

WHAT IS INSIGHT?

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## THE FIVE PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVE INSIGHT DEFINITION

**thrive**  
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THE FIVE PRINCIPLES OF EFFECTIVE INSIGHT DEFINITION

**AS CUSTOMER EXPERIENCES  
TAKE CENTER STAGE SO  
DOES THE NEED FOR MORE  
PROFOUND AND COMPELLING  
INSIGHT DEFINITION.**

Insights form the cornerstone of the design and innovation process, a lighthouse for what you should do next, and a catalyst for creating new value for your customers.







The ever-increasing explosion of data puts more knowledge at our fingertips than ever before, but you need to know what to do with it. Otherwise, it is obsolete and ineffective.

## WE SEE AN INCREASING LACK OF INSIGHT

With companies living in an “illusion of knowledge,” drowning in data, insight poor, and failing to turn information into intelligence.

## WHY?





The lack of shared understanding of what an insight is, and is not is one reason. An absence of the methodological rigor required for meaningful insight generation to happen is another. We see organizations frequently struggle to arrive at a standard definition of what an insight is, and a repeatable process for finding and articulating them. Most 'insights' we see are unfortunately nothing more than mere observations, reporting what has been seen in-field without any overt action or outcome attached.

**IF WE DO NOT HAVE A CLEAR UNDERSTANDING  
OF WHAT 'INSIGHT' IS, HOW CAN WE POSSIBLY  
USE IT AS A GUIDEPPOST TO DEFINE WHAT'S NEXT?**







## What An Insight Is Not

'Insight' has become a horribly misused used word, much in the same vein as 'brand,' 'strategy' and 'innovation' have become misused words. So let us first get definitional and restore some meaning to the word by considering what insight is not:

### Insight is not data

Data can take many forms, but we have to remember it is just that—data! Alone, it is not an insight, and it does not do your thinking for you. With masses of data at hand the fundamental problem is a lot more essential, how do we mine and analyze the data to reveal insight we can act on. Look at your data holistically and be cautioned against becoming attached to that singular inspiring data point that can drive a swift conclusion. **Think holistically. Analyze intensely.** Insight definition requires you to take a multi-dimensional view.







### **An observation is not an insight**

Observations are an incredibly important part of creating insight but are still only one data point to consider and should never stand alone. They are facts that lack the “why” and the “motivation” behind a consumers behavior. Never stop short of the hard work involved during the process of insight definition of converting an astute observation in something more meaningful and actionable.

**Always get to the “why.”**

### **A customer wish or statement of need is not an insight**

An Insight is not an articulated statement of need. Insights are less apparent, intangible, latent. A hidden truth that is the result of obsessive digging. Anytime you hear ‘I want’ or ‘I need’ in a statement—step back and pause—as you probably need to dig deeper and understand the motivation, and the why behind ‘the want.’ Articulated needs are ideal for defining features and benefits, but do not lead to insights that have the gravity to topple existing categories and create new ones. **Obsess about the outcome people want, don’t merely record their statements of need and assume you have insights, you likely do not.**







## Defining Insight

Definitions abound about what an insight actually is. But rather than get hung-up and belabor endless definitions we encourage our client partners to define their process of insight definition based on the business impact they want to drive within their own organizations. A definition is helpful but knowing what value your insight should deliver is far more important and makes them actionable, building momentum for change. At THRIVE we look at the insights we craft to deliver the following as a working definition:

- › An unrecognized fundamental human truth.
- › A new way of viewing the world that causes us to reexamine existing conventions and challenge the status quo.
- › A penetrating observation about human behavior that results in seeing consumers from a fresh perspective.
- › A discovery about the underlying motivations that drive people's actions.





## Turning Knowledge into Insight

Casual observation and simply having knowledge is not enough. Insights take work; they are a skill, they require creativity and persistence and deep thinking to craft. The most powerful insights come from rigor and serious analysis to translate large amounts of data in concise and compelling findings. Organizations who want to use insights as the platform for organic growth require a process that is both scalable and repeatable so that it can become routinized within the organization with predictable long-term results. Use written insight statements guided by five key principles to turn research data into actionable insight to inspire new ideas for product and service development.





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## The Five Principles of Insight Definition



# COMPELLING INSIGHT STATEMENTS SHOULD BE STRUCTURED AROUND FIVE KEY PRINCIPLES:

NO. 1

## Set the Context

Set the context for your insight statement by simply and clearly explaining the background. A simple observation of how people behave in a given situation, what they think, what they feel, but most importantly explain what they are doing and trying to achieve.

NO. 2

## Communicate the Dilemma

A critical part of insight definition is understanding the barriers that are stopping consumers from achieving what they want to achieve with a given product, service or experience. Dilemmas occur around the territories of values, behaviors, needs, and desires. Look for strong emotions as they happen, when a consumer has a conflict, tension or discomfort. This is where you find those powerful insights that give you the opportunity to create an emotional bond with consumers. Having a well-crafted dilemma is essential to any insight statement, without it there is no problem to solve, and no latent need calling for a solution.

NO. 3

## Articulate the Why

An insight statement is a discovery of understanding and needs to explain why something is happening the way it is. It should be a concise synthesis of the observed behavior, a look at the activity and what is driving it. You must know the reason a consumer is behaving in a particular way, and why it is happening if you are to develop a product or service that can in some way augment the behavior or change it. It is critical step in figuring out how we can help consumers achieve their goals.







NO. 4

## Capture the Motivation

Discovering the underlying motivations that drive people's actions is fundamental to insight definition. End-users of a product or service are motivated to change by the tensions that exist in their lives. These manifest themselves as unfulfilled needs they need to fulfill to make a given tension disappear. Look for tensions in four key areas: the physiological, the emotional, the cognitive and the environmental to inform your insight statements. Find the frustration that surrounds any given experience, and you will locate the core motivating factors.

NO. 5

## Envision the Ideal

The final and fifth principle is 'Envision the Ideal.' It is important to describe the desired end-state or situation the consumer is seeking. The key here is not to define a solution but clearly convey how the consumer would like the world to look and feel, what the ideal experience should be. An excellent way to articulate this is to start with the statement "I wish there was," and envision the ideal situation for the consumer from this perspective.





## LANGUAGE MATTERS

You can go through the mechanics of detailed analysis and know you have a great insight that can reframe a category, and give you an insurmountable competitive advantage. However, if you do not make it inspirational, a rallying cry for action for your design and innovation teams to develop more surprising and interesting products and services, then all your good work will fall by the wayside. Think of insight definition as a three-sentence journey that takes the reader through the consumers situation, frustration and future desires. Structure your insight statement succinctly in three sentences that commands action:

### First Sentence

Describe the current situation and the incumbent consumer behavior:

*"Having pictures around that instantly remind me of special moments and people, makes me feel good."*

### Second Sentence

Describe the dilemma the consumer has and clearly articulate why this is a frustration in their life:

*"But I find that pictures from my digital camera often stay hidden on my devices because I never have time to print them."*

### Third Sentence

Describe the consumers desired end-state, their ideal situation:

*"I wish there was a way to enjoy them everyday without having to actively play them on my TV or computer."*

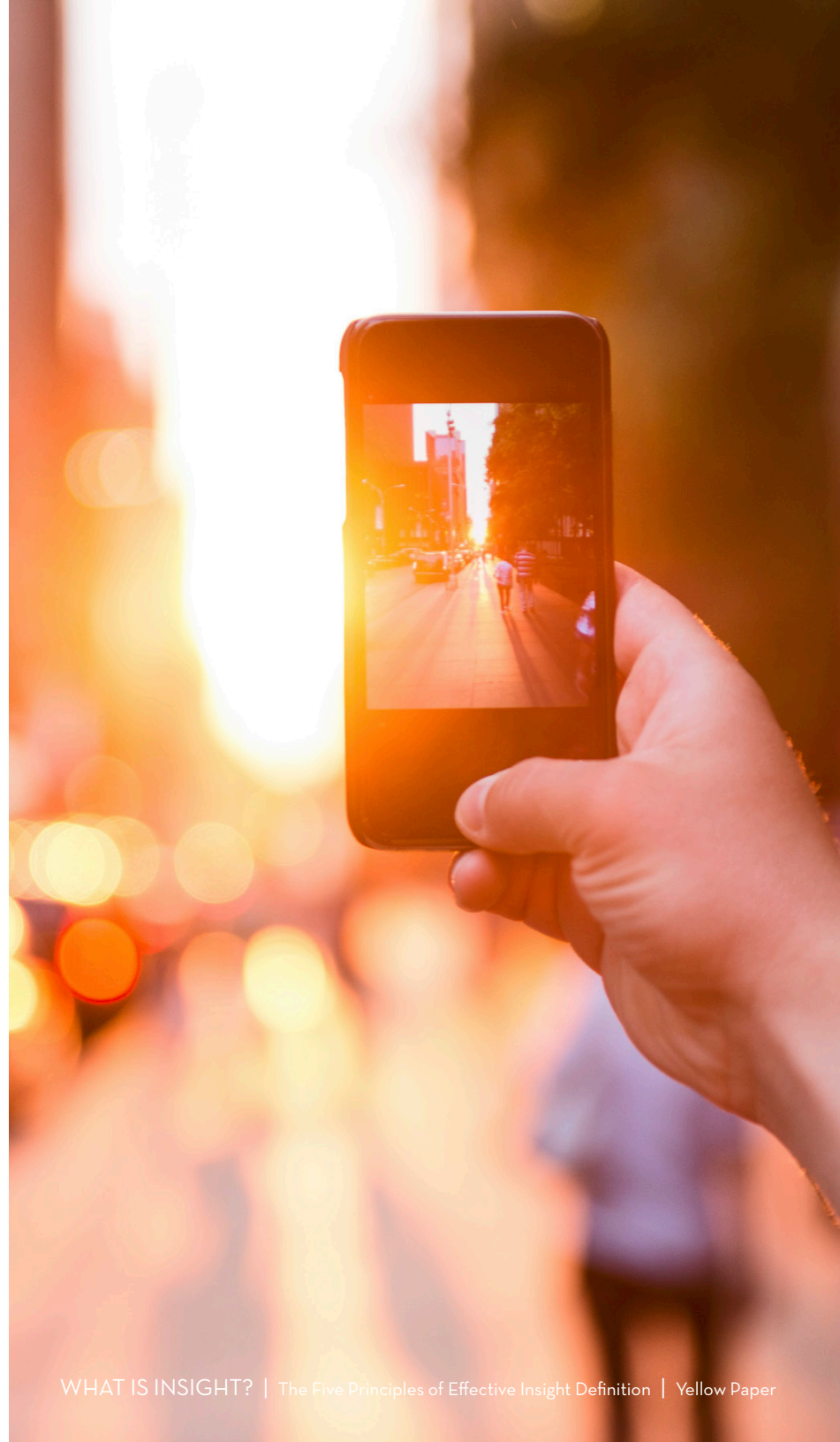




## Always write in the first person from the consumers' perspective to help you connect with them on a deeper emotional level.

Be real, be human, and avoid jargon—remember it is not a sales pitch—keep it objective and honest. This is especially important if you plan on validating your insights with consumers either quantitatively or qualitatively at a later date.

*“ Having pictures around that instantly remind me of the special moments and people in my life, makes me feel good. But I find that pictures from my digital camera often stay hidden on my devices because I never have time to print them. I wish there was a way to enjoy them everyday without having to actively play them on my TV or computer.”*







# POP

## How Do You Know When You Have A Significant Insight?

You know you have a powerful insight when it can be recognized to do the following:

- › It connects with consumers on an emotional level and elicits the reaction “you obviously understand me.”
- › It reexamines existing conventions and challenges the status quo.
- › It solves a real problem that results in the creation of new customers.
- › It inspires action by giving you a clear target to aim for.
- › It is a clear statement of what do next and how to deliver value to your customers.





## End with Ideas Not Insights

It is easy to get myopic when mining data, synthesizing the findings and crafting insight statements. So don't forget about the big picture. It is good to remember that insights are only the beginning, not the end, and form part of a far more significant process. Use your insights as the fuel for ideation but rephrase them to be actionable for the creative process rephrasing them, as "How might we?" statements.

"How might we enjoy our memories every day without having to take the time to actively play them on devices?"

Making your insight visual is a powerful way of activating them within an organization, visualize them as creative springboards around the "How might we?" statements.







# INSIGHTS ARE TERRIBLY DIFFICULT TO FIND BUT CRITICAL TO UNLOCKING ORGANIC GROWTH.

They reduce irrelevance and focus you on what is meaningful, setting the foundation for successful product and service development. Think of the insight statement as the question, the idea as the answer, and the resulting product or service as the solution. Reduce the data. Increase your insight. Be a smarter business.





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As the CEO and Co-founder of THRIVE, Jonathan Dalton helps clients achieve business objectives and redefine markets through user-centered products and strategic brand design. He's expert at helping organizations see what people will want in the future and transforming businesses to meet those needs. Jon speaks regularly around the globe on people-centered consumer research and innovation, and he brings a rare balance of design sensibility and strategic thinking to development programs—deciphering user needs and desires and connecting brand with product strategy.

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Founded in 2010, THRIVE was built on the belief that an integrated approach—deep empathy paired with sharp strategy—can be a powerful engine to drive growth. We go beyond surface consumer research and assuring rationales, mining ethnographic data to truly understand the emotional triggers that drive purchase behavior. We design to every detail, and we transform ideas into experiences. We've become a trusted partner to some of the world's most iconic brands, improving customer lives and the bottom line.

Visit us at [thrivethinking.com](https://www.thrivethinking.com) to learn more.



If you are interested in discussing your project with us please go to:

[www.thrivethinking.com/contact-us](https://www.thrivethinking.com/contact-us)

# NEED HELP GETTING STARTED?

**You've come to the right place.** Our team of researchers, strategists and designers specialize in going where people live, work and play to understand how life is actually lived to intimately get to know their values, needs, and behaviors. The result is a holistic understanding of people in the context of their lives and the definition of actionable insights that help you identify new ways to create value and lay claim to untapped areas of opportunity.



Call us today at **404.228.7342**  
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