

One part resonance one part edge

How Philips built a better business
with a new recipe for validating
consumer insights

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Abstract:

Philips transformed its business from being technology driven to consumer driven, recognizing that this was their best strategy to create breakthrough products and winning communications programs. This paper shares how Philips, in changing their organization, crafted a completely new platform through collaborative efforts with BrainJuicer that could redefine and validate consumer insights effectively, ensuring that only the most potent would be carried through to guide new product development.

Introduction: An Organizational Shift in a Major Organization

Philips was in trouble. For years it had prided itself on being first and foremost an engineering company. Indeed, every CEO in the history of the company had come from either corporate research, lab research or research and development departments. But the company that had developed so many of the twentieth century's technological advances was beginning to realise that it was not connecting with the people it hoped would buy its products. Philips' management recognized that a revolutionary change was needed in the way it structured itself; that it needed to put consumers at the heart of their business.

Philips was forced to take stock and redesign their entire organizational structure to ensure that everything they did resonated with their market. The business was spread across many different sectors and categories, but it needed a single unifying promise to express its new consumer-centric belief. They examined their four core competencies; healthy living, personal care, home living and interactive living, and arrived at 'Sense and Simplicity'.

At the time, Philips felt the power of marketing was intended to be project management rather than actual consumer focused. Deciding to instead change their organization to centre around their customer's Philips did a 180 degree change by defining what areas they currently felt confident in, which areas they wanted to tackle, and which areas they might have a competitive edge.

Philips began talking with international market research agency, BrainJuicer in 2004. They were brought together by a shared desire for a more rigorous method for testing insights. They first worked together on a number of small scale insights projects, but later their collaboration would develop into a partnership that would see BrainJuicer taking responsibility for all consumer insights testing, globally.

It was in 2005 that work began on a quantitative product that would validate consumer insights. But how do you go about devising a technique that can measure the potency of an insight? How do you even define an insight?

A Philips Case Study

Let us begin our discussion on how and why insights are crucial for understanding consumers with a case study at the crux of Philips' transformation. Philips had launched a technologically advanced fruit and vegetable juicer, one that was capable of delivering 600watts whereas the then highest powered juicers could only operate at 450-500watts. The juicer was well designed and marketed as the most powerful juicing engine available. But sales performance was not nearly as strong Philips had expected. So Philips approached their consumers through a series of consumer-brand communities and asked them what exactly they wanted in a juicer and why the idea of juicing fruit and vegetables appealed to them. The consumers responded saying the juicer represented and helped them to achieve a healthy lifestyle. Philips reviewed their marketing and moved from communicating the power of the motor and communicated instead that the powerful motor enabled you to extract more juice and therefore more vitamins from the fruit and vegetables you were juicing. This change in approach has led to a reversal of the juicer's fortunes; it is now one of Philips' most successful SKUs, with almost two million juicers sold in Europe alone. Had Philips not taken the time to speak with their consumers and understand how they were approaching their product, they may never have discovered why the product was not selling as they had hoped.

An insight such as this can turn around the fortunes of a product or indeed a brand. So how do we ensure that insights are articulated in such a way that they connect on deep, intimate levels with consumers?

Why great insights are like a fridge – Open them up and a light goes on!

Technical expertise is no longer enough to maintain a company's competitive edge. A company's edge will reside in how well it knows the people in its target market and how well it can turn that knowledge to good effect through emotional communication and develop an easy intimacy with its audience.

For Philips, this shift meant an entire overhaul of how they approached insights and it all started with a new definition for what an insight should do.

Defining Insights

How do we define an insight? Broadly, the market research industry seems to agree that an insight is a pertinent observation that demonstrates an understanding of or an intimacy with the consumer. Furthermore, we seem as an industry to agree that an insight reveals something to the consumer that they didn't up until that moment recognise for themselves, but which immediately makes sense to them once it is revealed, and which sparks an 'A-ha!' emotional response. A good insight should lead the consumer to think about everyday things with a new curiosity and to make connections that were not obvious to them before. And a really strong insight can change attitudes and behaviours.

In his excellent exposition of what makes a good consumer insight, Jeremy Bullmore explains that good insights:

'[...] because of the immediacy – because they evoke as well as inform – behave like the best viral ads on the internet. They are infectious; we only have to hear them once to remember them, to apply them, to pass them on to others.'¹

The difficulty of defining the term 'insight' is revealed in the numerous attempts by the research industry to explain what an insight is not. We have no doubt all heard at various times that an insight is not a statement of need, a consumer wish, an observation or a truism, it is not obvious but latent. It is not a fact, neither is it a new product idea, and it most definitely should not be a blatant attempt to sell more product.

When attempting to define an insight, we have found it is better to describe the response that we seek than to define the term itself. Most definitions attempt to capture what an insight is rather than what it does. For example, the definition we used to use was, 'A fresh, penetrating truth that resonates and excites people' and you have probably heard some variation on this theme. The problem is it may be entirely accurate but it fails to move you or give insight creators a clear target to aim at. Defining what an insight is becomes too rational, whereas defining the effect it should have on people, is instantly more meaningful and much easier for teams to work with. In fact, we felt the ideal definition should try and have the same effect as a great insight i.e. the light should go on! You can be the judge of whether it achieves this, but the definition we now use is:

“Wow, you really understand me – almost better than I understand myself!”

The two parts are critical, as they represent the two essential components of a great insight; resonance and edge. ‘Resonance’, almost like a musical tuning fork, is the “Wow, you really understand me” half. This is where you have managed to connect with the target audience with something highly relevant to them and their lives. This is the half that good companies and experienced researchers and marketers tend to do well. The second half is ‘Edge’, the “almost better than I understand myself” part. This is the really difficult part but also what lifts an insight from being entirely mundane to being moving, meaningful and potent. Not surprisingly ‘Edge’ is the part we find even good companies and experienced researchers and marketers currently do quite poorly. You know you have hit a great insight when both parts work in harmony and people nod their heads wildly in surprise and delight and say something like, “yes, yes you’re right, that’s so true and if I’m honest I’ve never quite articulated that way myself”. It brings to the surface something intangible that the consumer had perhaps only previously subconsciously recognized. Whereas, if you have ‘resonance’ without ‘edge’, as in “it’s important to give my children five fruit and veg a day”, it really doesn’t take you anywhere and would most likely lead to the response ‘so what, tell me something new’. Great insights need both ‘resonance’ and ‘edge’ to make the light go on, as in the insight behind the Philips Juicer product.

How do you measure the strength of an insight?

In spite of an insight’s importance, the exploration and evaluation of a consumer insight usually takes place during an internal client session amongst brand teams. Existing good practice in exploring and evaluating an insight platform might run something like this (this is broadly speaking the approach of one major multinational we work with):

- ◆ Brand team reviews existing knowledge, experience trends
- ◆ Team immerses itself in consumer behaviours and attitudes
- ◆ Team workshops the observations gathered and arrives at a set of insights
- ◆ Team then lays out a set of insights on the floor
- ◆ Team assesses common themes that emerge
- ◆ One overarching insight is created
- ◆ Insight is sense-checked within broader business
- ◆ Insight is where possible checked amongst consumers in a focus group

That the insight is *only sometimes* checked amongst consumers (and usually amongst a small group of consumers in qualitative research) and almost never checked amongst a large sample of category users is quite astonishing, considering how valuable great insights are for new product development and campaigns. How can the marketer be sure that he or she is using the most compelling articulation of the underlying need in their product proposition?

In 2005, BrainJuicer worked to develop a quantitative means of validating the insights that are used in the development of communication platforms and in the development of consumer product propositions. It was developed initially for use by Philips, but the technique is now used by many other multinationals around the world. This quantitative technique was developed to ensure that only insights that are relevant, fresh and exciting are carried through. Validating insights quantitatively has now become a key stage gate in the development of new propositions within

Philips, and marketers have grown accustomed to demonstrating that their insights are 'validated' before being able to take their proposition forward. Indeed, their bonuses depend upon it.

When constructing the technique, it was first necessary to decide what an insight needed to achieve. BrainJuicer developed a number of closed-ended questions that would determine the ability of any insight to convey to the consumer a need or frustration that had previously gone unacknowledged, and which would therefore generate an emotional response for the consumer. The dimensions our questions were based on were:

- ◆ Relevance
- ◆ Ability to identify with the statement
- ◆ Excitement
- ◆ Freshness
- ◆ Clarity
- ◆ Perception of truth

Open-ended questions were also included to understand associations with the insight and any problems that were inherent in its articulation (dislikes). This was included to give direction for improvement, should an insight not validate.

After a number of tests, it was soon possible to benchmark new insights against a set of norms for each of our closed-ended measures. In the first iteration of our model, each insight was plotted against the norms database on a matrix to illustrate their 'potency', as illustrated in Fig. 1.

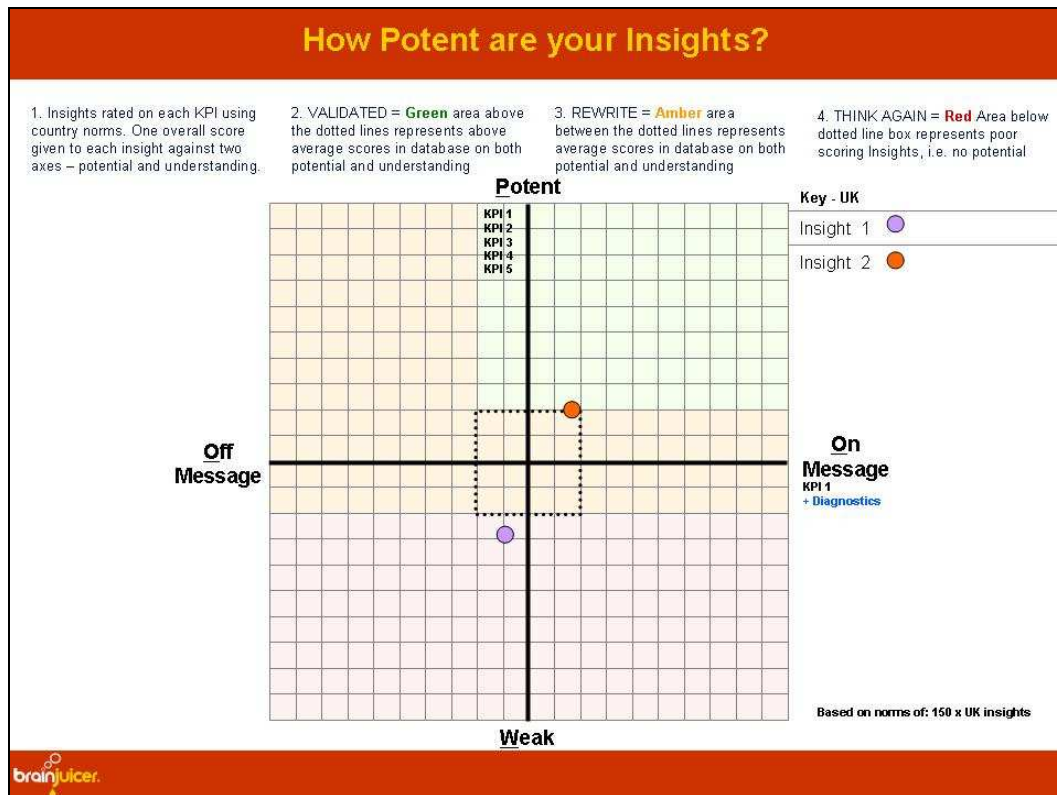


Figure 1

Potent insights, which achieved strong scores relative to norms on all measures, would be plotted in the top right hand quadrant, with weaker insights falling in other quadrants, either because they were not clear (not on message), because they weren't able to ensure a connection with the respondent (not potent), or both.

Raising the Bar and the New Model

In a yearly review of the insights tested for Philips, we felt that the potency analysis was not delivering on what we increasingly felt strongly were the two important dimensions of an insight – resonance and edge. Analysis of our norms database also revealed that certain measures were more discriminating than others, and it felt that a new potency model was required to ensure that future insight validations took this learning into account. An improved version of the potency analysis was developed (see Fig. 2). The two axes against which insights were plotted were now defined as '**resonance**' and '**edge**'. To validate, insights needed to demonstrate that they were both relevant and engaging on the one hand, and were fresh on the other. If they failed on the first count, they clearly weren't speaking to consumers, if they failed on the second count, they were likely to be eliciting the response 'yes, but so what?' – a result you might expect from an insight along the lines of 'It's important to give your children 5 fruit and veg a day', as outlined previously. In other words, the means of validating the response reflected our overall belief that an insight should inspire the response:

“Wow, you really understand me (resonance) – almost better than I understand myself! (edge)”

Three of our measures comprise the 'resonance' and three comprise the 'edge' axis. Insights are plotted for potency by referencing each measure against its norm. Some measures are known to be more discriminating than others and are given a greater weight. The extent to which the insight performs overall enables us to plot where it falls relative to our norms (the centre of the grid is effectively 'the norm'), as shown in Fig. 2.

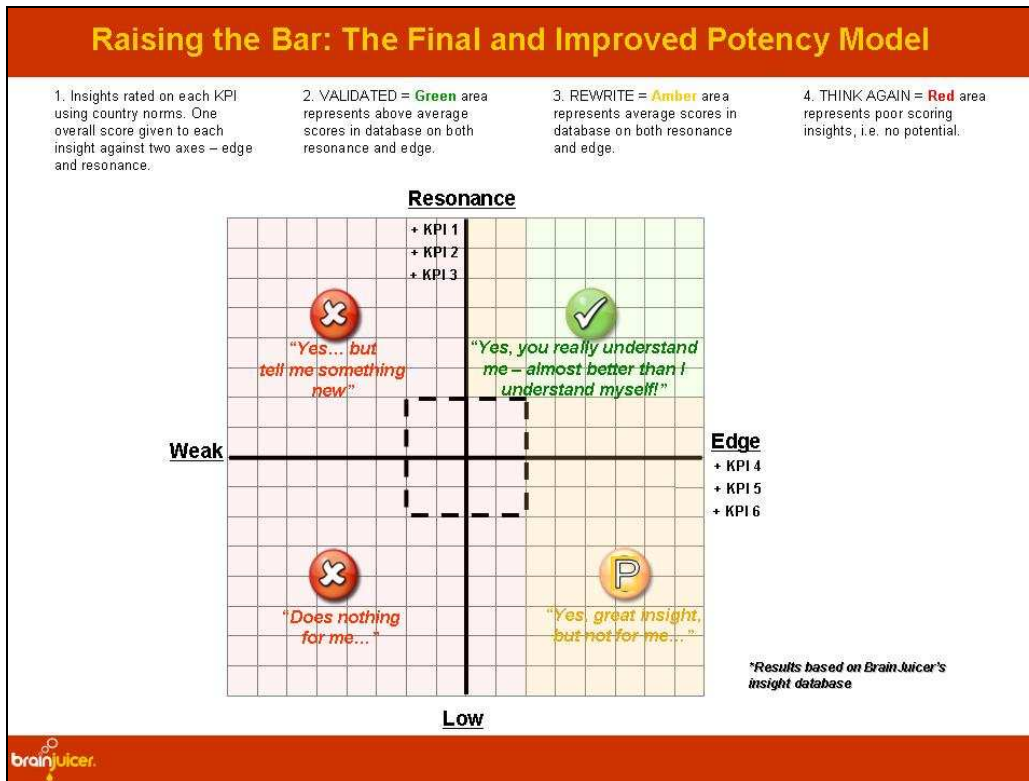


Figure 2

Validation of the approach

Let's examine now a few case studies, each demonstrating the effectiveness of plotting insights against axes of 'resonance' and edge'.

Dove Case Study

If an insight were ever to validate it would surely be this one. It formed the bedrock of an internationally successful campaign and enabled the brand to grow and extend into new categories. We set out to test retrospectively in 2007, for our own purposes of experimentation, the insight that underpinned the campaign. The insight we used was worded as follows:

"Most beauty products bombard women with images of unrealistic and unattainable perfection, almost deliberately designed to reduce self-esteem for their own ends. Wouldn't it be great to have beauty products that celebrated reality and real beauty of women rather than selling a beauty myth?"

We tested this insight with women in the UK, ran the results through our potency model and the insight was validated, with both edge and resonance, showing how we would have been able to provide re-assurance to the brand team that they were using an insight that would indeed resonate with women and have the necessary edge for an enormously successful and award-winning campaign. (See Fig. 3).

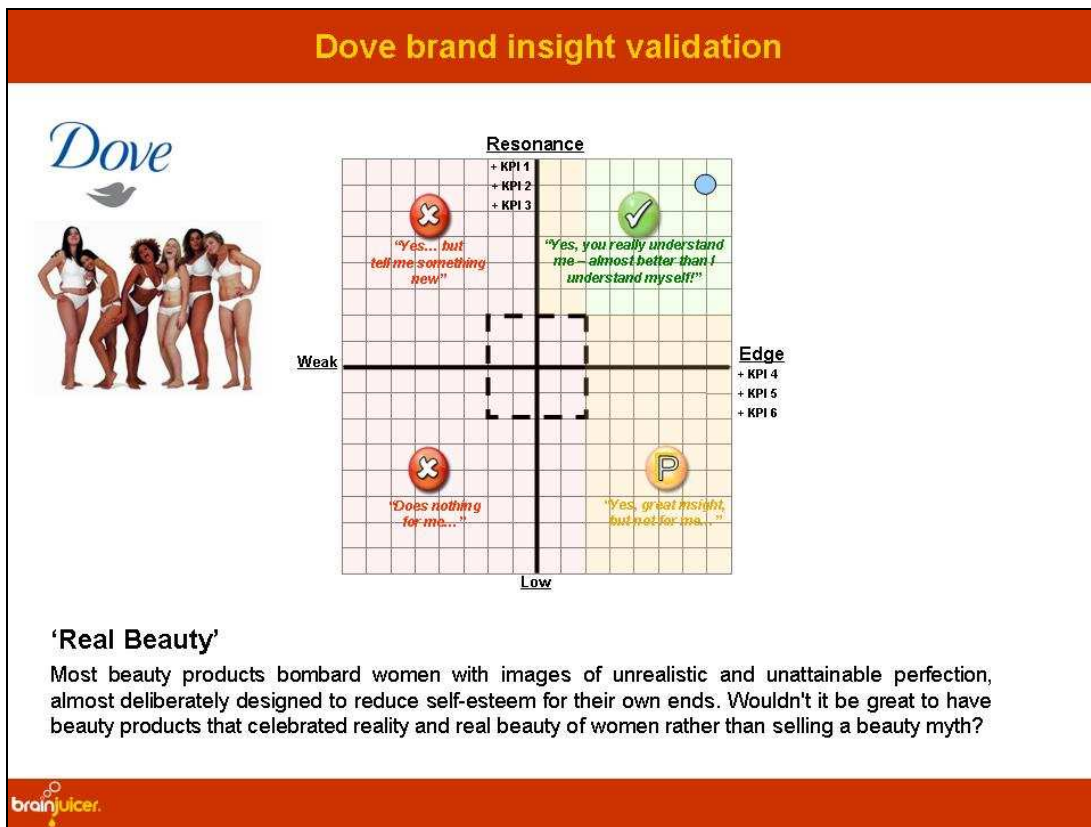


Figure 3

Digital Photo Frame Case Study

As the Dove insight was not product-specific, Philips wanted to test their insight for a digital photo frame in order to verify whether insights concerning individual products could also be validated.

It ran as follows:

"Photos not only capture and trigger memories, but help to tell who you are. However, in today's digital age, almost all of my pictures are stored on my PC. I feel like I'm being denied the ability to relive the special moments of my life and for others to get to know me. I wish I could show and share my digital pictures and once again feel them surrounding me in my home."

This initial insight did not test well and people found it difficult to relate to the insight at all. The open-ended diagnostic measures helped us to identify that the insight simply wasn't held to be true

"I don't feel this way and share my photos with my family & friends" (27%)

"I share and print my photos, so the statement is false" (7%)

"I use my computer as a digital photo album, and I can share my photos online" (7%)

and overlaid the frustration...

"I dislike the way it phrases the concept. I don't feel like we are 'denied'" (16%)

It was felt that an insight around gifting would be more likely to resonate. The insight was re-framed and moved away from talking about the technical problems of data storage to expressing the emotional benefits of giving and was re-tested, thus:

"To me, a gift that has a personal touch is wonderful. This signifies that someone has thought of me and created a gift that could only be for me. A photo is one of the most personal things you can give. The photo triggers a memory, the frame is the personal touch and together it creates a memorable and special gift. I wish it was possible to make the gift of a photo even more personal."

Scores improved dramatically and the insight validated. The improved response that the new insight evoked and the emotional connection it forged were clear in both the scores and in the respondents' open-ended answers:

"I agree 100% with that! I try to choose my gifts with each person in mind" (22%)

"That is so true of me. I want to see people enjoy the gifts I buy" (11%)

The improvement in the scores from one insight to the next is shown in the potency chart, Fig. 4. The insight went on to form the backbone of marketing communication for the product. The ultimate gondola end 'gift occasion' marketing communication can also be seen.

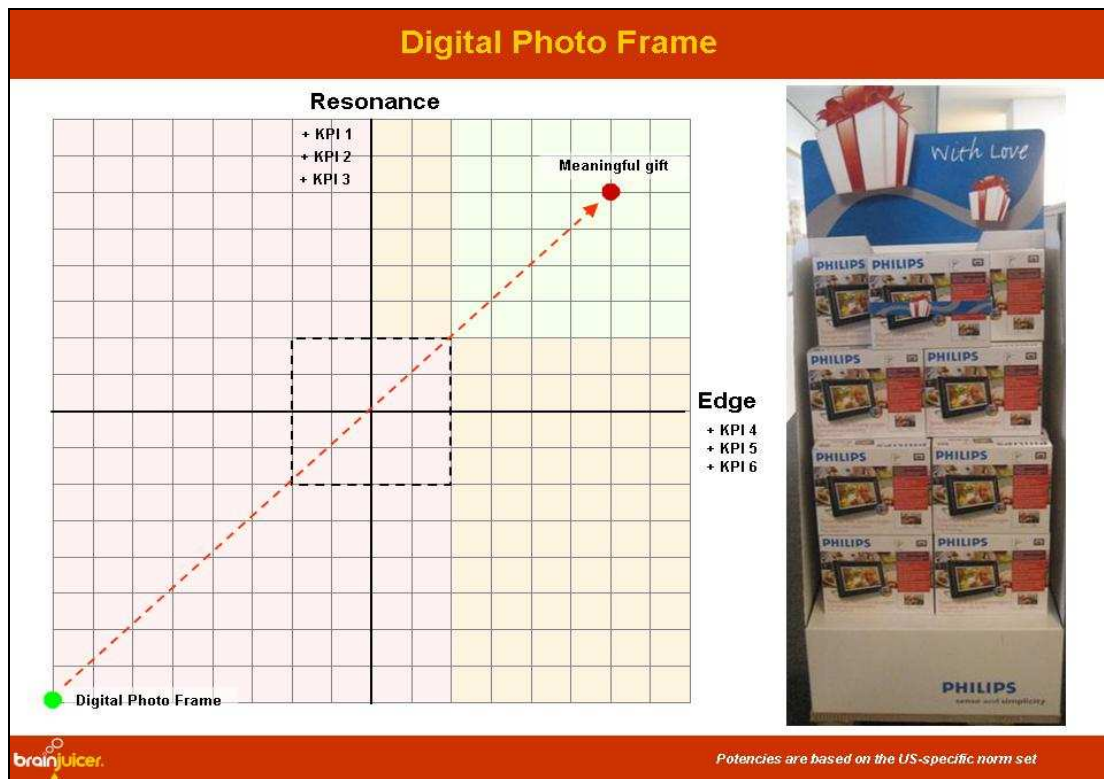


Figure 4

VOIP Calling Case Study

A further example of how insights can be tested quantitatively and improvements measured comes in the form of an insight around VOIP (Voice Over Internet Protocol) calls – in other words free voice calls made over the internet. The first articulation of the insight read as follows:

"I'm a regular Skype user and I think it's great. But I find it very annoying being unreachable for my contacts when my PC is off, or having to start my PC to make a call. I wish I could have Skype "always on" like my regular phone, even when my PC is turned off."

Testing showed that the insight lost the reader in the technical jargon of the second sentence, and the articulation of the consumer frustration and its possible solution was found to be confused.

"I have no opinion since I have never heard of the product" (33%)

"Just wish I knew what Skype was." (8%)

"What is Skype?" (8%)

"The fact that this statement doesn't make much sense and kind of hurts the brain" (3%)

It did not validate. The insight was re-framed to make it easier to follow, outlining the desire for a normal home phone that could take advantage of free calls via the internet. It was re-tested, and reframing the idea in this way, hiding the technology, meant that the idea was clear, resonated and sounded much fresher. The idea became much more immediate, sprang out from the page and was validated. (See Fig. 5).

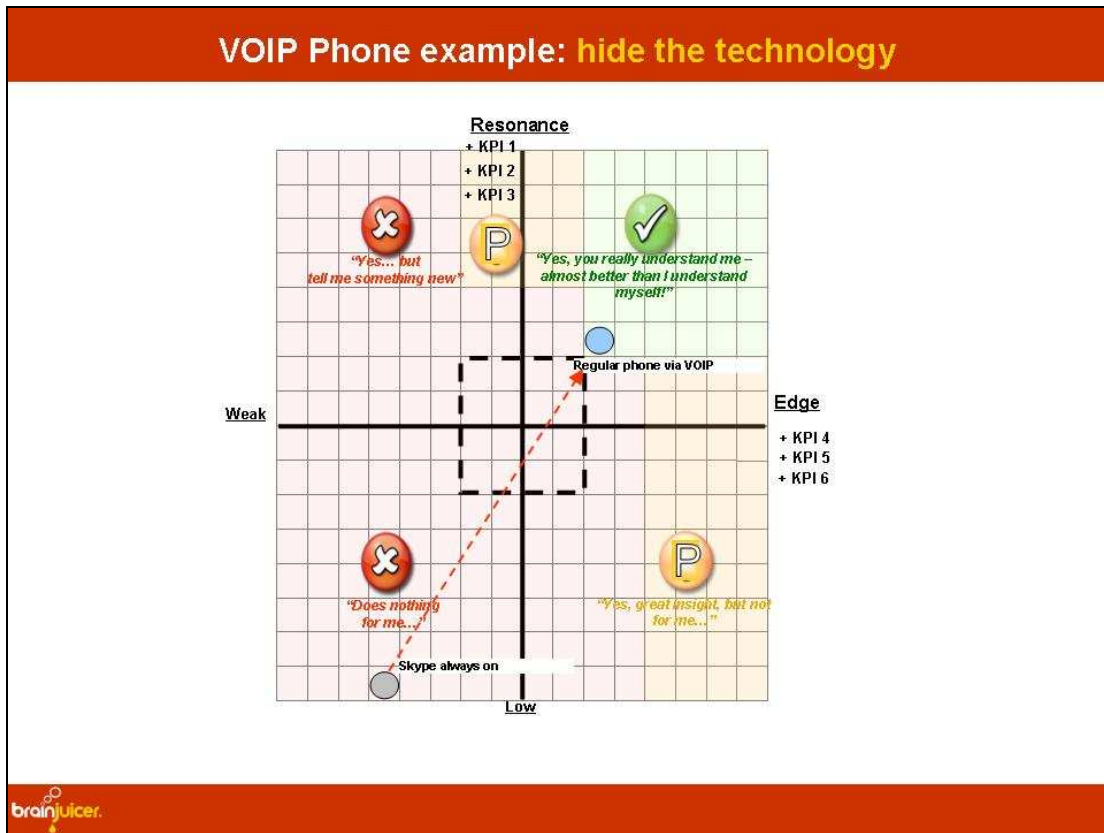


Figure 5

These two examples show how initially weak insights can be improved for greater resonance and edge, and how the improvement can be plainly demonstrated for all to see through quantitative testing.

Testing insights for Philips has provided a powerful learning feedback loop for the company; over time it has been possible to see the strength of Philips' insights improve. And improved insights have led to improved concept test scores, maximising return on investment for the company. Over a period of 3 years, the process of testing and validating insights in this way, and the feedback loop that it has ensured, has meant that the rate at which insights have been validated in one particular division has improved sharply, as illustrated in Fig. 6.

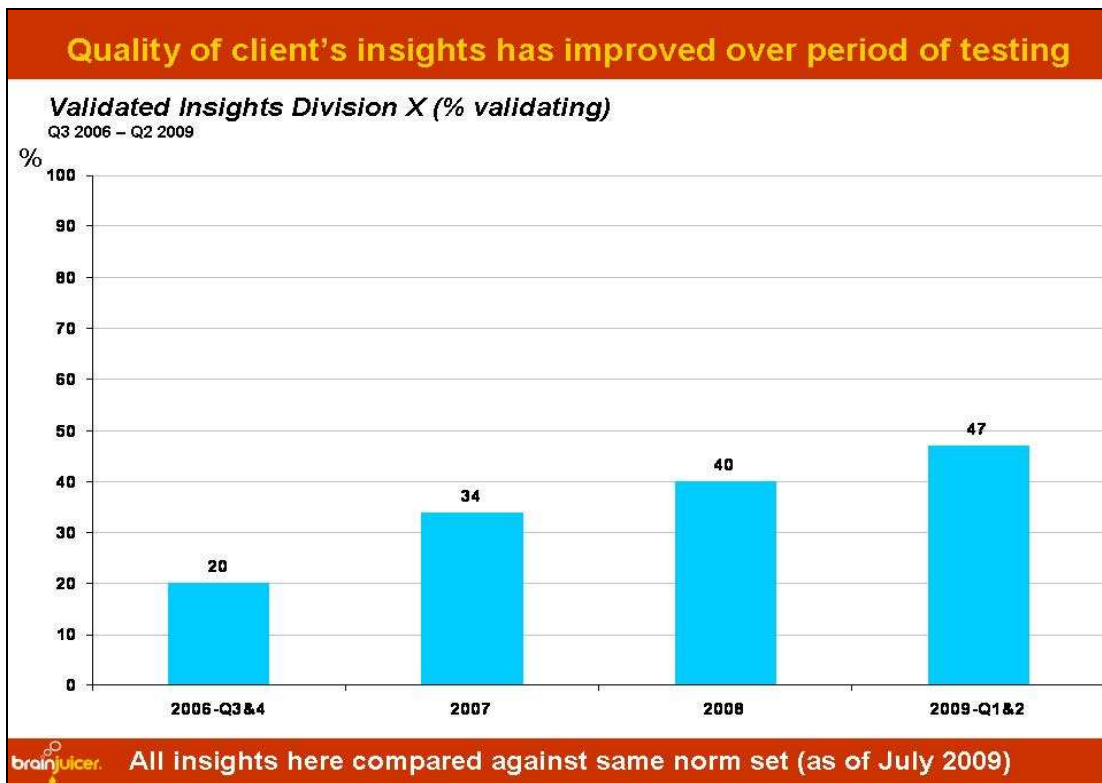


Figure 6

What role does an insight's articulation play?

When talking about insights, Bullmore (2005) stresses the importance of language in communicating an idea. He asserts:

"[...] the language you use is not arbitrary and inconsequential; for an insight to have real potency, the language in which it is couched is at least as important as the inner truth itself. For an insight to have real potency, literal accuracy is less important than its power to evoke."²

In other words, it is not always so much what you say, as how you say it. With experience of testing nearly 2,400 consumer insights, we felt this to be true and so, with this thought in mind, we undertook an analysis of our database to understand the impact of structure, content and language on the effectiveness of the insights we had tested. Our analysis shows that the articulation of the insight does indeed have a bearing on its success.

Insights from the UK database were sorted on their strength – a combined score from the 6 key measures that make up their potency score. The strongest 10% (all of which had been validated) and the weakest 10% of insights on the UK database were identified (108 insights in total). Each was coded up to indicate how the insight worked across a number of variables that we felt might have a bearing on success from our experience of insights testing and on hypotheses that have often been put to us by our clients.

The insights were coded up to deal with various issues of structure, content and language by two researchers, each checking the other's work afterwards for consistency. Where inconsistencies were found, the researchers discussed the discrepancies and arrived at a mutual agreement. Neither person knew which insights had achieved high scores and which had achieved poor scores. It is acknowledged that the exercise is subjective to a certain extent, but subjectivity has been minimised as much as possible through the quality steps we took. The findings are not based on the whole database, but analysis of 108 insights is thought to be sufficient to draw up some helpful guidelines. Our findings have resulted in six key learnings, which form the basis for the rest of this paper.

Structure your insight for success

First, insights were coded to establish whether their structure had any effect on their success. Three types of structure were identified as being commonly used:

1. *Positive situation – negative frustration – positive resolution*, e.g. *"I like the longer-lasting results of wet-shaving, but it can cause skin irritation or, worse, infection from ingrown hair, which is very unattractive and embarrassing. I wish there was a way to remove hair for longer that didn't cause irritation and ingrown hair."*

2. *Negative frustration – positive resolution*, e.g. *"Waiting to see a doctor at the hospital is a nervous time and medical advisory posters on the waiting room walls make me even more anxious about my condition. I wish hospital waiting rooms provided a more calming environment for patients and that advisory information was only provided after you'd seen the doctor."*

3. *Positive situation – positive resolution*, e.g. *"Showing a real interest in children when they are young, asking them questions and helping them to arrive at the answers themselves all helps in their development. Formal school education is great, I just wish I had a readily available source of interesting and fun ideas at home to develop their natural curiosity and build on what they learn at school."*

Most insights we test tend to follow the first structure outlined above, but our analysis points quite clearly to the second insight structure as being the most effective. Fig. 7 shows how strong insights are much more likely than unsuccessful insights to lead with the frustration first, without setting the context with an introductory sentence – 41% of successful insights are structured this way whereas only 20% of unsuccessful insights are structured in this way. Unsuccessful insights are much more likely to adhere to sentence structures (1) and (3) outlined above than successful insights.

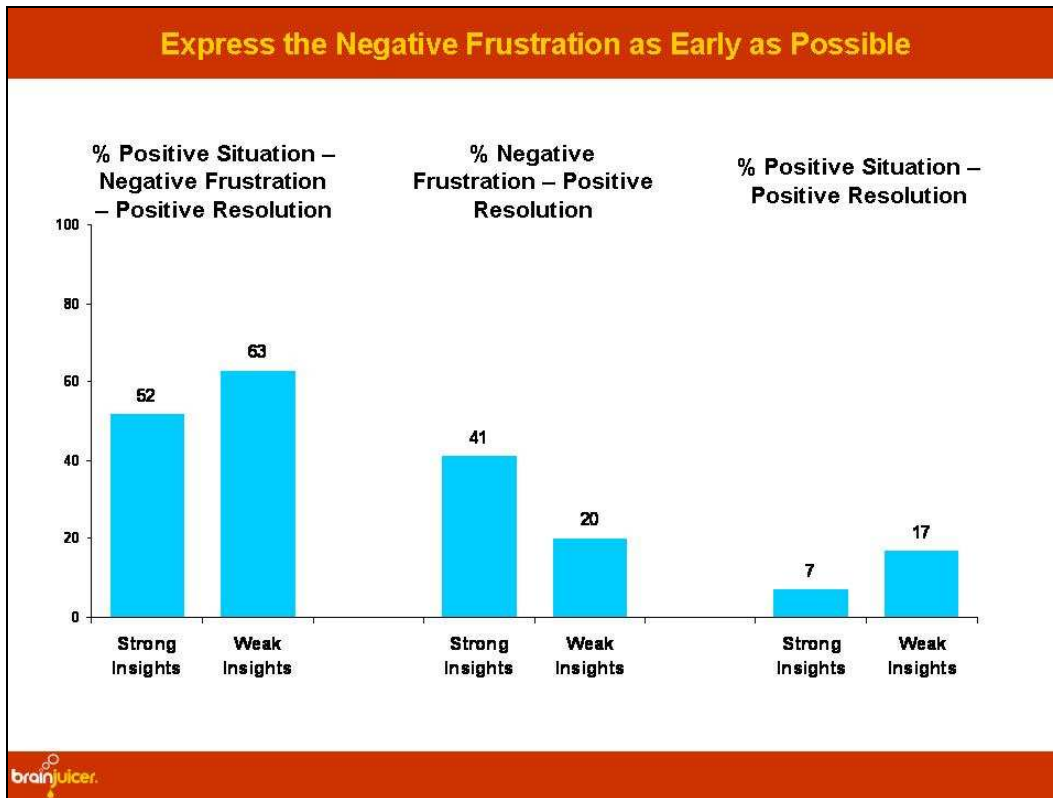


Figure 7

The table in Fig. 8 shows the correlation between the presence of each sentence structure type and positive scores on each of the key measures. Sentence structure type (2) – negative frustration followed by positive solution – is positively correlated with stronger scores on all key measures. Conversely, sentence structure types (1) and (3) are negatively correlated with higher scores on all key measures.

Keep sentences short – too many words can undermine clarity

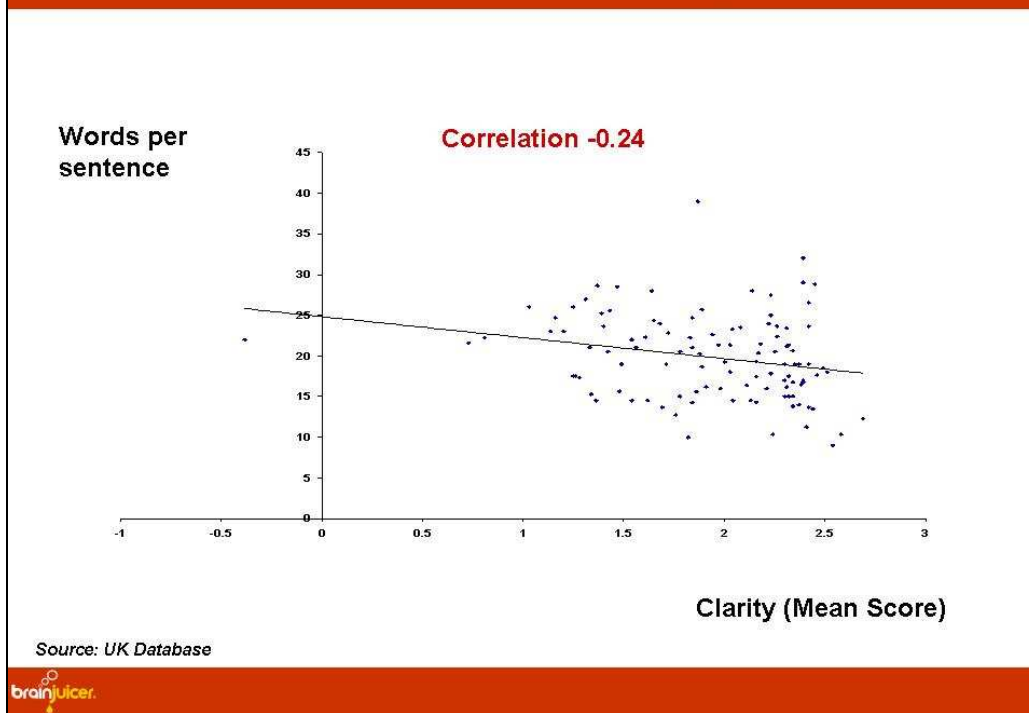


Figure 8

Short, Sharp Sentences Work Better

It felt to us that shorter insights might work better than longer ones. After all, this is usually the case in concept testing. But would this be the case? A count of the number of words and number of sentences that made up each insight enabled us to look at the length and pace (average number of words per sentence) of the insight.

Our results clearly indicate that longer sentences result in a lack of clarity and freshness. A long-winded insight is unlikely to sound like a new and exciting way of looking at something! The scatter plot in Fig. 8 shows how clarity deteriorates with increasing average numbers of words per sentence.

There is, interestingly, a suggestion that successful insights are made up of a greater number of shorter sentences than unsuccessful insights. Brevity and succinctness of expression are important, with one idea per sentence the hallmark of successful insights, even if this means more sentences are used overall.

Needs or Frustrations Should be as Category-Specific as Possible

A question clients often ask us is how specific to the category in hand should an insight be? It is commonly held that insights need to be broader than just the specific category of interest. We set out to test this hypothesis in our analysis by looking at the relationship between successful insights and how category specific they were.

Our analysis shows that successful insights are more likely to be *category specific* than unsuccessful insights in the way that they frame the consumer frustration. A

much higher proportion of successful insights relate to a specific category behaviour or attitude, and furthermore, a greater proportion of successful insights allude to a specific category occasion or activity than unsuccessful insights. A high proportion of weak insights rest on a broader insight that is not specific to the category (see Fig. 9).

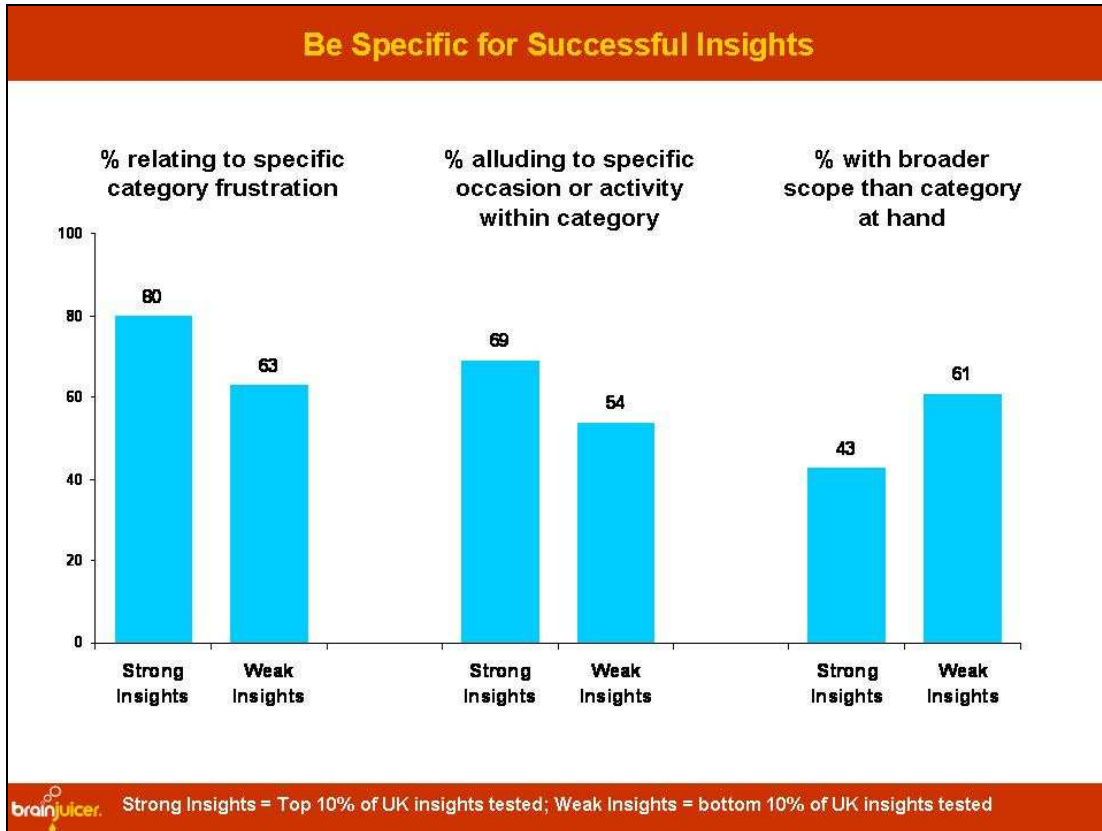


Figure 9

A penetrating insight will relate to attitudes or behaviours within the specific category at hand. Much as an observational comedian is able to connect with his audience by highlighting specific habits and annoyances that we accept day after day without questioning, a good insight can connect with us by revealing a frustration or need that has hitherto gone unacknowledged. The more specific the observation or insight is, the better it is. If a particular occasion or activity is outlined within the insight, it is more likely to resonate.

Unsuccessful insights are much more likely to rely on broad and non category-specific observations. If an insight rests on an observation that does not come specifically from the category at hand, it will lack the freshness required to be a really great insight, because the chances are that it is already a commonly acknowledged truth or an observation that the respondent is likely to have come across before. In short, insights that aren't category specific are likely to be dismissed as platitudes. Insights which are specific have both greater resonance and greater edge than those that do not.

Avoid the Hard-Sell!

If being specific is important when outlining the frustration within an insight, the opposite is true when alluding to the product solution. Analysis shows that it does not pay to outline the product solution in any great detail; it is better instead to hint at the product solution or, better still, an improved consumer experience. A greater proportion of unsuccessful insights outline the product solution in the insight itself (see Fig. 10).

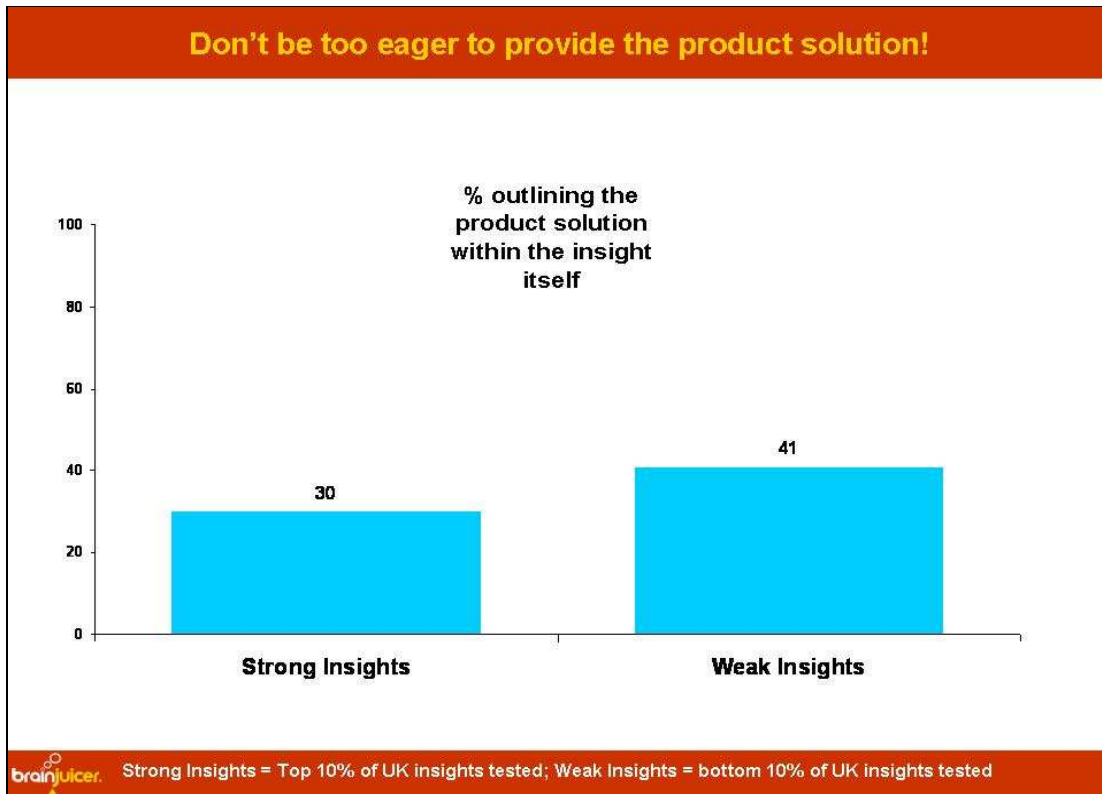


Figure 10

An eagerness to outline the benefit of the product solution too early, before the full implications of the insight itself have had chance to dawn on the respondent is likely to irritate the respondent, cause the respondent to *challenge the truth* of the statement and *result in lower relevance and excitement scores*.

The way that the product solution is introduced is also important. If it is heralded with a 'wouldn't it be great if there were a product that...' statement, it is less likely to resonate (see Fig. 11). People do not like to have words put in their mouths or to feel manipulated, and this kind of expression tries to do just that. It is better instead to be direct and simply state 'I wish I could/there were a product that...' or 'it would be nice if [...]'.

That said, our experience shows that leaving the respondent with a sense that a solution is possible is important; leaving them with nothing but a frustration or problem is unlikely to work well.

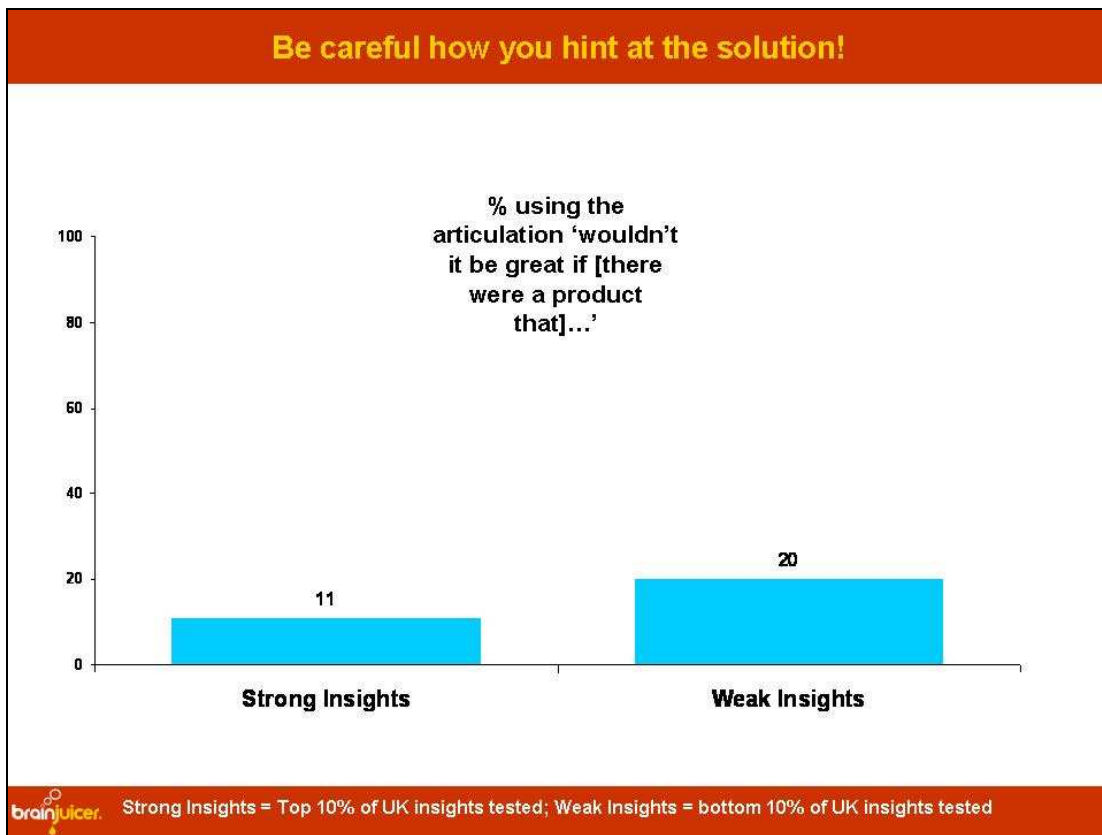


Figure 11

Don't Patronise or Invite the Consumer to Patronise Others

A number of the insights we have tested have incorporated elements that suggest an incapability or even ignorance on the part of the respondent. There are also those which, if agreed with, would suggest a sense of arrogance on the part of the respondent. We wanted to see whether these two things would have a bearing on effectiveness. The results show that patronising respondents or inviting respondents to patronise others is likely to lead to failure.

Analysis of our database shows that expressions such as 'I find it difficult to' do not work well, leaving the respondent to mentally counter 'no, I don't' or 'that's just not true'. Similarly, expressions that revolve around enjoying and displaying success or showing off to friends are unlikely to evoke empathy (at least in the UK!). More unsuccessful insights imply ignorance/lack of ability than successful ones, and the implication of a sense of superiority on behalf of the respondent is also more common among weaker insights (see Fig. 12).

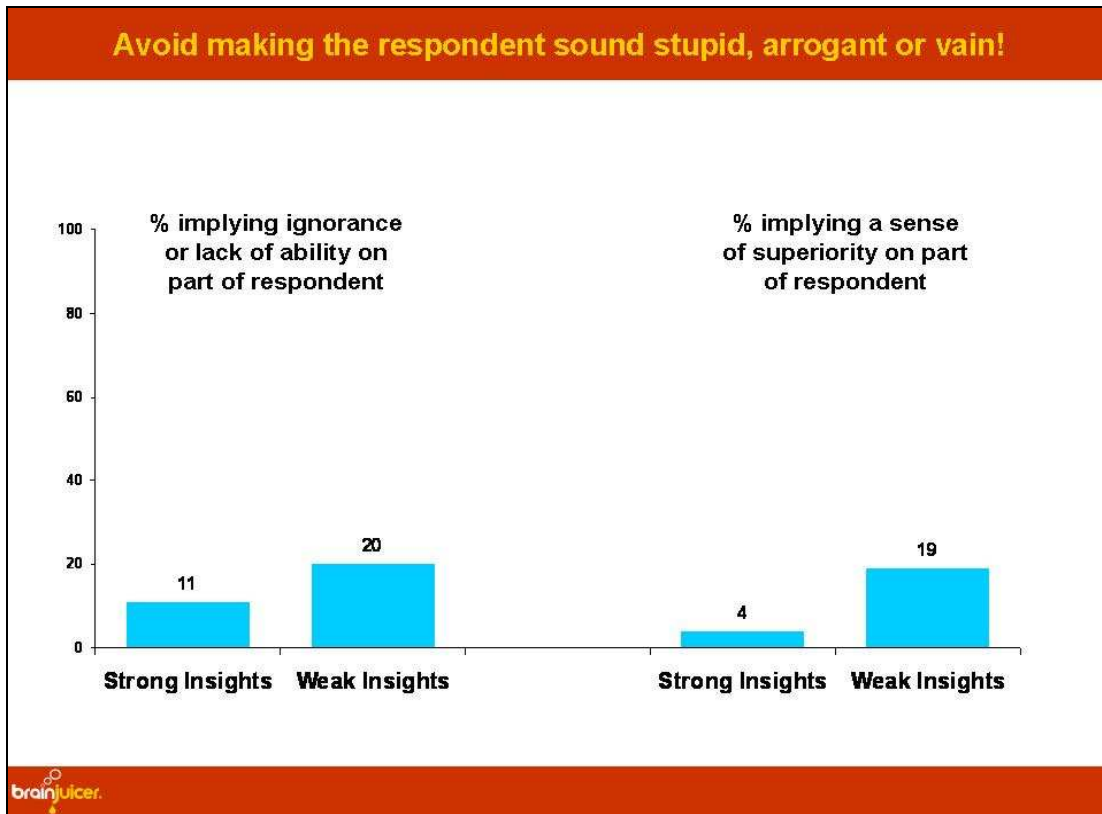


Figure 12

Don't Gush, But Write Like a Real Human Being

One hypothesis that we were keen to test in our analysis was that of tonal balance. We conducted an analysis that looked specifically at the use of emotive language and language which lacked human warmth. The findings show that emotive language that is incongruous with the frustration or situation at hand is more common among insights that perform poorly. At the same time, language that lacks human warmth is more common among unsuccessful insights (see Fig. 13). In other words, tonal balance is key.

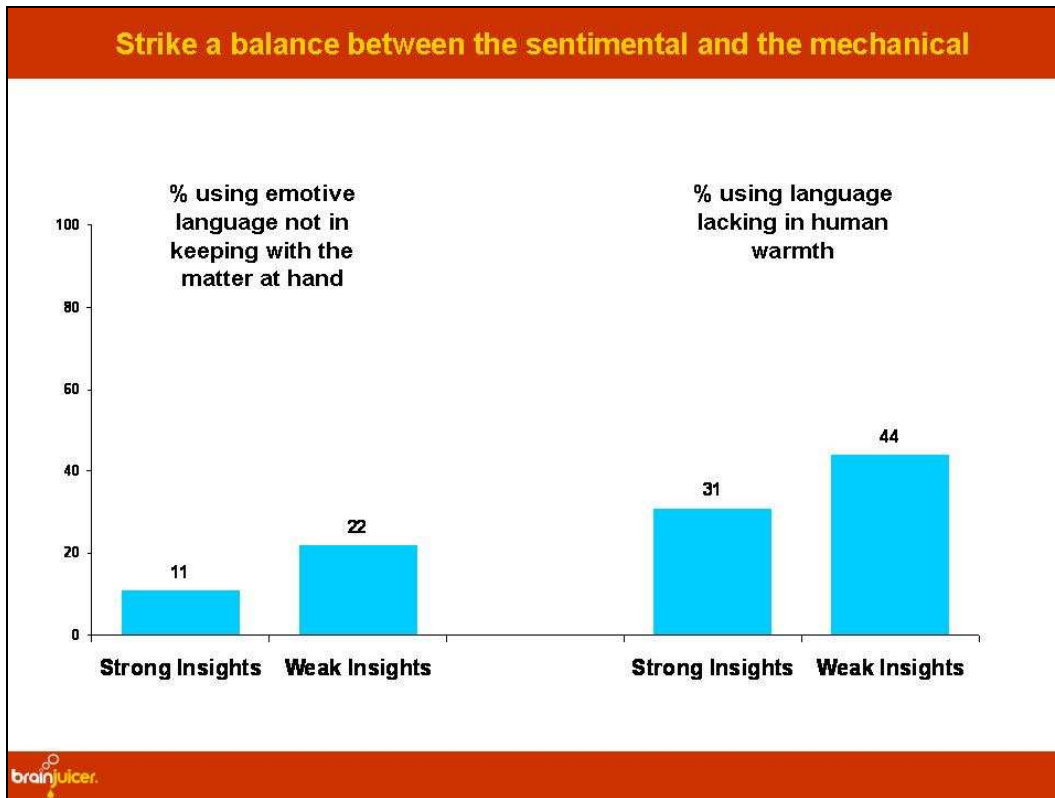


Figure 13

The fact is that people like to arrive at an emotion by themselves rather than be told how they should feel. Phrases such as 'I wish there were a more emotional way to share those moments' will not work, nor will words that overplay the emotional dimension of a commonplace or mild frustration, such as 'cumbersome', 'tiresome' and 'bleak'. Using emotive language out of step with the overall thrust of the insight in an attempt to force a connection with the reader rarely works well. It is better to evoke empathy by suggestion, by using tone, pace and structure.

It's important to strike a balance between sounding too sentimental on the one hand and an automaton on the other. Most insights we have tested strike a pretty good balance, but the very weakest insights we have tested fail to strike a good balance between a voice that is too sentimental and too mechanistic.

Summary of Findings

In summary, then:

1. Structure your insight for success – lead with the frustration
2. Short, sharp sentences work better
3. Needs or frustrations should be as category-specific as possible
4. Avoid the hard-sell
5. Don't patronise or invite the consumer to patronise others
6. Don't gush, but write like a human being

Let's look back at our failing digital photo frame example and see how our guidelines would have explained why the following insight didn't work very well:

"Photos not only capture and trigger memories, but help to tell who you are. However, in today's digital age, almost all of my pictures are stored on my PC. I feel like I'm being denied the ability to relive the special moments of my life and for others to get to know me. I wish I could show and share my digital pictures and once again feel them surrounding me in my home."

First, the insight could have been better structured. Usually it is better to lead with a negative frustration than with a positive situation as this insight does. Second, it is always better to hint at a solution or improved respondent experience rather than pointing heavily at a definite product solution which feels somewhat like a set-up for a hard-sell. Third, by saying 'denied', it uses emotive and exaggerated language which does not ring true and ends up reducing the insight's potency. Fourth, it suggests an inability on the part of the respondent in some way ('denied the ability to relive') which is slightly patronising. Finally, it feels slightly mechanical and lacks the human warmth ('in this digital age', 'denied the ability to relive') which is necessary to really move people, as any great insight should.

The purpose of our guidelines is not to lift poor insights to a mediocre level, but to provide a framework for good insights to shine. Our guidelines might not have rescued this insight completely, but they would certainly have provided helpful pointers on its articulation and could well have improved its chances of success.

Conclusions

Philips was in trouble. Its products and campaigns, while technologically savvy, were not connecting on the intimate level with their consumers Philips preferred. After restructuring its entire organizational structure to be consumer-driven (rather than previously technology-driven) Philips has seen a surge in market share and profitability. Because of this, the opportunity and challenge emerged for Philips alongside BrainJuicer to redefine what an insight is, and how great insights should be structured.

Just like a good insight, it is our belief that *the definition itself* should move people and force connections in the user that might otherwise not take place so we constructed a new definition that aims to move people and give insight creators a clear, inspirational target to aim at:

“Wow, you really understand me – almost better than I understand myself!”

This paper has asserted how a great insight has two important components – resonance and edge. Without both of these, an insight will not be great and will not inspire your communications or new products to greatness. We have shown how a quantitative technique can be applied to assess the potency of an insight and to provide guidance for improvement, and furthermore it has shown how improvements have been made by Philips in their insights writing over time as a result. Finally, it has given six clear pointers for how an insight should be articulated for success.

Of course, it is those exceptional insights that have gone on to underpin truly engaging communication that should really serve as our inspiration. Insights such the Persil insight ‘Dirt is experience, dirt is good’, or our Dove insight, are likely to open up territories and possibilities that can oxygenate a brand, its activities and its product range. Exceptional insights inspire, not because of their technical accuracy, but because they have the power to move people. A great insight harnesses a fresh, penetrating truth and expresses it clearly and originally, to open up mental avenues that have never before been explored.

Working with insights that are poor represents a real danger for brands³ and the majority of the insights we test fail to achieve scores we consider to be strong enough for progression. A manufacturer or service provider must demonstrate that they understand the consumer if their initiatives are to succeed, and this demonstration of understanding is at the heart of what a good consumer insight is.

This paper has shown how, through quantitative testing, marketing can be sure that they are working with potent insights – insights that connect, surprise, delight and make us think twice; insights that are key for great campaigns and hit product launches.

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¹ WPP, 2005, Annual Reports & Accounts 2004. UK: St Ives Westerham Press Ltd.

² WPP, 2005, Annual Reports & Accounts 2004. UK: St Ives Westerham Press Ltd.

³ As R.G. Cooper, 'Winning at new Products' (2001): "A lack of thoroughness in identifying real needs in the marketplace [...] is often the finding in a new product postmortem"