

INSIGHTS JOURNALISM[®]

How to write clear, compelling market
research reports.





INSIGHT

There's a lot of bad reporting in market research. This has serious implications for corporate research buyers. The best designed and executed market research studies will have little impact if the reports don't communicate new insights clearly and simply.

For corporate research buyers, bad reports mean:

Wasted time:

Corporate research buyers waste time rewriting supplier reports or engaging in rounds of back-and-forth with the supplier before they can share with internal teams.

Reduced actionability:

If new insights aren't reported with simplicity and clarity, teams won't act. The report ends up having little impact because new insights are buried in a sea of slides, data tables and "old news."

Lost confidence:

Bad reporting can erode the relationship between the consumer insights lead and internal teams. When bad reports are circulated, it not only reflects poorly on the research supplier, but also on the client insights manager or director who owns the project.

RealityCheck solves the problem of bad market research reporting by working like journalists. We were founded by a couple of journalists almost 25 years ago so reporting new insights in clear, compelling stories is in our DNA.

INSIGHTS JOURNALISM[®]:

An answer to the bad market research reporting plague

We understand the power of clear reporting. We've developed a workflow that addresses many of the root causes of bad reporting in market research. We call it Insights Journalism[®].

Insights Journalism is rooted in how journalists work. Good journalists are masters of non-fiction storytelling. They do a few key things that we've adopted at RealityCheck.





WE LEAD WITH THE NEWS

Good journalists don't "bury the lead," and neither do we.

We lead with the most important new insights we've found. We organize our stories around the "new news" that matters most to our clients. Many market research reports are organized around what was done rather than what was learned, reporting in the order of the questionnaire or fieldwork. That's not a story. That's a data dump. Like journalists, we organize our reports around the most important new insights we've uncovered.

WE WRITE THE STORY

Writing is essential to our process. We begin by writing the Strategic Story, a long-form, written article of insights, conclusions and recommendations. The Strategic Story is like a news story. It's the engine of our narrative process. We do it regardless of whether the final deliverable will be a PowerPoint deck, a documentary-style video, an insights magazine, infographic or a combination of these things.

Writing the Strategic Story **allows us to find the story in the data.**

WE KEEP IT TIGHT

Journalists like to say "write right, write tight." That means get your facts right and report them in as few words as possible. Market researchers often overwrite. They fill reports with big words, formal language and clutter. Some think this makes their reports sound more authoritative. Instead, it makes the story less clear.

At RealityCheck, we write like journalists, so **our reports are concise and clear, ensuring newsworthy insights don't get lost in a sea of slides.**

Applying these simple rules of journalistic practice makes a huge difference. It's why our clients come to us to **turn complex market research questions into clear answers.**



APPLYING INSIGHTS JOURNALISM® TO DATA VISUALIZATION

In recent years, a new age of journalism has pioneered exciting and engaging data storytelling. Data Journalism, as it's called, has become a field unto itself. Here too, market researchers can learn a lot from the creativity and clarity with which data journalists tell stories through data visualization.

At RealityCheck, we follow best practices from data journalism to create data visualizations that support our insight stories with clarity, simplicity and engagement. **Not surprisingly, the process starts with the written word.**

WRITE IT

We begin by writing out the main insight we want a data graphic to communicate, almost as if crafting a mini-narrative or headline. This written exercise serves a dual purpose: it forces clarity in thinking, and it helps reveal the visual metaphors that can guide chart design. For example, if the language we use includes metaphors like “growth,” “comparison,” or “balance,” these words can inspire visual elements in the chart, such as an upward trend, side-by-side bars, or balanced scales.

SKETCH IT

Once the message is articulated, our design team works with our strategists to sketch graphic ideas that capture these metaphors visually. By starting with rough, hand-drawn sketches, we can explore different ways to represent insights without the constraints of specific chart types. This step allows for creative freedom and helps refine ideas before committing to a final design.

This process – writing out the message, identifying metaphorical language, and sketching to visualize those metaphors – aligns the design closely with the data's core narrative. It ensures that the final chart doesn't just display data but visually resonates with the story you want the data to tell.

CREATE IT

Our designers then create final designs, following the same best practices of Insights Journalism®. They keep their data visualizations clean and uncluttered. We believe good data graphics are like good written reports – simple, clear and concise.



CLARITY AND CONFIDENCE TO DECIDE AND ACT

Insights Journalism® is more than just a workflow—it's a commitment to always report new insights with clarity and simplicity. By borrowing techniques from journalism, we ensure that insights are not only uncovered but communicated in ways that drive action. Leading with the news, finding the story through writing, and keeping it concise make our reports impactful, giving corporate research buyers the clarity and confidence they need to decide and act.

We extend these principles to data visualization, combining journalistic clarity with creative design. By crafting mini-narratives, exploring visual metaphors, and emphasizing clean, engaging graphics, we transform data into powerful stories. With Insights Journalism®, we solve the problem of bad reporting, helping insights teams cut through complexity and deliver actionable narratives that make a real difference.



e: jimw@realitycheckinc.com

