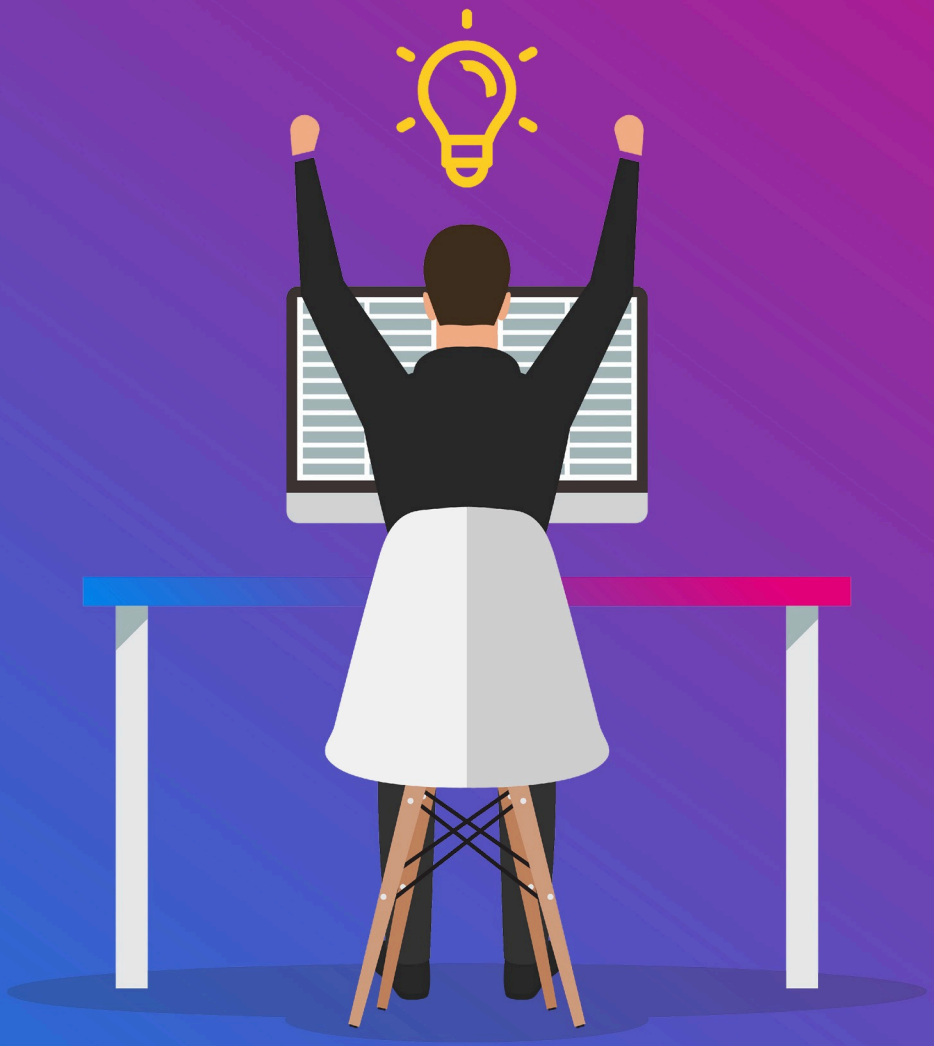
SAPIO RESEARCH

From Data to Story

How to quickly turn research insights into compelling content



>> A practical guide for B2B marketers & PR professionals

Table of Contents

Introduction 3

Our 3C Framework for insight-driven storytelling 5

01. Context: Setting yourself up for success 6

- Plan the What 7
- Define the Who 9
- Final Tips 11

02. Craft: Turning insights into compelling narratives, fast 12

- Find your stats quickly 13
- Transform them into compelling narratives 17
- Final Tips 21

03. Create: Making your insight story land 22

- Don’t overcomplicate it 23
- Apply the 80/20 rule 24
- Choose the right formats 26
- Final Tips 28

Conclusion 29

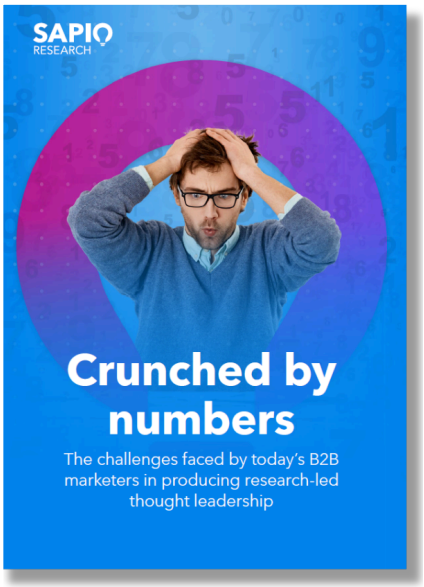
About us 30

Introduction

Whether it's reacting to a breaking news cycle, feeding an always-on thought leadership engine, or supporting an event or product launch, research is one of the most powerful tools available. Yet it's also one of the most underutilised.

Our own research among 300 marketers in the UK and US shows the scale of the challenge:

- **Only 1 in 20 marketers** and PR professionals face no challenges when analysing research data
- **Data analysis is eating into campaign creation time**: nearly a quarter (23%) of time spent on research projects is absorbed by data analysis, nearly twice as much as the time spent producing content
- **75% more assets** could be produced if marketing teams could interpret and manipulate their research data faster



At Sapio Research, our work with brands and agencies consistently shows how much untapped value sits in research projects.

Does the pace of modern marketing have to be the enemy of data-led storytelling?

No!

We created this practical guide specifically for non-researchers. It shows creative teams how to move quickly from raw data to stories that resonate with media, stakeholders, and audiences, without needing to be a data analyst.

At the heart of this guide is our simple, time-saving framework:

Context. Craft. Create.



Our 3C framework for insight-driven storytelling

We built our 3C framework for speed.

Each step helps structure your thinking so you are not left staring at spreadsheets wondering where the story is:



01 CONTEXT

Setting yourself up for success before the data lands

02 CRAFT

Finding newsworthy insights fast and shaping them into narratives

03 CREATE

Finding newsworthy insights fast and shaping them into narratives

The framework ensures your time is spent where it counts, sharpens creative focus, and increases the likelihood that your research will create long-lasting impact.

SAPIO RESEARCH

01. CONTEXT

Setting yourself up for success



Great data stories never start in the analysis phase.

They start before a single question is asked.

This step is about planning a research-led campaign. But don't worry, we're not here to teach you how to suck eggs!

Rather, our goal is to reinforce what you already know and share tips to help you get from data to story faster or spark a little extra creativity. We'll help you:

1. Plan the "What"
2. Define the "Who"

Plan the ‘What’

Before you think about charts or headlines, be clear on what you want the research to *tell* you.

Ask the right questions:

- **What conversations do we want to be part of?**
- **Is the topic we have in mind actually relevant?**
- **What would a strong insight-led narrative look like?**
- **What tensions, debates, or assumptions exist in our industry?**
- **Where are the gaps?**
- **How do we stand out?**

Look anywhere you can for ideas: speak to friends, colleagues, and clients. Use AI tools. Consult the news. Search LinkedIn. You need to work out what’s going on within the topic you want to explore, and just as importantly, what’s *not* going on.

💡Additional tip:

Make sure you invite your subject matter experts to participate in the first brainstorming phase and draft of your questionnaire. What happens when you do?

👉 New topics appear, fresh angles emerge, and that spark of creativity happens really fast.

Plan the ‘What’

Align research objectives with business goals

The Context stage is not about forcing the data to say something it doesn’t.

It’s about giving your research a clear strategic direction so insights are easier to identify, interpret and reuse later.

That starts with aligning research objectives to your wider business goals.

While this may sound obvious, it’s one of the easiest places for misalignment to creep in, particularly when teams are working at speed.

For example, if your product or service is rooted in automation, framing the research primarily around artificial intelligence can limit its value. While the topics are related, they do not always support the same narratives. We have seen projects where questionnaires focused heavily on AI, only for teams to realise later that the story needed to centre on automation, adding avoidable time, complexity and compromise to the process.

👉 When deadlines are tight, spending a little more time upfront to pressure-test your research approach against your business goals can save hours of rework later, making it far easier to extract strong, relevant stories at pace.



💡Our advice:

Prep a document.
Clearly write down your topics, ideal narrative, and desired headlines (multiple, don’t rely on one). A simple format with bullet points is fine, but don’t skip this step! It will make your life easier later.

Define the “who”

Sometimes you may start with the “*who*” before the “*what*,” but most of the time, being clear on *what* you want to say will inform *who* you ask.

Choose your audience

The audience you speak to ultimately defines the story you can tell, so the simplest way to approach this is to ask: ***who is actually able to answer the questions you need answered?***

Those are the people your research should speak to.

❌ Avoid this common trap

Many B2B teams assume they need to speak exclusively to CEOs or senior leaders to generate credible insights.

But do you always need the C-suite to tell a compelling story?

✅ Focus on the real decision-makers and influencers

Speak to users, technical stakeholders and mid-level managers. They interact with the product or service day to day, and their experiences shape internal perceptions and often play a decisive role in evaluation and final decision-making.



💡 Here’s your key takeaway:

The most effective B2B research rarely focuses only on the person with final sign-off. Instead, speak to people who have deeper insight into what’s working, what’s failing, and what really matters in practice.

Define the “who”

One of the most valuable things you can do at this stage is simply apply common sense.

Sense check

Before launching a survey or starting interviews, take a moment to sense check the audience to ensure the research will be credible and usable.

Start by asking yourself a few straightforward questions:

Do these individuals actually exist, and how many of them are out there?

For example, a sample claiming to include 200 CEOs from FTSE 100 companies raises clear concerns about the validity of the research.

Will this audience genuinely be able to answer the questions you plan to ask?

Using the same example, will CEOs at FTSE100 be able to talk about the inner workings of the IT department? Probably not.

Do you need comparisons between groups such as seniority, region or industry?

Cross-breaks, or splits by audience type, are often where the most interesting stories live. Planning for these upfront can save hours of rework later.

💡 Don’t forget:

Before you begin fieldwork, make sure respondents are properly screened and that robust qualification checks are in place. A small amount of rigour at this stage makes the analysis phase faster, cleaner and far more productive.

FINAL TIPS

On how time-poor teams can get Step 1 (Context) done quickly:

- ✅ Start with 3–5 potential story lines or headlines you might want to test
- ✅ Identify the minimum audience segments needed to support them
- ✅ Resist the urge to ask everything: speed comes from focus

Curious to learn more?

Check out some of our popular resources!





[How many respondents do you really need?]

[What makes a good, robust, and usable research sample?]

[How to recruit quality B2B respondents]

[Top tips for research questionnaire design]

[Future-proofing your research findings]

SAPIO RESEARCH

02. CRAFT

Turning insights into compelling narratives, fast



We created this step to save you from being overwhelmed by spreadsheets.

Because once the data is in, the challenge becomes one of interpretation.

As researchers, that's our favourite part. But we realise the analysis phase isn't everyone's cup of tea.

That's why we've compiled a set of practical tips and techniques you can immediately apply to your research projects. We'll show you how to:

1. Find your stats quickly
2. Transform them into compelling narratives

Find your stats quickly

This is where we pull the data tables and start analysis.

The quickest way is to take your planning document with your headlines or stories from Stage 1 and put your data in.

Does the data support your headline? If so, great!

But maybe you didn't write your document (don't worry, it can happen!), or perhaps you wrote it, but the stats just don't fit? If so, don't panic.

We'll give you five of the most common strategies to find interesting statistics, fast.

- **Look for the extremes**
- **Flip the stat**
- **Apply the 75%+ rule**
- **Divide and conquer**
- **Break it down**

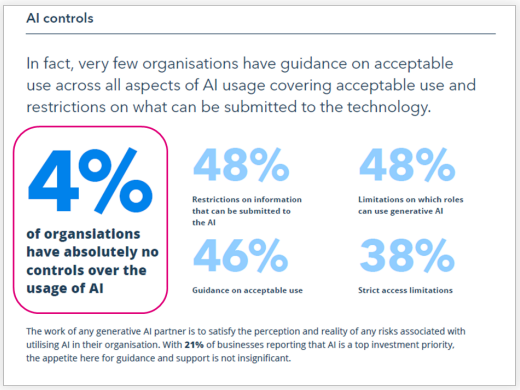


💡 **Remember:**

You don't need advanced analytic skills to instantly find compelling stories. Here are some of the fastest ways to do it 👉

Find your stats quickly

Look for extremes



Look for very high or very low percentages.

💡They naturally attract attention and suggest consensus, urgency or risk.

👉 They can form the backbone of compelling stories and be turned into attention-grabbing headlines.

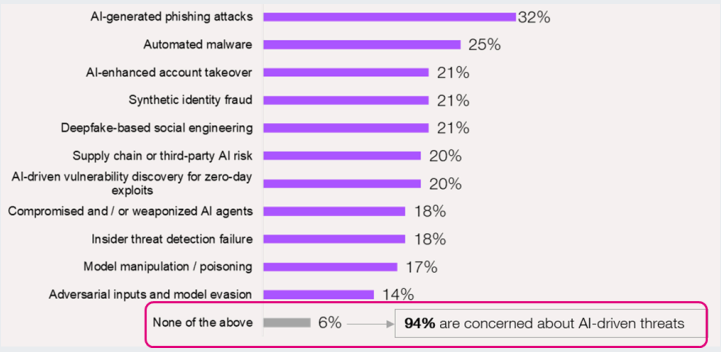
Flip the stat

If 30% struggle with something, that also means 70% don't. **Play with your framing. Which works best for your story?**

💡To enable this, whenever our team is designing or consulting on a questionnaire, we often recommend having a '*None of the above*' or '*We do not do 'xyz'* option. Partly because it's offering respondents more options, but it also helps you to flip the stat!

In this example, only 6% say they have no specific concerns about AI-driven threats.

On its own, that figure may not feel especially compelling. But when you flip the stat, it becomes far more powerful: 94% do have concerns.



👉 **This reframing helps you extract more insight and impact from a single question.**

Find your stats quickly

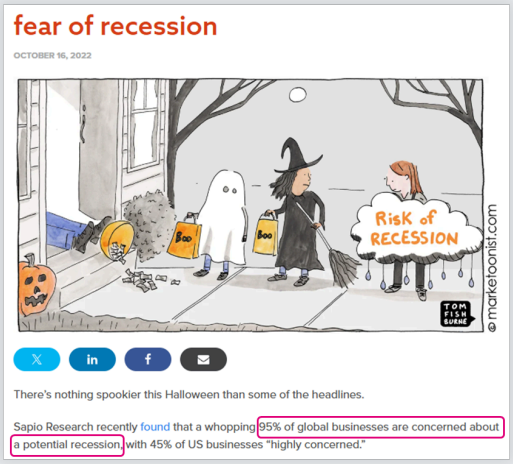
Apply the 75%+ rule

Big numbers make bold headlines, and stats above 75% signal a clear majority or mandate for change that makes campaigns stand out.

💡How you ask the question matters. Instead of a binary *'yes/no'*, use a scale like '*very concerned*' or '*somewhat concerned*'. This allows respondents to express nuance, and in analysis, you can combine responses to create a powerful headline.

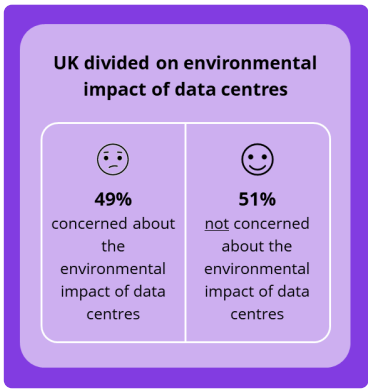
This example is from our 2022 barometer: we found that 95% of global businesses were concerned about a potential recession.

This statistic was picked up by The Marketoonist and turned into a Halloween themed cartoon.



👉 **As long-time fans of The Marketoonist, seeing our research brought to life in that way felt like mission accomplished!**

Divide and conquer



As we've seen, when sifting through data it's tempting to focus on large statistics in the 80–90% range. **But don't disregard 50/50 answers.**

💡They can be a real opportunity to talk about how divided your audience is, with one half thinking something, and the other half the opposite.

👉 **It signals controversy and division, which can be a powerful media hook.**

Find your stats quickly

Break it down

If one of your top-line results is flat or underwhelming, don't panic. The story is often hidden beneath the surface.

💡That's where **cross-breaks**, or simply digging into how different groups responded, come in.

Instead of looking at your sample as a single, uniform block, break it down by region, role, seniority, age, or any other relevant segment. Differences between audience groups often reveal insights that aren't apparent in the headline numbers. And these often reveal great hidden stories.

For example, in our research for National Women's Enterprise Week, we asked young people how they felt about being a boss.

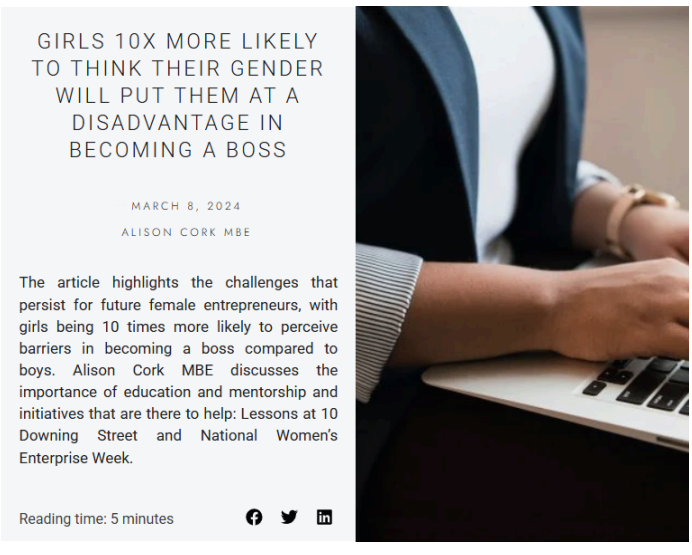
The headline results were almost identical: 43% said "exciting," 43% "challenging," 43% "stressful," and 41% "ambitious."

At first glance, there was no standout insight.

Q11. I find the idea of being a boss ... Select all that appl	Total	Gender	
		A boy	*A girl*
Base	500	250	250
Exciting	43%	45%	42%
Challenging in a positive way	43%	46%	40%
Stressful	43%	40%	45%
Ambitious	41%	42%	40%
Powerful	38%	37%	39%
Inspiring	38%	36%	39%
Daunting	26%	22%	30%
Realistic for me	21%	21%	20%
Unrealistic for me	14%	13%	16%
Too risky	13%	12%	14%
Challenging in a negative wa	11%	9%	14%
Other	0%	0%	-

But when we examined responses by gender, a clear story emerged 👉

Girls were most likely to describe it as stressful, while boys saw it as challenging but in a positive way.



Transform your stats into compelling narratives

Now you need to turn your stats into something that's actually worth reading.

We see a lot of people default to using the same narrative formulas or the word "majority", even when the percentage is below 50%! And yes, big stats have impact, but hopefully by now we've established that lower percentages, or even those in the middle, can also tell an interesting story.

This step is about learning how to phrase your findings and keep your story accurate, engaging, and headline-ready.

Here are some simple narrative formulas to help you speed this process up:

- **Personalise**
- **Contradict**
- **Highlight scarcity and/or shock**
- **Showcase change**
- **Extrapolate and scale**



💡 Keep in mind:

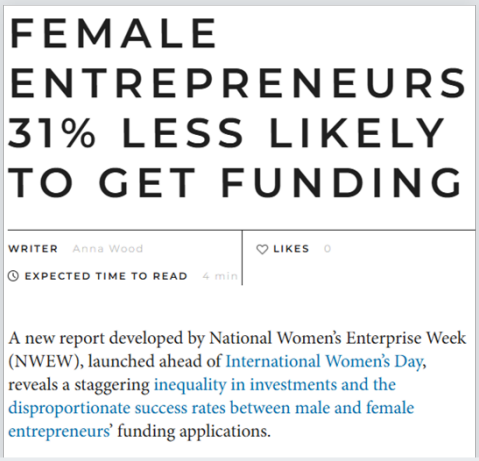
You can mix and match these techniques, and we'll go through each of them with examples to show how they can transform your headlines.

Transform your stats into compelling narratives

Personalise

“X% of [specific group] say…”

💡This makes the stat feel more relatable.



This first example comes once again from our research for National Women’s Enterprise Week.

Instead of using the total group of entrepreneurs surveyed, the headline focused on female entrepreneurs: “Female entrepreneurs are 31% less likely to get funding.”

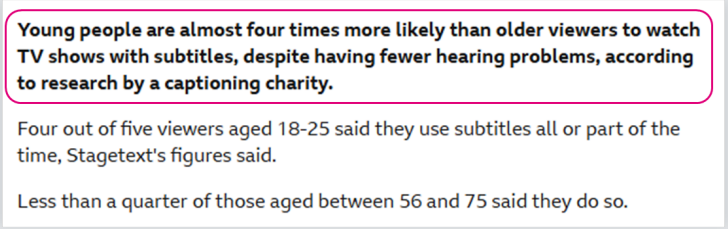
👉 **By singling out that group, we’ve made the stat more impactful and relevant.**

Contradict

“Despite [common belief], our data shows…”

💡A stat that contradicts or challenges the general consensus creates intrigue and positions your insight as fresh and surprising.

When we worked with a charity called Stagetext, we found that despite having fewer hearing problems, young people use subtitles more than older people.



👉 **This is the complete opposite to what you’d expect, which makes it instantly newsworthy.**

Transform your stats into compelling narratives

Highlight scarcity and/or shock

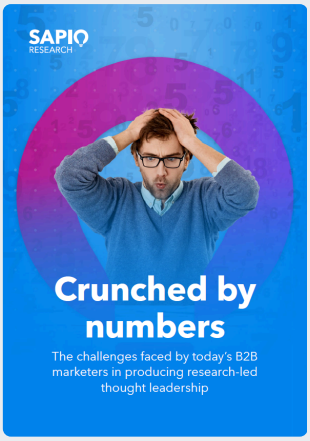
“Only” or “just” X%...

💡Highlighting rarity or unexpectedness is a powerful way to frame the story.

In our recent research, we found that 95% of marketers and PR professionals encounter challenges when analysing research data for their thought leadership campaigns. That, in itself, is already a powerful headline.

However, here’s what it looks like when you flip it:

*“**Only 1 in 20** marketers and PR professionals encounter no challenges whatsoever when analysing research data.”*



This means that in a room of twenty people, only one will be comfortable analysing research data.

👉 **And by zooming in on the few, we highlight the many.**

Showcase change

“Fastest growing”, “Most frequent”, “For the first time”

💡Ask a question about what’s happening now versus what happened in the past or what’s expected in the future, then look for the difference between the two. That gap is where the story lives.


10FOLD, AI - ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE, B2B LOYALTY, LOYALTY TECHNOLOGY, NEWS RELEASE, REPORTS

2025 Report Reveals Average B2B Content Volume Triples: Budgets Barely Budge

By: Wise Marketer Staff | Posted on August 27, 2025

10Fold commissioned Sapio Research to gather opinions from 400 senior marketing executives across North America and Europe. 89% of marketers say they’re increasing content output this year, and nearly half (46%) report producing three to five times more than in 2024. Yet most of those teams (76%) received only modest budget increases of one to ten percent. The average annual spend on content sits at $1.2 million, although a

In this example with 10Fold, we found that almost half of marketing professionals were producing three to five times more content than in 2024.

👉 **Highlighting shifts draws attention to trends, momentum and progress, all of which make your data feel alive and relevant.**

Transform your stats into compelling narratives

Extrapolate and scale

“Two hours a week” becomes “104 hours a year” or “14 working days.”

💡 Scaling helps your audience understand the real significance of a finding, transforming small numbers into big, tangible impacts.

During our research for National Women’s Enterprise Week, we found that 61% of 14–18-year-olds don’t feel encouraged by their teachers to consider owning their own business. We used ONS data to establish the scale of the problem, and here’s what we found:

> 61% of 14–18-year-olds do not feel encouraged by their teachers to consider owning their own business. That represents **2.3 million** young people and potential future business leaders (source: ONS, 2022) - that’s **more than the whole population of Latvia!**

These seemingly small language choices dramatically increase impact without changing the data itself.

👉 **Suddenly, the true scale of the problem becomes much clearer.**

FINAL TIPS

On how time-poor teams can get Step 2 (Craft) done quickly:

Data collection and analysis are now complete, and you're ready to start creating outputs. Before you do, compile the evidence:

- ✅ From the analysis, first identify the headline findings and overarching themes which are the structural foundations of the narrative
- ✅ Then, assess how each headline or theme addresses your research objectives and ideal narrative (step 1)
- ✅ If there are any that don't, ask yourself – why don't they? Are they important? If not, be ruthless

Curious to learn more?

Check out some of our popular resources!





Best practice guide for using statistics in PR & communications

Crunched by Numbers research report

How inefficient data analysis is costing agencies thousands of pounds a year

SAPIO RESEARCH

03. CREATE

Making your insight story land



This last step is about creating, packaging and amplifying your data-led story, FAST.

We won't dwell on the basics.

Instead, we'll focus on what we know works best based on what we see time and again with our clients:

1. Don't overcomplicate it
2. Apply the 80/20 rule
3. Choose the right formats

Don’t overcomplicate it

When time is short, communicating your insights well is even more crucial.

Now that the foundations are in place, it’s time to tell the full story and bring your insights to life with a creative output. That’s where great data storytelling will help you land a story much more quickly.

Be creative

You can be creative, using different narrative formulas and weaving data points from multiple sources. But the trick is to limit what you select, focusing only on the data that truly matters and adds value to the story you tell.

Sequence insights like a narrative

Organise your findings like a story, guiding your audience from the problem you’ve uncovered through to what should happen next.

Bring everything together

Always aim to address:

- The ‘so what?’ - what the story means for your audience
- Why they should care about it
- The ‘now what?’ - what they can do with the information



💡 Keep it short:

When the average attention span is shrinking faster than ever, short, sharp content built around one or two key “holy grail” stats can perform just as well as long-form articles or a 20-page report.

Apply the 80/20 rule

When time is short, communicating your insights well is even more crucial.

"Perfect is the enemy of done"

The Pareto Principle, also known as the 80/20 rule, suggests that 80% of results often come from 20% of effort. While it originated in economics, **it is just as useful as a time-management tool for research-led campaigns.**

It encourages teams to prioritise timely impact over perfection, delivering enough of the story when the moment is right rather than waiting to release everything too late.

Take two teams for example:

Team A, like many PR and marketing teams, prioritises the release of a comprehensive research whitepaper, supported by a number of press releases to extend reach. This often accounts for 80% of the overall campaign effort.

Over time, the team may revisit the topic through blog articles, podcasts, or interviews with subject matter experts — the remaining 20%, if time and resources allow.

⏰ **Research reports are powerful campaign anchors**,
but because they take time to produce, they tend to suit more planned, less reactive campaign timelines.

With the right sequencing, they can deliver long-term value, but they are rarely the fastest way to respond to immediate opportunities.
See what we mean on the next page...



💡 Key takeaway:

When timelines are tight, leading with a major report launch is often too ambitious, increasing the risk of missed deadlines.

Apply the 80/20 rule

So, what happens when teams focus on smaller deliverables first, applying 20% of their effort to achieve 80% of the impact?

For example, **Team B starts by showcasing a small number of high-impact insights**, using bold single-stat headlines delivered through short, punchy formats. This initial release sparks interest and opens the door to further conversation through short videos or podcasts.

This approach buys them time to develop a full research report. By the time it launches, the team has identified valuable contributors such as thought leaders, subject matter experts, and even clients and partners, and can incorporate their perspectives and reactions into the report, strengthening both credibility and impact.

As the campaign reaches its peak, the team extends its shelf life with more in-depth, high-quality content including blogs, articles, and interviews that explore the findings from different angles.

🎯 **Short, simple assets are initially faster to produce and easier to distribute**, allowing you to be more reactive and capitalise on timely opportunities without overloading your audience or your team.

✅ **This approach delivers additional benefits:**

- it buys you time to develop more resource-intensive outputs
- it creates space to involve valuable stakeholders
- it helps your spread activation across the year, maximising the value of your research

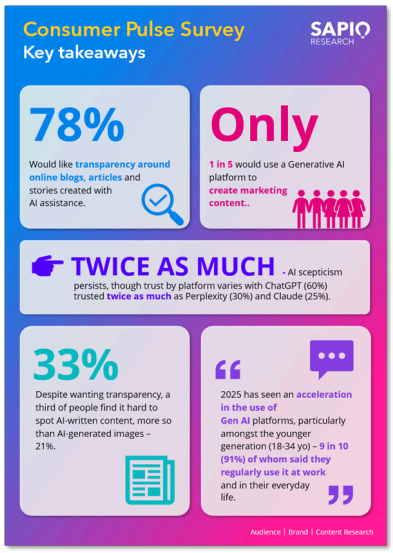


💡 This is how you can apply the 80:20 rule:

Start with a few high-impact insights to spark engagement and build momentum, then expand the story with more in-depth content over time.

Choose the right formats

Here are some examples of quick-win assets that you can build off your data.



Infographics

Infographics are perfect for presenting a few key findings at a glance. As highlighted in Step 2: Craft, remember to use a variety of narrative formulas to keep your design engaging.

💡 When focused on local markets or regions, infographics can be produced much faster than traditional country-level reports, enabling global marketing teams to quickly activate local campaigns.

Single, bold visual stats

They are one of the fastest ways to communicate insights, turning complex data into instantly digestible, attention-grabbing content. This format, particularly when animated, helps your audience process and remember information far more quickly than text.

💡 They also tend to be more shareable than other more traditional assets, making them the perfect choice for social media and other digital formats.



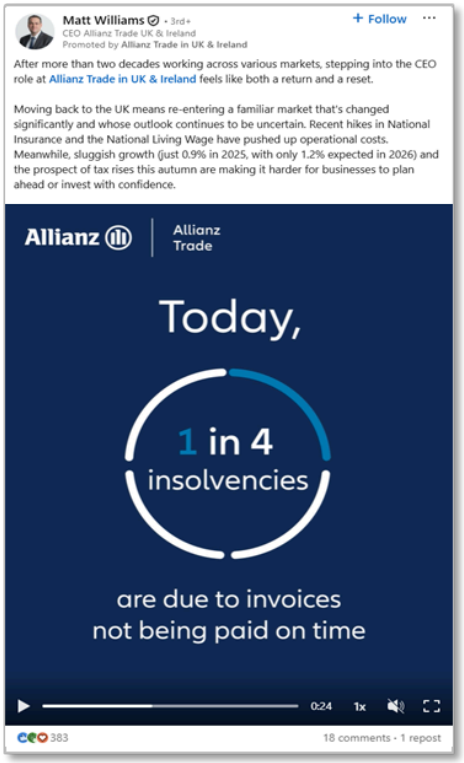
Choose the right formats

LinkedIn POV posts from spokespeople

The platform increasingly prioritises content from individuals over company pages, so sharing research-led insights through personal voices helps them travel further and feel more credible.

💡 Combined with single stat animations, posts from your subject matter experts are more likely to stop your audience from scrolling, be watched in full, and spark conversation and sharing, making them a powerful way to amplify your research quickly.





Thought leader ads

These are the obvious next step: they allow you to amplify your research insights by combining the credibility of an individual perspective with the scale of paid distribution.

💡 By putting budget behind bold, insight-led POV posts, you can extend reach beyond organic networks, target the right audiences precisely, and maximise engagement with your research insights while they are still timely and relevant.

FINAL TIPS

On how time-poor teams can get Step 3 (Create) done quickly:

- ✅ **Let performance guide what comes next:**
  Early reactions and engagement are valuable signals. Use them to refine angles, double down on what resonates, and share personal perspective with confidence.

- ✅ **Design for reuse from the start**:
  Think in modular assets that can be easily adapted across channels, helping you extend the life and value of your research without slowing down.

Curious to learn more?

Check out some of our popular resources!



Why sponsor thought leadership posts in B2B marketing

Data storytelling vs. data visualisation

The art of storytelling in research

The complete guide to thought leadership

The complete guide to content marketing



Conclusion

Turning data into compelling stories does not have to be slow, complex, or resource-heavy.

At Sapio Research, we witness first-hand how switching between data analysis and creative storytelling can be a major productivity killer for our clients.

That's why we created **Data to Story®**. Our secure AI platform helps you interpret quantitative survey data faster and turn it into compelling insight-led narratives.

DATA 2 STORY
By Sapio Research

If you have any questions or would like some more guidance as you put our 3C Framework into practice, get in touch!

Try it, test it, and share your feedback with us!



About us

At Sapio Research we all share the same drive and passion – providing data confidence for all.

We deliver robust, insight-led evidence that helps our clients understand their markets, build distinctive brands, and cut through the noise with standout content and headlines. Based in the UK, we work with a wide range of clients globally, from leading technology companies to marketing and PR agencies and consultancies.

Our enthusiastic, purpose-driven team of expert researchers specialises in both quantitative and qualitative research. We care deeply about our craft and are committed to delivering high-quality, honest insights. This means our clients can rely on us to tell them what we really believe, rather than what we think they might want to hear!



Andrew White
CEO & Co-Founder



Jessica Bunce
COO & Co-Founder

SAPIO RESEARCH

Audience • Brand • Content Research

(+44) 0207 2361 604
team@sapioresearch.com
sapioresearch.com

Certified B Corporation

Sapio Research
Pentagon House
52-54 Southwark Street
London
SE1 1UN