Insights as a Service:

The Evolution of the User Experience Insights Landscape

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In this guide Jenni Bruckman, VP Customer Success + Strategic Partnerships at WEVO, and Brian Cahak, Managing Director, Digital Growth & Marketing Operations at Accenture Interactive explore three prevalent themes and how Insights a Service can unlock the potential of your organization.

1. **Demand for Insights: Current State and Challenges**

2. **The Insights Landscape: Generative and Evaluative research**

3. **The Future at Scale: Connecting Insights as a Service**

Using an Insights Engine to Fuel UX Research

Presented by WEVO & Accenture

Every company has access to valuable data from customer experiences. Unfortunately, accessing reliable insights across that wealth of data is often overwhelming and underutilized.

Insights as a Service is becoming an increasingly popular strategy for company leaders looking to increase alignment and untap actionable items across their customer experiences. Collecting and gathering insights is no longer a luxury; it's a necessity for forward-thinking organizations. By combining the power of artificial intelligence (AI) with the analysis of human research experts, everyone in an organization can become People Who Do Research - knocking down silos and building a better customer experience through insight-led innovation.
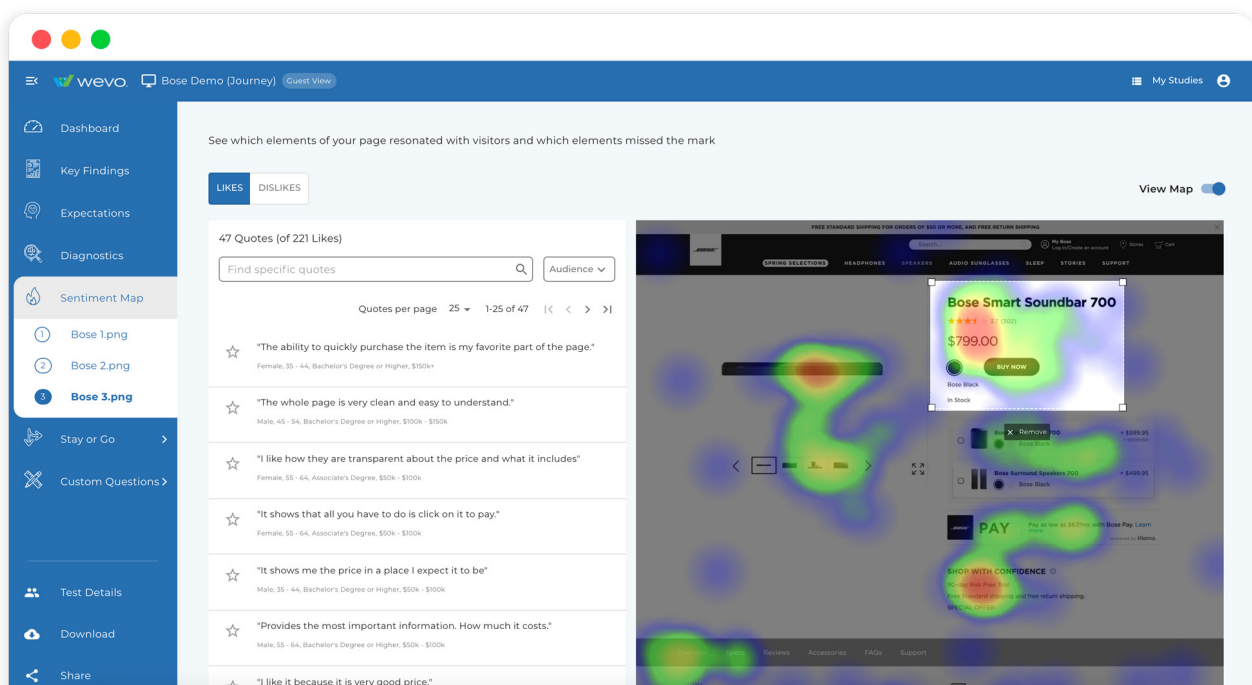
Demand for Insights:

Current State & Challenges

By the Numbers

The B2B marketing landscape is changing, and business leaders have to be ready to adapt. Consumers are increasingly focused on their experiences with brands, making agility and insight-led thinking more important than ever.

90% of consumers demand more authentic and purposeful experiences. (source: Accenture Research)

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated certain trends for workers and consumers alike. Flexibility became a core principle, whether that was reflected in new hybrid work models or a consumer preference for tailored experiences. More than ever, consumers have the power to dictate how their brand interactions look. There's so much content out there; authentic and pur-poseful experiences will cut through the noise.

The idea of a company's purpose or its values has gone from a "nice to have" to a fundamentally core need: a driver of consumer's demands on a company. This shift is forcing companies to be more strategic about how they articulate that in their experiences. Leaders across all depart-ments have to ask themselves how their brand's experiences become more personalized, simple, relevant, easy to use, and generate demand that spurs business growth.

74% of companies are trying to be more agile and resilient to respond to the shifting market. (source: Confidential)

So how are companies responding to a customer desire for more meaningful experiences? Agility and resilience have emerged as key qualities for any business.

Most companies tend to have very siloed functions (some of which are intensified by a remote work environment). Customer service may have certain insights on the consumer, while research teams might have others. These unique insights aren't always shared with product teams, marketing teams, or content and design teams who are trying to appeal to the customer. Unfortunately, the connective tissue across departments has historically been a weakness.

Many companies are trying to combat these silos and respond to the shifting market. Leaders are working towards creating agile ways of working, and cross-functional pods that allow them to really take advantage of those valuable insights and monetize them.

100M research pros are needed by 2050 to accomplish the exponential growth in demand for insights (source: Nielsen Norman Group)

In addition to sharing insights more efficiently, companies are also demanding more research and data to generate more of these valuable perspectives.

The demand curve for research professionals is exponential. Cutting-edge leaders, across all departments, recognize the criticality of under-standing what their customers are saying, doing, and feeling, and using that to inform the rest of their teams.

The Era of Agility

The Era of Agility is upon us. In order to differentiate themselves, company leaders have to focus on best organizing their teams to deliver consistent and stable growth. That means adapting to (and anticipating) customer trends and acting quickly.

The companies best positioned to deliver consistent growth are the ones that keep a pulse of what a customer's needs and demands are, as they change. Those needs and demands have to underpin every aspect of strategy, and must drive activation points across the product and customer journeys.

Highly-competitive verticals like retail, insurance, travel, and hospitality have led the charge on this customer experience focus. B2B businesses are beginning to catch up, and leaders are realizing that experience is becoming a critical differentiator in crowded marketplaces.

The old concept of a company's moat, that defense mechanism that helps them survive in the market, is changing. Companies can no longer hide behind their technology, IP, or distribution. Delivering consistent, valuable, positive experiences to your customers must be part of every company's total package.

Everyone has to grow and flex new muscles to respond to the Era of Agility that's upon them.

> "2021 is the Era of Agility, where the winning businesses will be the ones that identify and respond to consumer needs more quickly than their peer set."
>
> – **Brian Cahak**, Managing Director, Digital Growth & Marketing Operations at Accenture Interactive

The Next Generation of Insights

Achieving an insight-led culture isn't something that happens instantly. It's important for company leaders to self-identify where their company is at in its insights journey. There's always another level to reach, and it's important to know the steps necessary to get there.
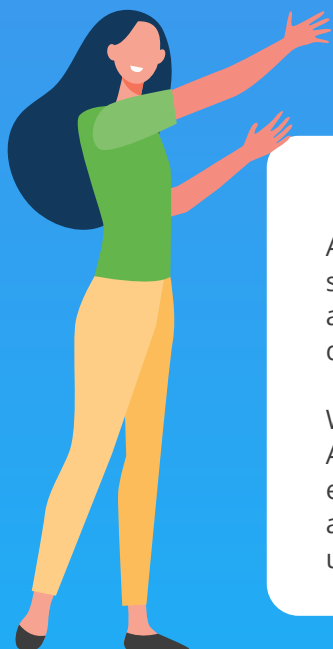
Transformative Leaders

A vision for customer experience (CX) permeates the organization at the Transformative Leaders level.

An executive champion, usually in the role of Chief Experience Officer or Chief Product Officer, takes a leading hand in fostering an insights-led culture. Robust tools for testing and validation research form a standardized tool stack. Qualitative and quantitative insights are required for every release. Teams across the organization are empowered for select research techniques while user experience (UX) researchers are tasked with more complex problems.

Intermediate Advancers

At this stage of maturity, companies see an increased appetite for problem and solution validation across their organization. Qualitative and quantitative insights are gathered together, and understood to be connected. Rich, strategically-gathered qualitative insights are available at a reliable quantitative scale.

What was ad-hoc has become more consistent and formalized for Intermediate Advancers. Their insight efforts show consistent returns and outcomes. An empowered central pod is usually spurred by a leader that galvanizes departments and forms a consistent voice. Insights have become a mechanism that the company uses to understand the customer and start driving those consistent results.

Early Adopters

This is the beginning of a company's journey to an insight-led approach. In this stage, qualitative and quantitative insights are independently gathered. Qualitative insights are often gathered anecdotally through small focus groups that are recruited manually. There may be as few as one or two roles in the company for A/B testing and user research.

Being an Early Adopter doesn't mean you're at zero as far as insights are concerned. Likely, these companies have different "pockets of excellence" amidst a more ad-hoc approach with sporadic processes and procedures. There are likely a few individuals evangelizing the value of research, whether they are researchers themselves or members of the marketing team. These "heroes" are the seeds of growth for an insight-led culture.

Insights are baked into every discussion; they're no longer just a project or operational discussion about budgets and timelines. The question is constantly asked: What was the insight that drove this priority?

Companies like Intuit, Fidelity, MasterCard, Procter & Gamble, and Harvard University come to mind as real-world examples of Transformative Leaders in the insights sphere.

The Challenge of Being an Insight-Led Organization

Demand for insights is outpacing the natural supply of research professionals (recall the statistic suggesting a need for 100 million research pros needed by 2050). But all is not lost. Creative leaders will leverage innovative solutions to meet their company's need for insights, even if they can't hire researchers fast enough to keep up. The answers lie in empowering everyone in your organization to do research and gain insights.

3 Steps to Efficiently Scale Insights Research Throughout Your Organization

Give all teams access to gather reliable insights.

You want your teams to have the specific Generative Research that's practiced by your UX researchers. However, also leveraging Evaluative Research, practiced by everyone, allows you to gather effective insights from all angles. Sharing these insights creates sparks in your organization. Employees from different departments will start to ask questions: How did we find that out? How does this impact other activation points? These sparks will ignite productive conversations that guide everyone to become insight-led.

Automate current processes to uncover the "why" in experiences.

Harkening back to the three levels, we saw that Intermediate Advancers and Transformative Leaders found a way to standardize the insight-gathering process. Automating these processes increases accuracy, quality, and speed of dissemination.

Standardize methods and key findings.

So you've given everyone access to the tools they need, and streamlined your procedures. Now it's about interpreting your findings quickly and shortening the cycle from research to actionable items. If leaders can lighten the cognitive load in this step, it's easier to see patterns, which means it's easier to act upon these insights.

The Insights Landscape:

Generative + Evaluative Research

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Every leader wants a team of creative, intelligent, and driven individuals. One of the "problems" of fielding such a team is that each member will demand that they're constantly challenged and given new responsibilities to master. Insights are the perfect kindling to keep a team inspired, so empowering everyone with easy access to research is imperative.

"Hiring smart teams is the first step - giving them easy access to reliable insights is what will fuel their innovation."

– **Jenni Bruckman**, VP Customer Success + Strategic Partnerships at WEVO

The Insights Landscape

There are many ways to gather insights. Some are better than others, but each has their own purpose in the research process. The optimal method for gathering insights is through AI Powered Research. Let machine learning do the heavy lifting, leaving the team more bandwidth to strategize and act on the insights they've gathered.

Considering the Value of Top Research Methods

Intuition: low on insights, low on accuracy
Too many brands are relying on intuition, that "gut feeling." The human element of research is important, but intuition tends to be highly biased and isn't based on customer feedback.

UX Research: high on insights, low on accuracy
This category includes generative and formative research, moderated or unmoderated studies, and research operations. It's insightful and directional, but tends to be strictly qualitative and rather labor-intensive.

Retrospective: low on insights, high on accuracy
This quantitative method includes A/B testing, pre/post analysis, cohort studies, personalization, and segmentation. It's accurate and iterative, but often is time-intensive to build and run tests that require several iterations to uncover insights that can be quickly implemented.

AI Powered Research: high on insights, high on accuracy
This is the "North Star" of insights. It includes qualitative feedback from a wide audience: a group large enough to make the insights statistically significant and meaningful for action. It's the approach WEVO embraces to deliver insights to our clients.

Introduce Evaluative Research with Human-Augmented AI

So what exactly does Human Augmented AI look like in the context of a business? We outline three aspects of evaluative research that are boosted by Human-Augmented AI:

Preparation - AI expedites the heavy lifting of recruitment. WEVO delivers a qualified pool of panelists and participants faster, and at a greater scale. Additionally, by simplifying and standardizing the study design there's no need to reinvent the wheel for every new study. This makes insights accessible to team members who aren't research pros.

Execution - Run asynchronous studies, creating a constant loop and flywheel of insights.

Analysis & Sharing - Data storytelling is an important piece of gathering buy-in and adoption for being insight-led across an organization. Streamlining analysis allows you to action insights more quickly.

AI Speeds up UX Research

UX researchers provide highly qualitative and extremely detailed insights. We call this "The Mile Deep Understanding." The problem is, their work is labor-intensive and expensive. A UX researcher will typically spend 200+ hours manually executing all steps in the process of a user experience test. It leads to great insights, but it's certainly not easy to scale. And you only want to invest in this mile-deep once you're sure you're focusing on the right point in the user experience.

The Traditional UX Process:

1. **Preparing Research plans -** Developing methods, technology, recruiting specifications, interview guidelines and survey questions.
2. **Performing interviews -** Moderated research methods require a consistent moderator to perform each interview.
3. **Reviewing quotes & videos -** Unmoderated methods require a consistent researcher to watch hours of video and review pages of quotes to separate the valuable feedback, which is qualitative only.
4. **Summarizing Insights -** Manually cleanse, organize and categorize for key insights, which are anecdotal and not statistically significant.

With AI-Powered Evaluative research, the process becomes more streamlined. We call this "The Mile Wide Understanding," and it's as simple as identifying the test and reviewing the results.

The Next-Gen UX Process with WEVO:

1. **Select Test Asset and Audience -** WEVO automates the provisioning of the panel at scale, runs a standardized test framework, scores the experience and generates insights.
2. **Review Results -** Any digital team can become "people who do research", and there's no need for integration with engineering or IT.

Now, what might've taken 200 hours could take 30 minutes. The best part is, anyone in the business can generate insights when they use WEVO.

How It Works

Fast insights without any technical integration sounds great, but how does it work? WEVO utilizes a combination of AI and its in-house research professionals. Here's how WEVO helps with each stage of research, so that any digital team can generate insights:
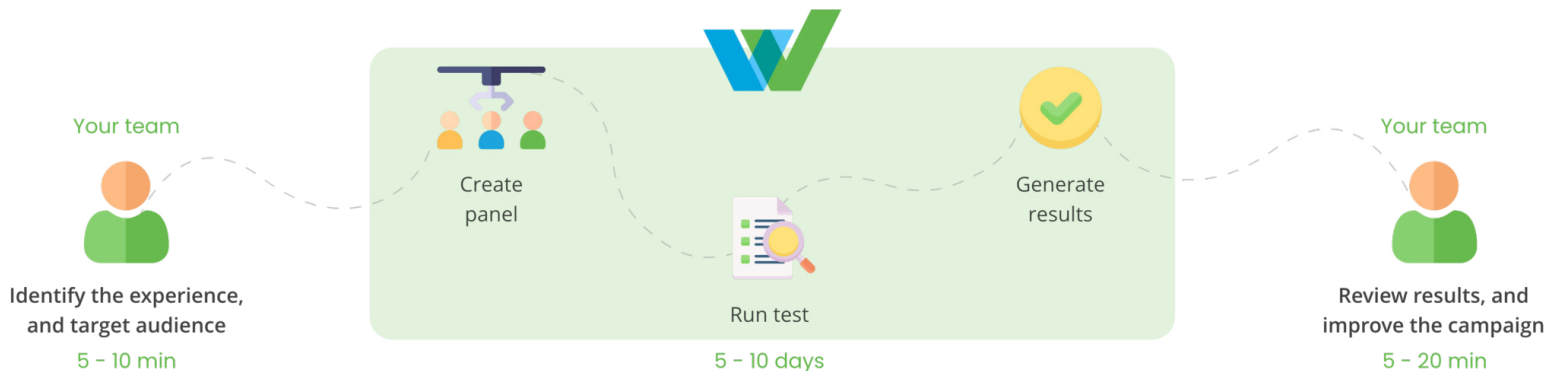
Provisions Panel

WEVO automatically provisions a look-alike panel matching the targeted audience from an available pool of 30 million people and sends out a standardized test. Users will get 120+ validated respondents per page. You'll only work with high-quality feedback.

AI Evaluates Experience

AI cleanses the responses and scores the experiences, using supervised learning (trained models, historic data, and responses) for theme identification.

Generate Insights

AI, augmented by an expert WEVO analyst, generates diagnostics, reaction analysis, expectation gaps, and recommendations. WEVO's data professionals provide expertise to help synthesize what everything means. AI discerns the signal from the noise, and a professional insights analyst can simply summarize the key insights for your company.

Your team — Identify the experience, and target audience — 5 - 10 min

Create panel

Run test — 5 - 10 days

Generate results

Your team — Review results, and improve the campaign — 5 - 20 min

Different Lenses of Insights: The WEVO Solution

WEVO allows company leaders to view their brand's experiences through a variety of lenses. This enables different parts of the business to apply their unique perspective to extract meaning from your research. The key is to understand the "why" within each experience.

Standardization is key to making research digestible to teams in a repeatable, reliable manner. **Benchmarked drivers and diagnostics** provide a standardized delivery of qualitative and quantitative insights. It's important to see benchmarks from your own experiences and how they change over time. Leaders should also test concepts against those of competitors' to better understand the strengths and weaknesses of their own experiences, and the marketplace as a whole.

Another key is bridging the gap between expectations and reality. It's often difficult for marketers to look at their own experiences without biases. WEVO's insights allow you to **measure customer's expectations** and how they stack up to the experience in reality.

**Geographic analysis** of experiences is another helpful WEVO insight. WEVO measures likes and dislikes, delivering real quotes from participants to support quantitative data with qualitative feedback. This analysis helps marketers understand what users liked, what they disliked, and most importantly, why.

The why unlocks the areas of opportunity for improvement.

Use Cases to Apply Evaluative Research

WEVO empowers marketers to conduct Evaluative Research across all of their digital experience assets: prototypes or live experiences, mobile or desktop, ads, emails, web page, and owned or competitor sites.

Ways to leverage WEVO to improve your experiences across the board:
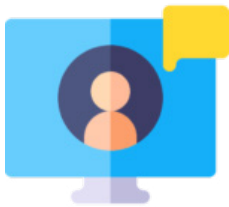
Page

Always start with the problem and work to diagnose or validate it. With problem discovery, pinpoint why consumers are not engaging or converting. From there, move on to solution validation, where your team can determine what works, and why it does.

Compare Pages

Concept comparisons allow marketers to validate concepts and prototypes before going live. This saves valuable time, and protects financial investments by optimizing content before it gets to the consumer in the real world. Tying back to competitors and the marketplace, WEVO lets leaders analyze their strengths and weaknesses compared to their competition. Step back from what you're seeing every day to reduce your reliance on intuition.
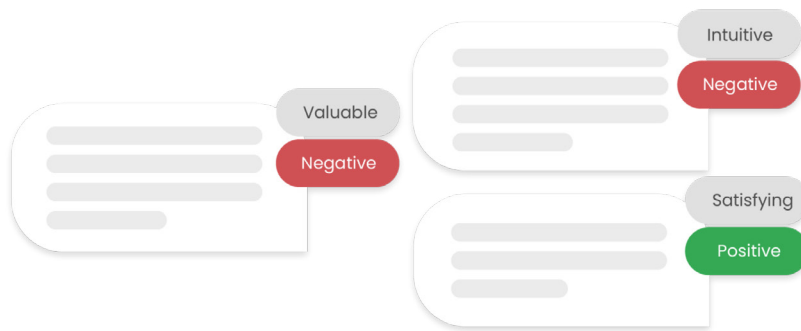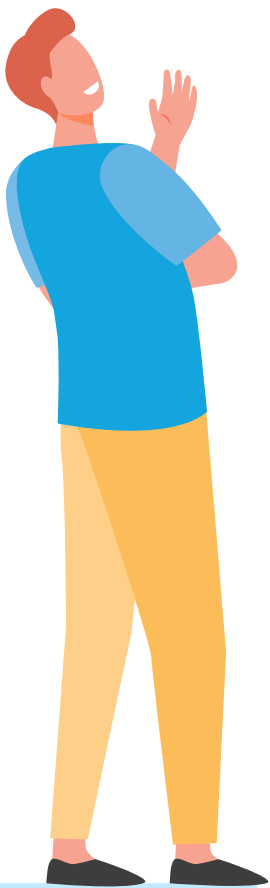
Journey

It's vital to understand the user's holistic experience journey. Users don't necessarily care what parts of the journey you own or don't, so it's up to the company to strengthen their roadmap across digital channels.

The Future at Scale:

Connecting Insights as a Service

Insights as a Service combines the "Mile Deep Understanding" of Generative Research done by UX research professionals with the "Mile Wide Understanding" of Evaluative Research, which can be practiced by everyone with a tool like WEVO.

Combining these two practices empowers teams to share responsibility for the customer journey. Silos will fall, and truly cross-functional teams can glean insights to drive strategic growth.

Operating Principles

The surging demand for insights can be overwhelming. Focusing on proactive (instead of reactive) transformation allows leaders to shape the agenda and narrative within their teams.

How do you proactively start pushing insights?
What are the best ways to get started?
We've got you covered:

- **Reduce risks** by comparing concepts before you launch them. Compare your own experiences, but also expand your focus to the entire marketplace and your competitor set. All digital channels have journeys that need to be measured; and teams share responsibility for the journey's success.
- **Accelerate impact** by investing time to make insights part of your process. Step back from your biases and think strategically, leading with the problem. Begin to standardize processes so that you're able to make that impact repeatable and scalable.
- **Democratize insights** by empowering your teams with the resources they need to incorporate insights into their daily workflow. Advocate for all teams to lead with insights, and identify an executive champion to help expand reach. Choose a tool like WEVO that has standardized methods for reliable results.

Start small. Fast, reliable insights are the mechanism that can underpin how everything in your company is done. These quick wins help everyone, as part of their day job, focus on the customer and then deliver the outcomes that the business demands.

"Insights isn't a thing one does. It's how you all do things."