

Chapter 8

Only when you have the killer insight will the
killer creative be born

Michael Frohlich



The best-in-class public relations campaigns – those that deliver beyond stakeholder engagement and media coverage to create lasting behavior change - are grounded in a strong underlying audience insight.

A well-researched and clearly expressed insight is a far greater driver of success than a brilliant ‘PR-able’ idea. Often considered the domain of advertising creative development, insights are equally the backbone of a successful creative PR idea as they provide a fresh understanding of a situation or trend that moves our thinking from what it is to what it means. This is essential if we want a new way of framing a situation that sparks reconsideration and support for change.

So what is a brilliant insight?

An insight immediately makes sense when it arrives and sparks an ‘Aha!’ emotional response. It helps consumers/customers make connections, which they may not have previously had.

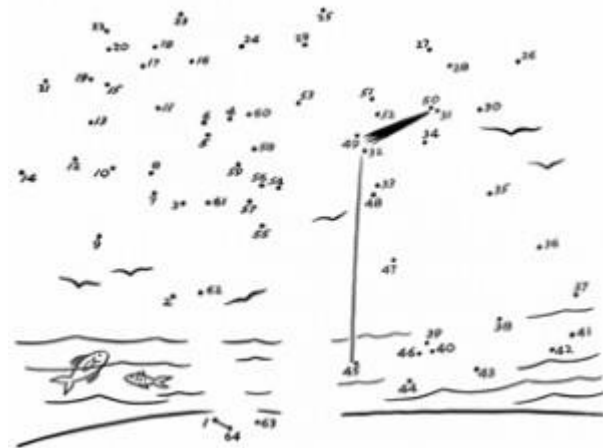
Insights are not merely facts or observations from research, or reading a few online posts. “New mums are under pressure and time poor” or “Dubai consumers trust recommendations from celebrities”.

Great insights come from research, analysis, judgement and experience:

- Research helps us define what it is.
- Insights help us define and interpret why it is and what it means.
- The Creative idea is driven by the connection of these 4 elements, and together they show engagement with stakeholders at points relevant to their work, leisure or family moments where the topic becomes relevant.

So how do you build an insight?

If you understand how to play “join the dots” then you have the basic skills to build an insight. Once you’re given the numbers, and you start to connect them, the picture becomes obvious. Digging for insights is essentially searching for the data, numbers and opinions then applying non-linear thinking to spot connections and unique opportunities.



So where do you get the numbers from?

Start by reviewing all existing knowledge and consumer research your client/brand may already have. Often public relations professionals don't see the relevance of their consumer research to PR messaging, so they may not think to review or share the research with their agency. Start by seeking out existing knowledge. Then immerse yourself in consumer behaviour – their likes and frustrations, do's and don't's, their true behaviour in the category.

Try to experience the category as they do. Social media listening is a great first step. Start with a conversation audit to understand how the category or brand is described. Use social media tools for instant online research, for example, Cadbury UK is very clever at using its Google+ page and Hangout groups with trusted customers for new insights.

The most critical step is getting out of the office to find the dots. So get out from behind your computer and go on 'home visits' to see how the category/brand is used in situ. You don't need a full ethnographic study to immerse yourself in your audience – just dive in and see it for yourself. For example, in-home visits for the room air freshener category uncovered that plug-in air fresheners are often concealed behind sofas so consumers don't notice when they run out.

Work in your brand's store for a day as a sales trainee, or in your client's office to observe what they discuss about the category. Accompany a sales rep for a day, especially in B2B and pharmaceuticals where experiencing the category directly may not be an option. If it's a brand with a consumer call centre, ask to listen in on their call centre line for a few hours to understand brand frustrations and the current tone of voice. And most importantly- interview customers / consumers – ask them what you want to know.

How do you bring it all together?

David Ogilvy said, “Stuff your conscious mind with information, then unhook your rational thought process.” All the rich data and information collected needs time to percolate, be given time to create a story. It can be helpful to use a ‘war room’ – a dedicated room where all the ‘dots’ can be plastered around so you can visually seek out the connections.

Talk team members through the data gathered and listen for their questions and comments to see what they reveal. Read campaign case studies on databases such as warc.com to learn how similar marketing challenges were tackled in other countries or categories. And sleep on it for a couple of days to see what emerges.

What does an insight look like on paper?

Simple. An insight should look simple, read simply and translate simply into your planning.

Expressing your insights is, in effect, a copywriting exercise and often benefits from working with a professional copywriter.

1. Short, sharp sentences
2. Be category specific – get to the point versus vague general issues like feeling “time poor”
3. Avoid hard sell – it’s an insight, not a selling line
4. Use emotion - get an edge to the insight in a way that makes consumers respond with “yes, that’s so true, and if I’m honest I’ve never thought of it like that myself”.

The time invested in killer insight development speeds up the idea generation stage considerably, allowing you to spend more time on generating many more killer creative ideas.

Michael’s Top 3 Measurement Tips

- ✓ Be PROVOCATIVE. Abandon all goals for broad coverage. Aim for the right impact only. Become obsessive about "how did this change behaviour?" not how much coverage it got. Design communications programs from the outset to drive behaviour change, not clippings.
- ✓ Speak the language of the boardroom. Always strive to measure business outcomes not PR outputs enabling results to be ‘banked’ (ie. not clippings or AVE). This may be a longer term outcome (eg. new leads to closing deals 12 months later) or corporate reputation gains that open up access to new resources or cost savings from deeper employee engagement and reduced staff turnover.
- ✓ Reserve campaign budget for quality impact and outcome measurement to prove business impact.



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