity of research insight, but it does little to make those insights more actionable. Given that implementation of insights is what drives research value, we feel it is important to redefine 'innovation' as implementation innovation rather than methodological innovation.*

*This white paper outlines three examples of implementation innovation including workshops, action roadmaps, and accountability plans. By helping stakeholders implement insights, market researchers can evolve from trusted partners to strategic leaders.*

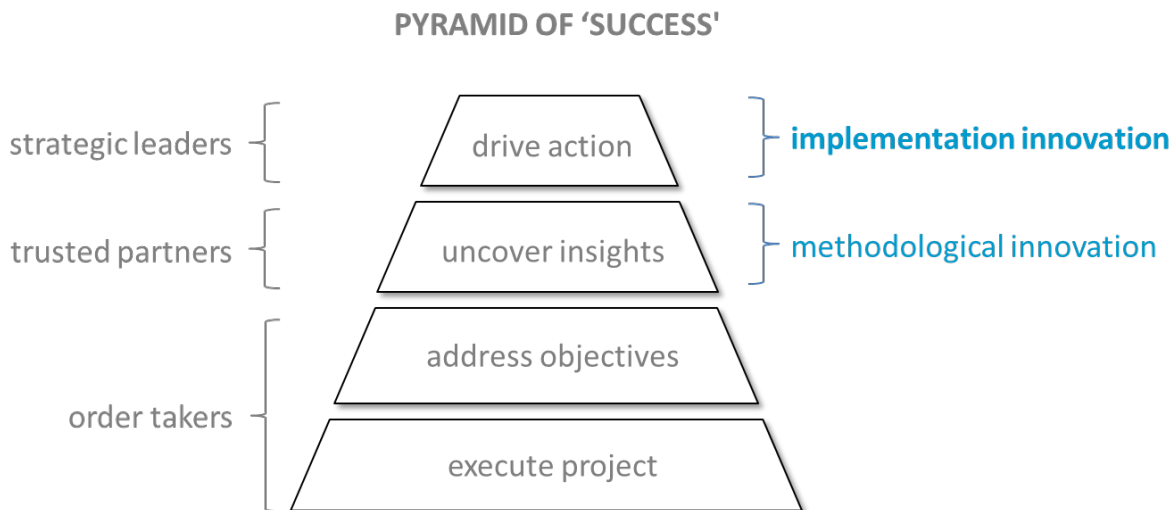
## Redefining Innovation

A redefinition of innovation is an appropriate first step. Our interviews with Research (R)evolutions members suggest that innovation should focus on finding new ways to help stakeholders act on the insights market researchers are already uncovering. To focus on implementation innovation rather than methodological innovation is to change the market research conversation entirely. Instead of thinking about how to accumulate insights, market researchers can begin to think about how to ensure that stakeholders follow through on those insights.

Figure 1 shows the 'Pyramid of Success' for market research projects. In this diagram, driving action stands at the apex of the pyramid, illustrating that organizational action is the ultimate objective of any market research project. In order to achieve this apex of success, it is important to focus on implementation, rather than methodological innovation.

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Figure 1: Implementation innovation focuses on the ultimate measure of market research success



## *Building the Bridge*

Following through on insights is the most difficult part of any market research project. Too often, a market research project does not turn into organizational action. Too often, a market research report is filed away on a hard disk or stored in a desk. Too often, the presentation of research results is a one-way monologue with little dialogue about turning insights into action. Too often, stakeholders leave a research presentation with interesting insights, but no clear plan to implement those insights.

While it is easy for market researchers to abdicate responsibility for whether the organization acts on research insights, market researchers increasingly are taking steps to change the way their stakeholders behave with market research findings. Based on interviews with Research (R)evolutions members, we identified a three-phased approach to solving the implementation problem (Figure 2):

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Figure 2: Solving the implementation problem in 3 steps

### PRESENT



### FUTURE



## Phase 1: Set up stakeholder workshops after a project is complete

*The collaborative workshop environment elevates stakeholder buy-in.*

Workshops help stakeholders to internalize the insights, which is something that is often difficult in the scope of the traditional one hour presentation of research results. Over the course of a multi-hour (or even multi-day) workshop, stakeholders can fully digest the findings through a series of engagement activities and small group discussions.

Additionally, these workshops provide an opportunity for brainstorming on how to bridge the gap between insight and action. The collaborative workshop environment elevates stakeholder buy-in and increases the likelihood that stakeholders will follow through on action items.

## Phase 2: Create an action roadmap

At the conclusion of the workshop, it is often important to create roadmap that outlines a clear plan of action.

This roadmap documents the specific actions to be taken, the people accountable for the action, and the item's due date. Ultimately, the roadmap is the blueprint for articulating ideas formulated in the workshop.

*The roadmap is a blueprint for articulating ideas formulated in the workshop.*

## Phase 3: Create an accountability process

*The accountability process is helpful in assessing the value of a market research engagement.*

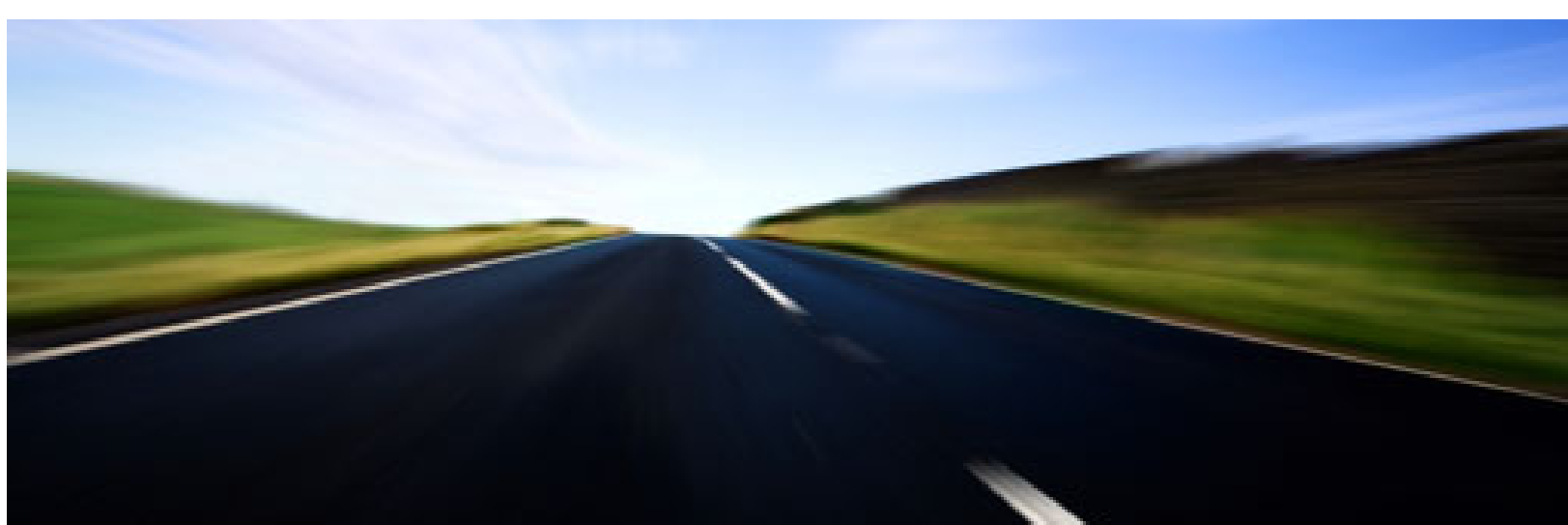
After creating the action roadmap, it is important to have a process in place to hold stakeholders accountable for implementing the roadmap. This process includes holding regular check-in meetings to review the action roadmap, track progress against the roadmap, and revise it as necessary.

In addition to its practical benefits, this process is helpful in assessing the value of a market research engagement. By measuring progress against the roadmap, researchers can document the actions taken as a result of the research.

## *Embarking on a Journey*

We envision the Research (R)evolutions community evolving together into the future. Vivisum sees this initial consortium report as the very first step in our journey to increase the value of market research among our members. We plan to continue to grow the community and hope you will walk this path with us. We anticipate a few next steps in our journey:

- **Webinar Series:** Through the end of this year, we will present a 4-part webinar series. We will also be distributing a series of white papers like this one outlining the webinar findings.
- **New Topic:** Beginning in late 2012, we will identify a new consortium topic for 2013 and we will be seeking your input on which topics you would like to pursue.
- **Workshops:** Beginning in early 2013, we will offer free half-day workshops to help you develop an action plan to implement consortium findings in your organization.
- **Growth:** In the upcoming years, we will continue to grow the membership organically. If you have a market research colleague in mind that would add value to the community, please let us know.



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Insights from Vivisum's Research (R)evolutions

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October 2012  
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