Getting Your Products to Market Faster

A Guide to Agile, Iterative Research
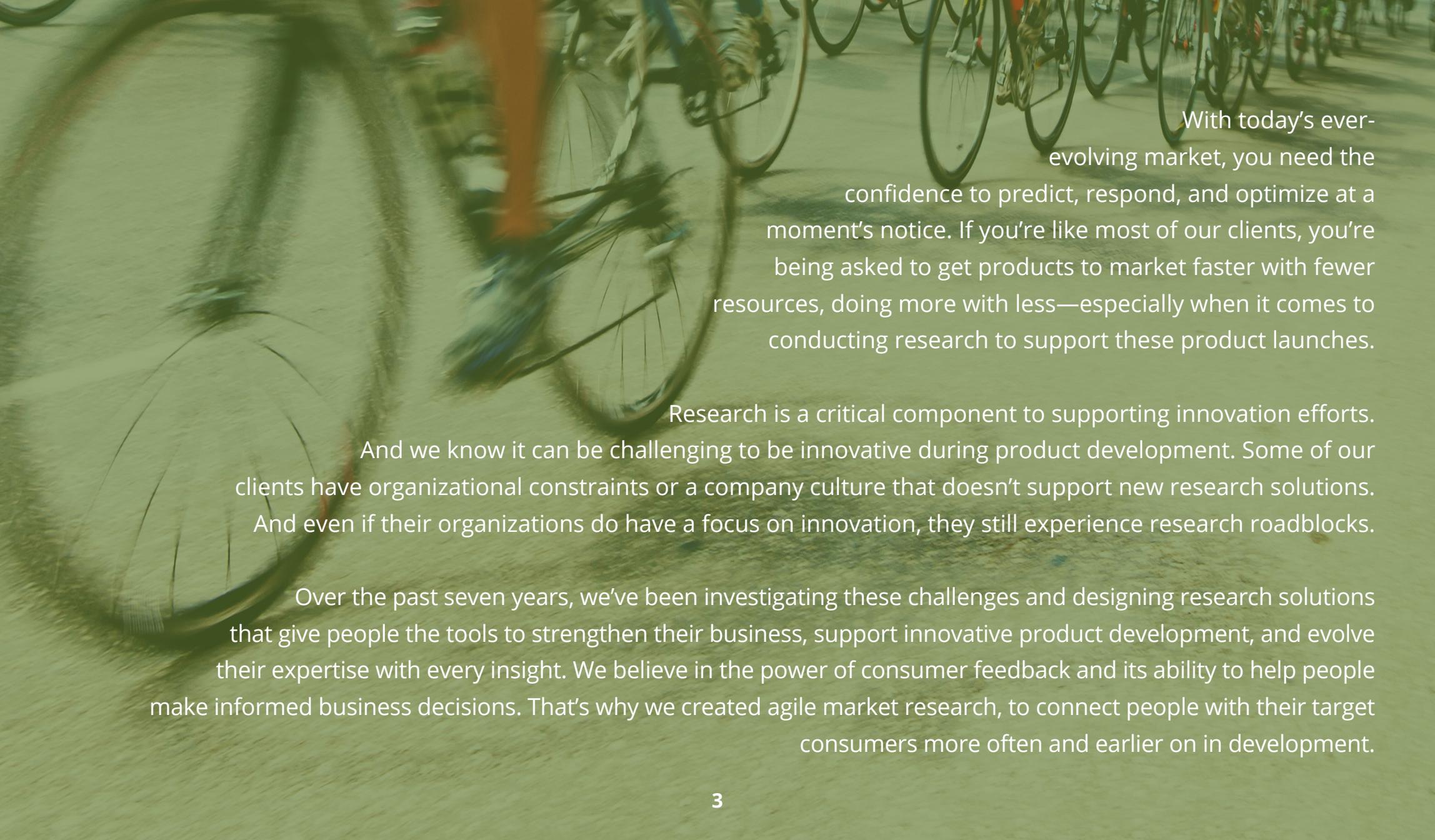
GutCheck®

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A Guide to Agile, Iterative Research

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With today's ever-evolving market, you need the confidence to predict, respond, and optimize at a moment's notice. If you're like most of our clients, you're being asked to get products to market faster with fewer resources, doing more with less—especially when it comes to conducting research to support these product launches.

Research is a critical component to supporting innovation efforts. And we know it can be challenging to be innovative during product development. Some of our clients have organizational constraints or a company culture that doesn't support new research solutions. And even if their organizations do have a focus on innovation, they still experience research roadblocks.

Over the past seven years, we've been investigating these challenges and designing research solutions that give people the tools to strengthen their business, support innovative product development, and evolve their expertise with every insight. We believe in the power of consumer feedback and its ability to help people make informed business decisions. That's why we created agile market research, to connect people with their target consumers more often and earlier on in development.

Based on industry experience, we define agile market research as any tool or methodology that is fast, flexible, and affordable, enabling people to quickly obtain actionable insights to address key business questions.

Agile research methodologies are simply agile approaches to research practices that have been around for decades. They don't abandon the foundational research principles upon which they are built; they take the best of more traditional methods and fuse technological advances with human expertise.

We practice what we preach and use agile research methods to check in with our own clients, as well as those who are unfamiliar with agile research, to better understand its perceptions and associations. Here's what some researchers and marketers familiar with agile research within the consumer packaged goods and food and beverage industries had to say about agile research in a recent survey we conducted.

"Having the ability to be iterative in collecting feedback is a huge advantage."

*"I think the biggest problem agile research solves is how quickly **you could get answers to help you make informed business decisions.**"*

*"Agile research is very important when you have a fast-paced go-to-market strategy for new product development. Especially in the world of consumer packaged goods where there is constant innovation, **it's critical to have sound data and research supporting the product you are launching** to make sure there is a place for it in the market, and most importantly, a demand for it."*

Agility & Iteration

Explore

Define

Refine

Execute

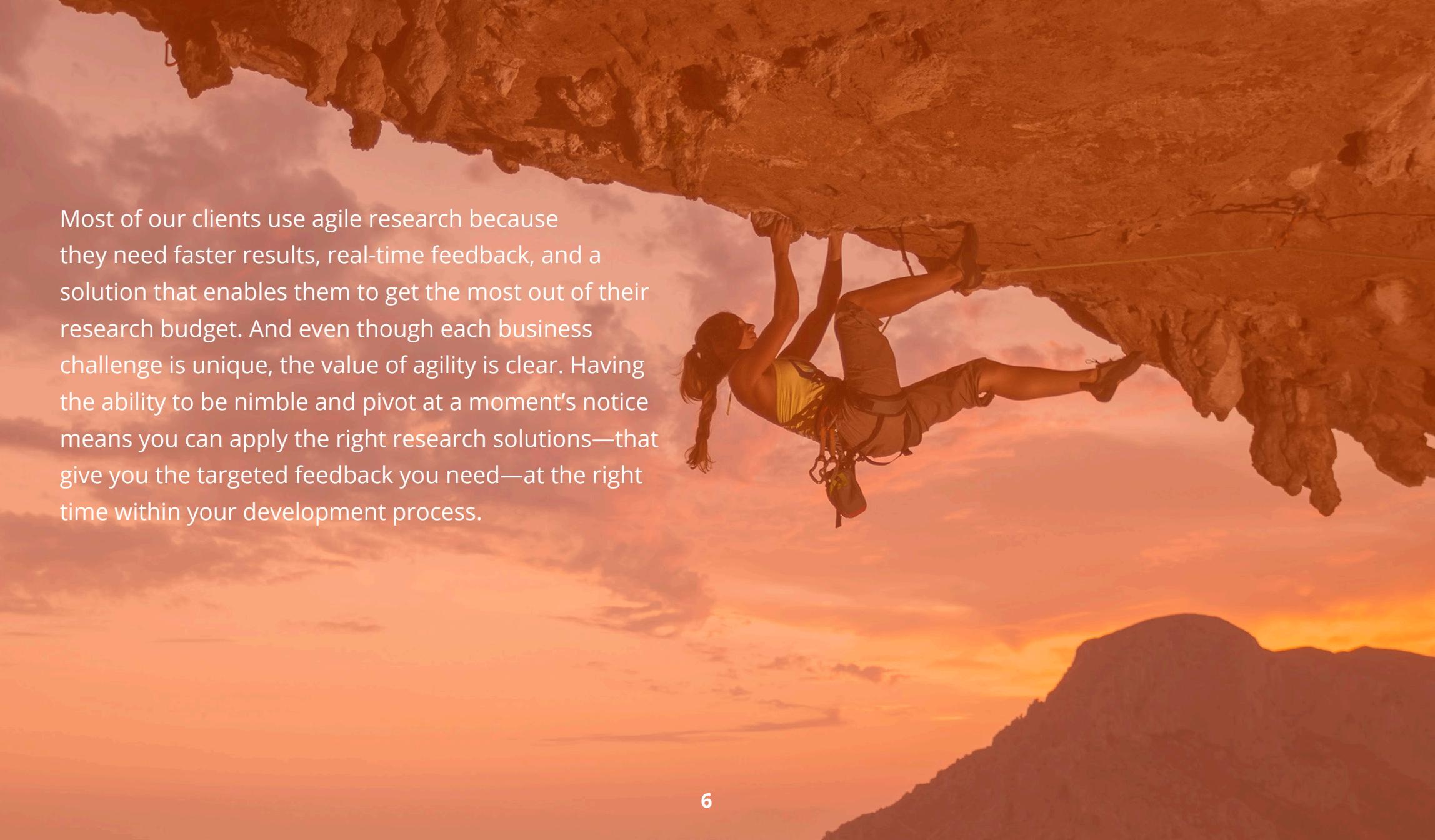Having conducted thousands of studies with an agile, full-service approach, we strongly believe in the benefits of iterative learning as you progress through development. Applying an iterative approach, like the process to the left, gives you more opportunities to be thoughtful and react confidently, whether it's decision making for quicker, short-term goals or for an ultimate goal of moving products to market faster.

Agile research follows the same principles; its speed and affordability enable this process, especially for product development. Many of our clients use this cyclical approach multiple times within each phase of development as needed to capture influential feedback.

Most of our clients use agile research because they need faster results, real-time feedback, and a solution that enables them to get the most out of their research budget. And even though each business challenge is unique, the value of agility is clear. Having the ability to be nimble and pivot at a moment's notice means you can apply the right research solutions—that give you the targeted feedback you need—at the right time within your development process.

Industries

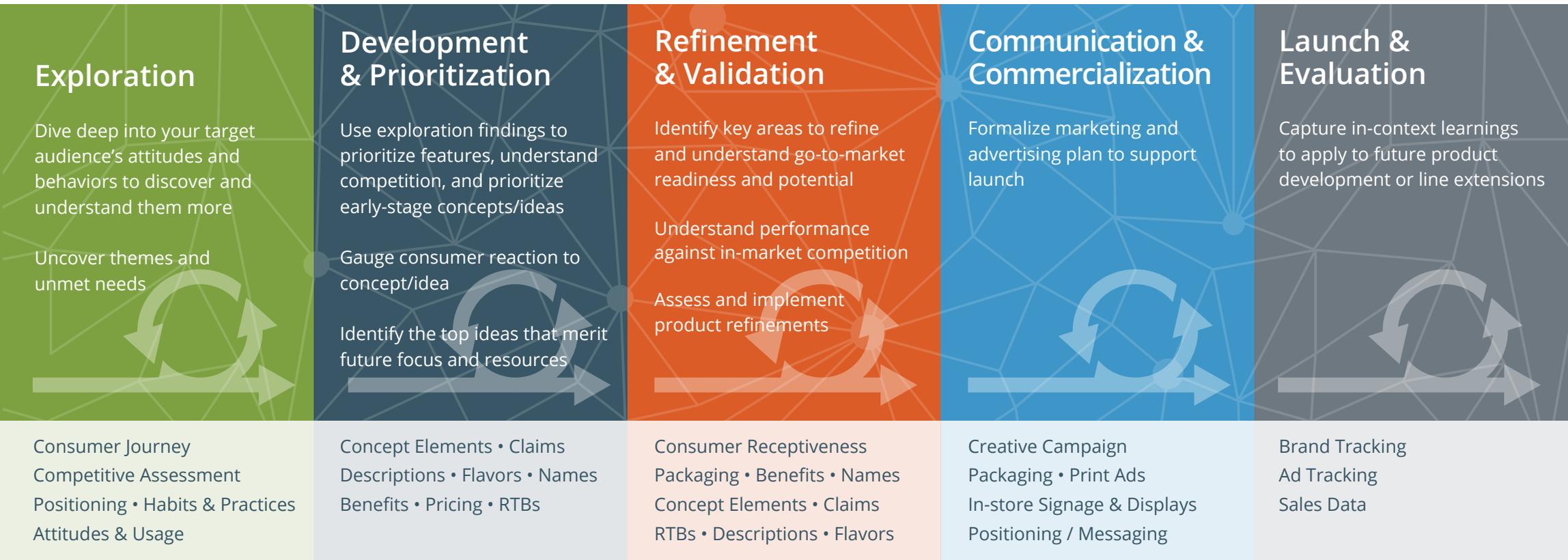This eBook is a guide to conducting research in an iterative way throughout new product innovation and development. These best practices are based on thousands of studies conducted over the past seven years with clients in consumer packaged goods, food and beverage, and more. What follows is a look at how our clients use agile research to save resources and get products to market faster using quality consumer feedback.

New Product Innovation & Development *Food & Beverage, Consumer Packaged Goods*

Here's a breakdown of the average product development process. Each phase includes main objectives we find clients are trying to meet as well as types of topics and/or stimuli you can test within each. Of course, every process and initiative is slightly unique, which is why it's important to work with a flexible, knowledgeable research provider who can tailor research studies to your specific business needs.

Exploration

Dive deep into your target audience's attitudes and behaviors to discover and understand them more

Uncover themes and unmet needs

Consumer Journey
Competitive Assessment
Positioning • Habits & Practices
Attitudes & Usage

Development & Prioritization

Use exploration findings to prioritize features, understand competition, and prioritize early-stage concepts/ideas

Gauge consumer reaction to concept/idea

Identify the top ideas that merit future focus and resources

Concept Elements • Claims
Descriptions • Flavors • Names
Benefits • Pricing • RTBs

Refinement & Validation

Identify key areas to refine and understand go-to-market readiness and potential

Understand performance against in-market competition

Assess and implement product refinements

Consumer Receptiveness
Packaging • Benefits • Names
Concept Elements • Claims
RTBs • Descriptions • Flavors

Communication & Commercialization

Formalize marketing and advertising plan to support launch

Creative Campaign
Packaging • Print Ads
In-store Signage & Displays
Positioning / Messaging

Launch & Evaluation

Capture in-context learnings to apply to future product development or line extensions

Brand Tracking
Ad Tracking
Sales Data

New Product for an Existing Brand:
A Detailed Case Study

Let's take a closer look at each of these phases and what questions can be answered within each. We'll walk through some research examples that correlate with each phase so you can better understand how agile methods can be valuable tools in your research toolkit.

For each phase, we'll share excerpts from a story about how the *Good For All** brand launched a new snack bar.

* Brand name has been changed for privacy purposes.

Exploration

1 group of
20 respondents

Background

The *Good For All* brand was looking to understand more about their target audience's attitudes and behaviors on snacking prior to developing new snack bar concepts.

Qualitative
Exploratory
Research Group™

Objectives

• Explore unmet needs within the snack space

• Understand occasions by asking consumers to snap pictures of when they needed an on-the-go snack bar

• Identify respondents' favorite healthy snacks by asking them to take a video of going to the pantry to pick out their favorite healthy snacks and talk about why they like them

• Males & females
• Ages 18+
• Purchased & consumed fruit-based snack bar within past 30 days
• Seeking healthier foods

Results

The *Good For All* team came out of the exploration process with a much better sense of the following areas based on qualitative feedback from their target audience:

• Learned there is an unmet need for a specific type of on-the-go snack bar.

• Understood which usage occasions fit best with consumer lifestyles.

• Identified which nutritional benefits stand out to consumers on the shelf.

7 days recruit
to report

Next Steps

• Use consumer feedback to develop concepts for prioritization phase.

Recruit to report refers to the number of business days from the start of respondent recruitment to the final report deliverable.

Concept Development & Prioritization

Background
Coming out of the exploration phase, the *Good For All* team created 12 concepts based on the consumer feedback they received. Then, they wanted to assess which 3 concepts were most viable for future development.

Objectives
- Prioritize 12 concepts to identify which 3 concepts should move forward in development
- Use heat map analysis to identify specific areas of likes and dislikes
- Use sentiment analysis to pinpoint areas of opportunity to refine the concepts

Concept Name	Purchase Intent	Believability	Uniqueness
Pow Snx	68%	73%	74%
Chi-Yeah!	60%	76%	70%
Kale [2]	47%	78%	69%
Mean	58%	75%	71%

GutCheck Concept vs. Mean Scorecard Comparison
Statistical significance is determined by a 2-tailed test and sample size of N=200 per concept.

Results
Significant differences in purchase intent gave Pow Snx the edge over other snack concepts.
- Identified top 3 concepts to move forward into refinement.
- Learned that taste and believability were key areas to improve in refinement.
- Isolated key areas of dislike from sentiment analysis and heat maps.

Next Steps
In refinement phase, look into areas of dislike from heat maps to refine packaging design for top concepts. Take into consideration the likes and dislikes for other concepts to incorporate into winning concept accordingly.

Sample Size
300 respondents
N=100 per concept

Methodology
Quantitative Concept Prioritizer™ (sequential monadic design)

Stimuli Tested
12 concepts

Target Audience
- Males & females
- Ages 18+
- Purchased & consumed fruit-based snack bar within past 30 days
- Seeking healthier foods

Timeline
7 days recruit to report

Qualitative Refinement

Background

Based on the results from the prioritization in the previous round, the team wanted to learn more about the flavors that were appealing and unappealing as well as any packaging improvements that could be made.

Objectives

- Gauge consumer response to 3 product concepts, with emphasis on consumer language
- Explore perceived emotional and functional benefits of new product concepts
- Evaluate opportunities for concept improvement prior to validation, with focus on red flags or points of confusion/disbelief

Results

- Chi-Yeah! was a polarizing snack because of its strong health cues but unappealing flavor combinations.
- Chi-Yeah!'s name was a barrier, seemed unprofessional, and didn't indicate the bar's true ingredients/flavors.
- Respondents expected this product to be in the granola bar aisle, not with the vitamins.

Next Steps

- Revise concepts based on refinement feedback gathered from this phase; test 2 most appealing concepts with Competitive Checkpoint to focus on market potential relative to a set of key competitors.

Sample Size
1 group of 30 respondents

Methodology
Qualitative Concept Refiner™

Stimuli Tested
3 concepts

Target Audience
- Males & females
- Ages 18+
- Purchased & consumed fruit-based snack bar within past 30 days
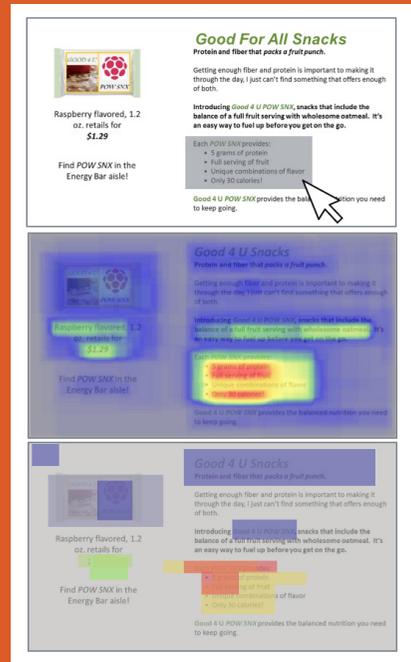- Seeking healthier foods

Timeline
8 days recruit to report

Quantitative Validation

Background
For validation, the team wanted to see how the top 2 concepts competed against other products already in market and understand breakthrough potential.

Objectives
- Understand how top 2 concepts compare to a relative competitive set; identify specific areas *Good For All* should focus on for improvements in product development and successful messaging before introducing to market

Results
Pow Snx has potential for in-market success.
- The product promises of protein and energy drove high scores in uniqueness and quality, but key ingredients like flax and soy negatively impacted flavor and believability scores.
- 2 competitive concepts had significantly higher purchase intent due to berry flavors.

Next Steps
- *Good For All* should reevaluate ingredient list and reduce emphasis on quantifying polarizing ingredients on packaging; Pow Snx should emphasize raspberries.
- Seek other ways to drive value of the product instead of solely relying on ingredients and nutrition.

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Sample Size
400 respondents
N=200 per concept

Methodology
Quantitative Competitive Checkpoint™ (sequential monadic design)

Stimuli Tested
7 concepts
- 5 competitors
- 2 client

Target Audience
- Males & females
- Ages 18+
- Purchased & consumed fruit-based snack bar within past 30 days
- Seeking healthier foods

Timeline
8 days recruit to report

Communication & Commercialization

Background
As the team began to finalize the marketing and advertising plan for the new snack bar product, they needed to understand which of 2 advertisements would be best to communicate the overall message and support commercialization.

Objectives
- Understand main takeaways consumers have from messaging
- Identify what is and is not working; compare preferences across creative executions

Results
- Intended messaging came through clearly, though it resonated more with women than men.
- Length of creative was too long for some, but there was a clear preference for execution #1.

Next Steps
- Consider ways to appeal to both men and women; develop slightly shorter version for lower attention spans.

Sample Size
2 groups of 20 respondents each

Methodology
Qualitative Pre-LinkNow™

Target Audience
- Males & females
- Ages 18-44
- Non-rejectors of main fruit bar ingredients

Timeline
7 days recruit to report

Agile research can be used within each phase of a more extensive creative development process as well.

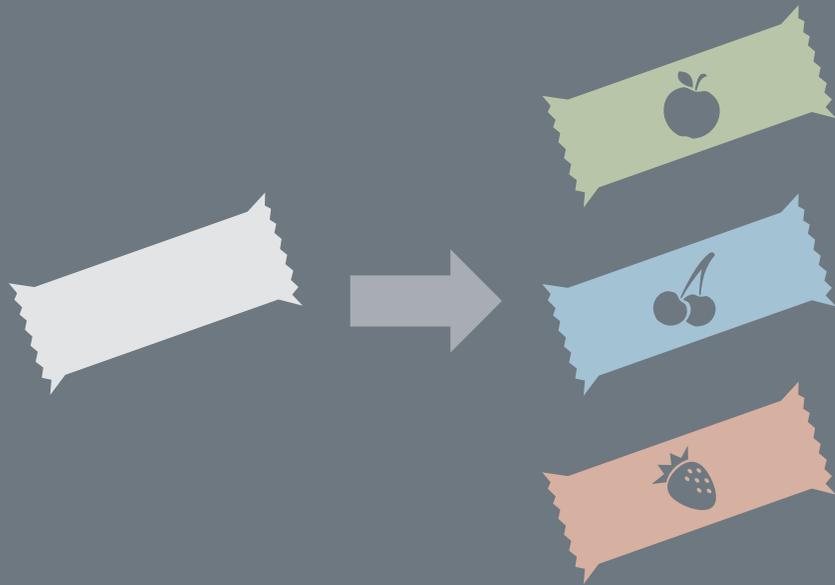| Exploration | Big Idea | Early-Stage Creative | Post-Production | In-Market |

Launch & Evaluation

After successfully passing validation and understanding market potential with volumetrics, *Good For All*'s snack bar was launched and is currently in market, meeting initial sales goals, with growing awareness in the marketplace.

The initial flavors were successful and the team has begun discussing opportunities for line extensions.

"Using agile research throughout the development of our snack bar allowed us to move forward with confidence every step of the way instead of having meetings upon meetings and going around in circles internally."

– Consumer Insights Director, Food & Beverage

Even if you aren't using agile research methodologies throughout every stage of development like the case study we shared, they can be incredibly valuable wherever you need to apply them, notably when you need to conduct research to make big decisions. If you're working with a capable, experienced agile research provider, they'll have the right parameters in place to ensure you get quality insights within your budget and timeline, even if both are limited. There's a common misconception around agile research that you have to sacrifice quality for speed and affordability. In our experience, we find that to be untrue, and have clients—including some of the world's leading brands—to attest to that.

Client Case Studies

Premium Baby Care Brand Assesses Competitive Landscape in 9 Days

A product team was expanding their offerings and needed to know how stroller concepts would stack up against competitors. They needed feedback from new and expectant mothers on prices and designs to identify product improvements and assess market potential.

Solution
Using a quantitative prioritization study that incorporates competitors, the team compared their concepts with in-market benchmarks to understand realistic performance potential and what elements mattered most to consumers.

Findings
- Certain features needed tweaking to make their stroller more valuable at the right price
- Uniqueness and believability scores had a huge impact on the strength of the concepts
- Optimization ideas are already fueling decisions for two future products

"You don't know what 'good' is without this type of study. We've done concept testing, but Competitive Checkpoint was more valuable for us because it shed light on different areas of the concept, showing us how we would do against competitors."
–Product Marketing Mgr.

Prioritizing & Refining New Packaging for Cosmetics

A major beauty brand was looking to expand its cosmetics offerings and needed to evaluate several packages to optimize and drive consumer appeal.

Solution
A simultaneous, two-phase study was used to evaluate concepts quantitatively on metrics like purchase intent, color likeability, and fit with brand; packaging line-ups were tested qualitatively to uncover opportunities for refinement.

Findings
- Certain product shapes were perceived to be higher quality.
- Consumers associated certain colors with the brand and shared ideas on where they should be most prominent.
- To improve quality perceptions, the logo and branding needed to be relocated.

"When working within beauty, everything about the product is linked to an emotion, from the product itself to packaging and advertising. The only real way to capture a deeply personal insight, which will help you evoke that emotion in consumers, is through qualitative research. Never underestimate the power of qualitative research."
–Global Innovation Insights Mgr.

Suja, an Organic Juice Co., Redesigns Packaging for Leading Product Line

Product innovation timelines for this marketing team are six weeks from concept to shelf. A team of three needed to know how to redesign their packaging to differentiate Suja's products from the many category brands and appeal to both of their consumer segments.

Solution
A qualitative refinement study was used to gauge likes, dislikes, appeal, and improvements for new packaging. Second, a quantitative approach focused on prioritizing packaging sets based on uniqueness, product functionality, appeal, and more.

Findings
- New packaging outperformed older packaging by nearly a two-to-one ratio, giving the team confidence to move forward with the redesign.
- Easily recognized certification labels helped create trust in quality of product.

"This Suja product line is our number-one revenue driver and makes up the largest percentage of our portfolio; because of the risk involved in updating its packaging, this was one of the most important studies we've done as a company."
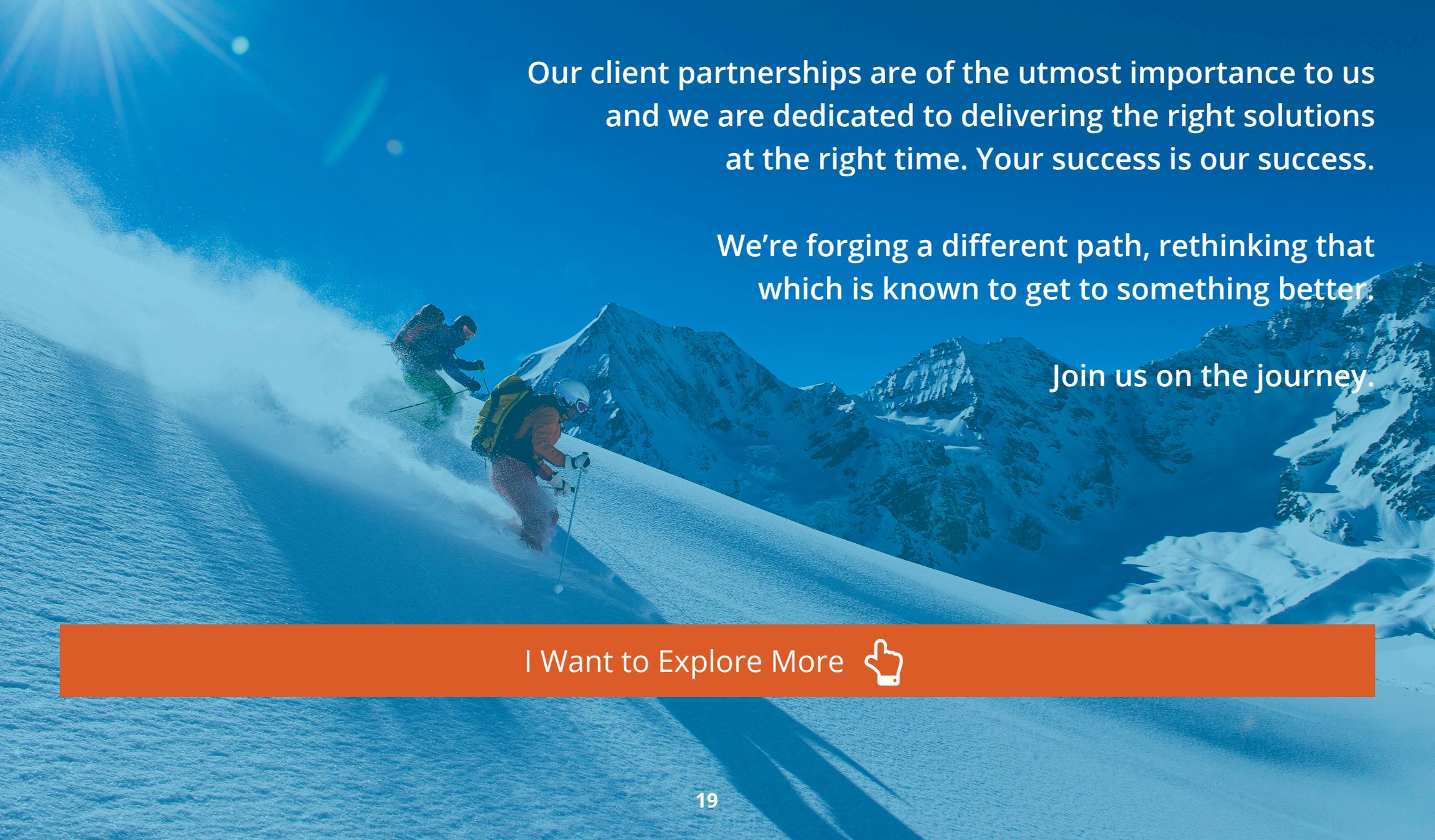–Brand Mgr.

About GutCheck

As the inventors of agile market research, it is our mission to deliver actionable answers at the speed of your business. Since 2010, we've tested more ideas, concepts, and ads in a full-service approach than any other agile research provider. Our methodologies are built to provide clients precision in sampling, targeted recruitment, study design, and analysis.

We have a team of expert researchers with experience in multiple industries and several different types of tried-and-true methodologies, not just agile ones. Because we've automated certain steps of the research process that don't add value, our researchers are able to focus where it really matters: designing research that fits your unique needs and analyzing data with the context of your business and key questions in mind.

We are currently the largest agile research team with over 200 agile market research experts bringing the model to 30+ countries and 20+ languages—the breadth and coverage needed to innovate on a global scale.

Our client partnerships are of the utmost importance to us and we are dedicated to delivering the right solutions at the right time. Your success is our success.

We're forging a different path, rethinking that which is known to get to something better.

Join us on the journey.

I Want to Explore More

A Quick Guide to Our Solutions

Because no two clients' needs are the same, we know our agile research solutions aren't always the best fit. As such, we recommend working with a full-service research provider who can apply their research design expertise to make sure you're getting the most out of the methodology you do choose. Here are a few examples of the products our clients use throughout ideation and development to find success.

Exploratory Research Group ●
Qual study to learn about a target audience's attitudes and behaviors using exploratory questions
About 7 days recruit to report

Agile Attitudes & Usage ●
Quant approach to explore an audience and/or category
About 10 days recruit to report

Mobile Shop-Along ● ● ●
Qual approach to assess in-store experience or feedback through actual in-store shopping activities
About 10 days recruit to report

Recruit to report refers to the number of business days from the start of respondent recruitment to the final report deliverable.

Concept Prioritizer ●
Quant test that presents a set of stimuli to targeted consumers to rate on key metrics; statistical testing is used to identify top performers
About 7 days recruit to report

Concept Enhancer ●
Qual study that presents a set of early-stage concepts and gathers consumer feedback to identify opportunities to enhance the product
About 8 days recruit to report

Concept Refiner ●
Qual study that gathers feedback on late-stage product concepts and identifies key areas to refine
About 7 days recruit to report

Creative Prioritizer ●
Quant test that presents a set of creative ideas to targeted consumers to rate on key metrics; statistical testing is used to identify top performers
About 7 days recruit to report

Feature Prioritizer ●
Quant analysis that categorizes customer satisfaction with different product features using the Kano model; prioritizes which features to focus on in product development
About 6 days recruit to report

Pricing Evaluator ●
Quant test that identifies preferred price ranges for products in new categories
About 7 days recruit to report

Agile IHUT ●
Qual in-home usage trial where prototypes or finished products are shipped to a targeted consumer group to gather feedback on trial and usage
About 10 days recruit to report

Competitive Checkpoint ●
Quant concept test that compares your product concepts against in-market competitors to evaluate market potential
About 8 days recruit to report

Pre-LinkNow with Kantar Millward Brown ●
Qual study that uses Millward Brown's Link™ framework for creative evaluation and optimization
9 days recruit to report

| Exploration | Development & Prioritization | Refinement & Validation | Communication & Commercialization | Launch & Evaluation |

GutCheck®

Actionable Answers. Achievable Change.