

Beyond Surveys

**A practical guide to getting more
out of your research data**

Learn how to make your reports:

- Credible
- Holistic
- Relatable
- Digestible
- Actionable



Who this guide is for

This guide is **for B2B marketers, PR professionals and communications teams who use research** to fuel content and thought leadership, whether that's a single press release or a full campaign.



If you're looking to make your research stand out, from your own past reports or from what others in your space are publishing, this is for you.

We cover five reasons research reports fail to land with readers, journalists and stakeholders.

From data that lacks credibility to findings with no actionable takeaways, **we explain the impact and practical techniques to fix all of them.**

Every technique is illustrated with a real project we've delivered, so you can see exactly how it works in practice, not just in theory.

We surveyed 300 people who regularly read research reports, and then built this guide around what they told us.



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The problem

Getting thought leadership research noticed is harder than it used to be.

Journalists are busier than ever - they're wading through a growing pile of AI-generated releases that don't give them anything to write about.

Meanwhile, your target audience is surrounded by other research reports, articles and webinars, all competing for the same attention.

Cutting through the noise demands thought leadership content that's clear, distinctive and relevant.

For that to happen your content can only be as strong as your evidence, and that comes from strong data-backed research. So for your insights to land, they need to do two things:

Be interesting

Share a fresh angle, a surprising finding, or a useful perspective that makes people want to keep reading and talk about it.

Be useful

The best way for a reader to remember you is if they've taken your insight and used it for making a decision.

We know that's easier said than done - that's where our techniques come in.

What we found

We surveyed 300 decision makers who regularly read research reports and white papers to understand their habits and frustrations.

99% of the respondents told us they'd experienced a frustration when reading a research report. **These five frustrations came up again and again:**

01 YOUR DATA LACKS CREDIBILITY

02 YOUR FINDINGS LACK A HOLISTIC VIEW

03 YOUR FINDINGS ARE NOT RELATABLE

04 TOO MUCH INFORMATION

05 NO ACTIONABLE TAKEAWAYS



But there's a fix for all of them.

In this guide, we share our tried and tested research techniques (*with client examples*) to help you solve all the above pain points and build genuinely powerful stories.

Frustration #1

Your data lacks credibility

Numbers on their own can feel abstract.

Not everyone is comfortable with statistics, and while data is great at informing, it can feel impersonal.

When a message doesn't have an emotional connection, it can struggle to land. And when it doesn't land, the story struggles to cut through the noise.

In reality, people connect with people more than they connect with pure data. A stat tells your audience what. It rarely tells them why it matters to them.

Learn how to fix it...

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The solution: Qualitative quotes

Integrating a handful of qualitative interviews, and a few quotes, adds a depth and credibility that data alone can't reach.

Data

+

Voice

=

Impact

68%

say their comms
aren't landing

“

“we're saying the
right things –
they're just not
landing”



Something that
merges the data
and quote
together into a
decent headline



This works because:

- It puts a human voice to the numbers, making them feel real
- It makes the findings more credible and memorable
- It's great for storytelling, and gives the reader their, 'that sounds like us' moment

How to use them

Here are three tips for using quotes well



Be specific.

Choose who you speak to carefully. Who you speak to depends on the angle: an analyst for commentary, or the customers and leaders already in your sample if you want to validate what the data says.



Use verbatim quotes.

Don't reduce what someone told you into a paraphrased theme. Write it word for word. A summarised quote will never carry the same weight as their actual words.



Pair quotes with the data they support.

A quote about the challenges of adopting AI belongs next to the stat about AI adoption, not floating on a page by itself.



Our advice:

You don't need many voices.

A handful of well-chosen quotes can bring an entire report to life.

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Case study: Tech Mahindra

The challenge

Adaptive manufacturing is a highly technical area, and one that can feel far removed from most people's day-to-day experience.

Tech Mahindra needed findings that would feel credible to the people actually working in these environments.

Our approach

We surveyed 690 senior manufacturing decision-makers globally, all from organisations with more than 1,000 employees.

We blended quotes from Tech Mahindra executives as well as senior manufacturing leaders who interpreted the findings in their own words and explained what the data meant in practice.

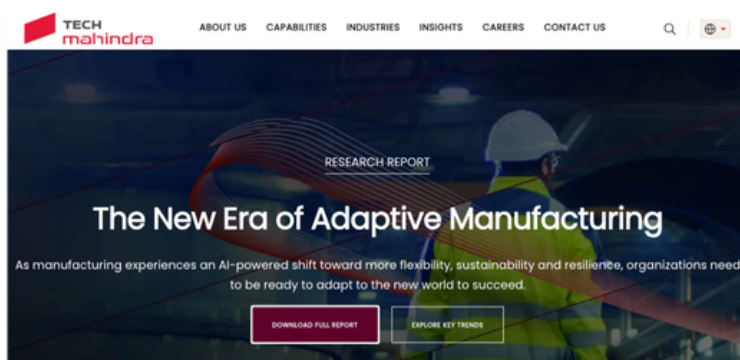


Case study: Tech Mahindra

The outcome

Abstract, technical findings became something readers could genuinely relate to, backed by the people living it every day.

By pairing hard data with real perspectives, the research moved from "here are some statistics about manufacturing" to a story people in the sector recognised as their own.



Tech Mahindra Unveils Global Report on Adaptive Manufacturing: A New Era of Intelligent, Agile, and Sustainable Industry

Pune, India | SEPTEMBER 01, 2025:

Tech Mahindra (NSE: TECHM), a leading global provider of technology consulting and digital solutions to enterprises across industries, today announced the launch of its latest global research report, **'The New Era of Adaptive Manufacturing'**. The report offers exclusive insights into how manufacturers are reimagining their operations to stay competitive in an era defined by disruption, complexity, and constant change.

Firms Invest in AI to Counteract Workforce Shortfall

The manufacturing sector has long struggled with workforce shortages. Appetite for blue-collar roles is waning among younger generations and some regions are suffering negative population growth and aging workforce. While technology can't directly replace human talent, **manufacturers are investing 11% of IT budgets into AI, and nearly half (46%) say the spend is driven by a skills scarcity**.

For many manufacturers - particularly in developed markets seeking to scale production - AI investment is as much about addressing labor shortages as it is about driving efficiency. The fact that nearly half of AI spend is prompted by skills scarcity highlights its role in augmenting, not replacing, human capability. By automating repetitive tasks, AI is freeing up time for skilled workers to focus on higher-value activities. Organizations need to balance AI initiatives with a human centered approach for sustainable, long-term success.

"New technologies are providing opportunities in efficiency, health and safety, flexibility and data-driven manufacturing. They're useful on the people side, too. In the old days, when an experienced maintenance operative left, all the knowledge left the business. Now we can use digital capabilities to help train new employees and transfer tacit knowledge."

CIO
A Fortune 500 specialty materials manufacturer



Manikantan NS
Global Head, Manufacturing
Service Line, Tech Mahindra

"To stem the tsunami of technical debt, in 2025, tech leaders will triple the adoption of AI for IT operations (AIOps) platforms."

Forrester
Predictions 2025: Technology & Security

1. <https://www.forrester.com/news-release/news-release-details/forrester-technology-security-predictions-2025-tech-leaders>

"The resiliency to the supply chain is being really challenged at every level right now."

Manufacturing Lead
Tech Mahindra

Frustration #2

Your findings lack a holistic view

A single audience only ever tells you one side of the story. Treat your sample as one uniform block, and the output can end up feeling one-dimensional.

Compelling stories often sit between audiences, in the gap between what one group thinks and what another does. Miss that gap, and you miss the opportunity it represents.

Perceptions can vary hugely between groups. There's a place for a focused, single-audience view, but it's just as important to remember the bigger picture.

Learn how to fix it...

The solution: Gap analysis

Comparing the difference between distinct groups gives you a multi-dimensional story to build.

Gap analysis is about finding the gaps between audiences, describing them, sometimes challenging them, and sometimes showing how to close them.



20%

Vs.



60%



Why this technique works:

It provides a holistic, multi-dimensional view of the market. When you research, compare and contrast distinct stakeholder groups, it allows a bigger picture to be captured.

This technique also supports future understanding, as today's contributors and mid-level managers are tomorrow's decision-makers, so engaging them now helps your brand stay in touch rather than become out of touch.

Furthermore, it encourages self-reflection, as readers naturally ask "which side of this am I on?", and people engage more when they recognise their own experience in a story.



Here's a bonus tip:

If you're planning to include gap analysis in your research (*i.e., before it goes live*), start by including additional groups to survey. For example, users vs decision makers, consumers vs businesses, etc.



And if you're planning to use gap analysis on data you already have (*i.e., post field work*), then focus on creating distinct groups in your cross breaks to compare the findings.

But where should you look for gaps?

Gap analysis works with almost any pair of groups. Common splits include:

- Users vs decision-makers
- Consumers vs businesses
- Employees vs managers
- Different regions, markets or generations

Case study: TeamViewer

The challenge

Digital friction and IT dysfunction exist in almost every organisation.

TeamViewer knew the problem existed, but wanted to demonstrate its impact and scale in a way that would resonate with both IT teams and everyday employees.

Our approach

We ran a multi-market, multi-audience survey of 4,200 respondents.

We measured revenue, profitability, expected profitability, market expansion and employee engagement, then compared results across several groups:

- employees vs managers,
- different markets
- different work environments (on-site, hybrid, remote)
- different generations.

Case study: TeamViewer

The outcome

The result was a visual, well-rounded report that made it hard for any reader not to recognise themselves in one of the groups.

Rather than a single, generic view of "digital friction," the research became something accessible and engaging to a genuinely broad audience, from frontline employees to senior IT leaders.

Key Findings	Gen Z (ages 18-28)	Baby Boomers (ages 61-79)
		
Workdays lost per month to digital friction	1.5	0.7
Have used personal devices or apps to bypass IT issues (Shadow IT)	52%	22%
Have considered leaving their company due to IT dysfunction	40%	12%
Say tech frustration has no impact on attrition	11%	47%
Report no digital friction frustrations at all	2%	12%



Frustration #3

Your findings are not relatable

87% From our research said they find it hard to relate to the findings.

And 84% said they'd be more likely to actually read a report if the story and data were more relatable.

But what does relatable really mean?

In simple terms it means easy to understand or connect with because it reminds you of your own life and shared experiences.

So the goal is to help readers understand the situation and feel personally connected to it.

Learn how to do it...

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The solution: Maturity models

This technique gives you a framework that lets your audience benchmark their progress against the wider market.

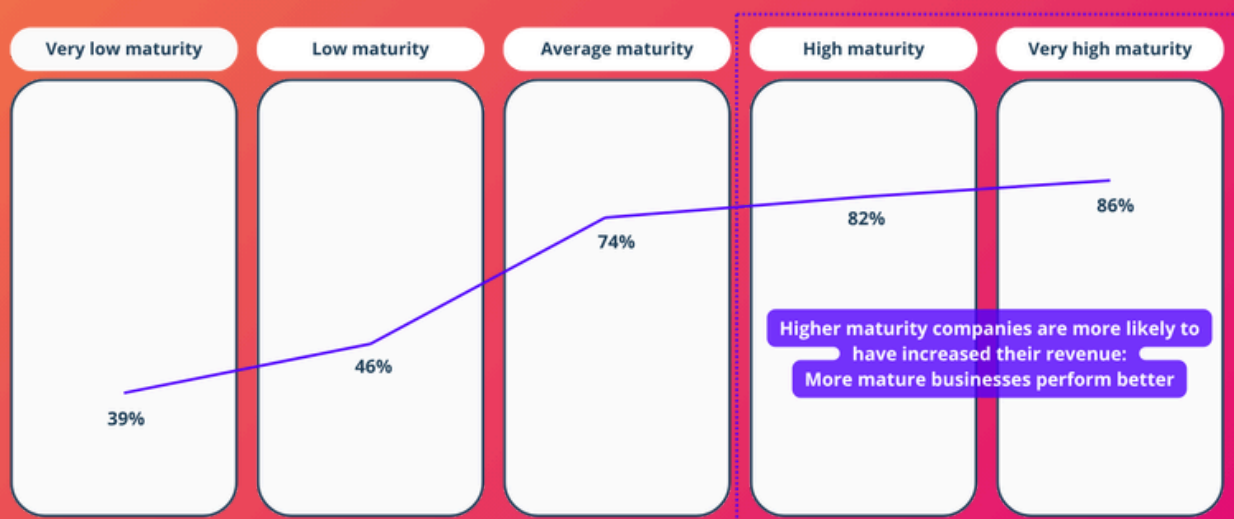
Where gap analysis and qualitative quotes work at a personal level, maturity models solve relatability at a business level.

The question shifts from "where do I fit?" to "where does my business sit?"



Example of a Maturity Model

Showing % of companies that increased their revenue over the past year



Why do maturity models work

➞ They're objective, yet relatable

Setting a framework for how an industry is progressing makes your report feel objective rather than promotional.

➞ They're versatile

Multiple levels of maturity and a range of success measures mean there's almost always something for a reader to relate to.

Maturity models also lend themselves to different formats like mini quizzes, interactive charts, benchmarking tools, etc.

➞ They're actionable

This technique makes it easy to build a roadmap showing what the next level of maturity looks like, the concrete steps to get there, and what a business stands to gain by reaching it. This gives readers something to act on, and keeps the report interesting.



Case study: EF Corporate Learning

The challenge

Leaders at multinational organisations already know language skills make a difference day to day. What's hard is quantifying that impact in monetary terms.

Education First (EF) wanted to answer a specific question, **'How can organisations measure the business outcomes of language training, particularly in hard ROI terms?'**

Our approach

We built the EF Corporate Learning Maturity Report around a maturity model with five distinct factors.

It explored the impact of corporate language training on:

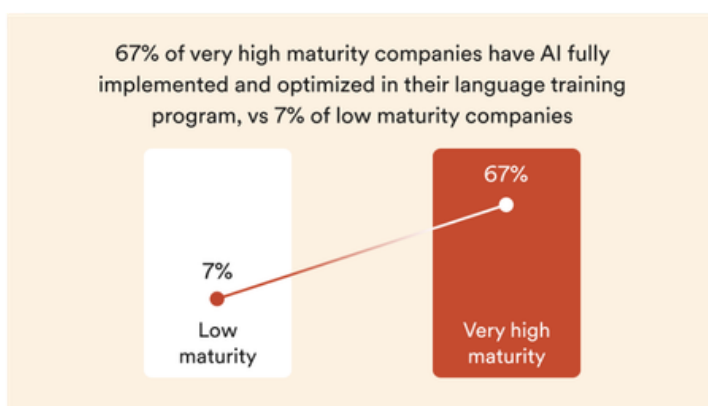
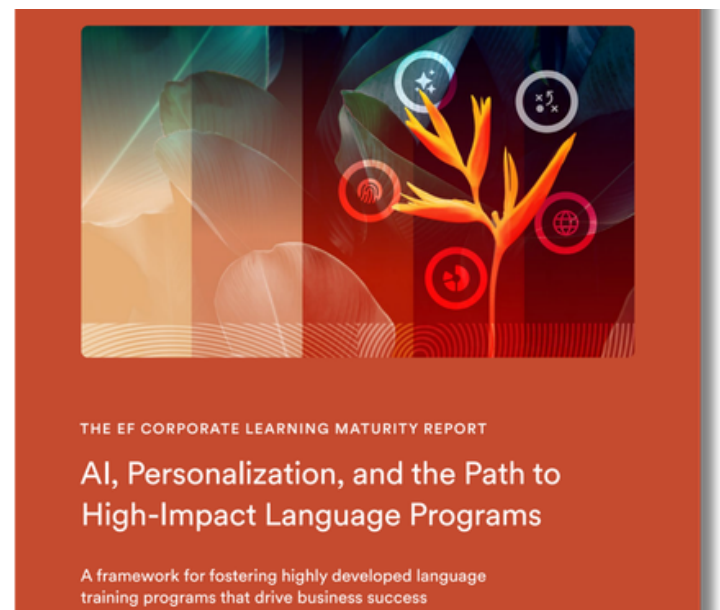
- business profitability
- using measures including revenue,
- profitability and expected profitability
- market expansion
- employee turnover

Case study: EF Corporate Learning

The outcome

The report demonstrated the real impact of language programmes, set out five clear areas for improvement, and showed the business trends associated with each level of maturity.

That gave EF a strong, evidence-based asset to prove ROI and make the case for investing in language training, giving readers something actionable rather than just interesting.



Frustration #4

Too much information



It's unlikely anyone is going to sit through a 50-page report, cover to cover, when it's packed with data.

Reports that move from one statistic to the next, without tying them together, can feel like they're not adding anything new to the conversation.

They come across as dull, with no clear hook for the media and nothing memorable for the reader to take away.

That's why your reports need to define what's happening in the market, instead of just reiterating the same problems.

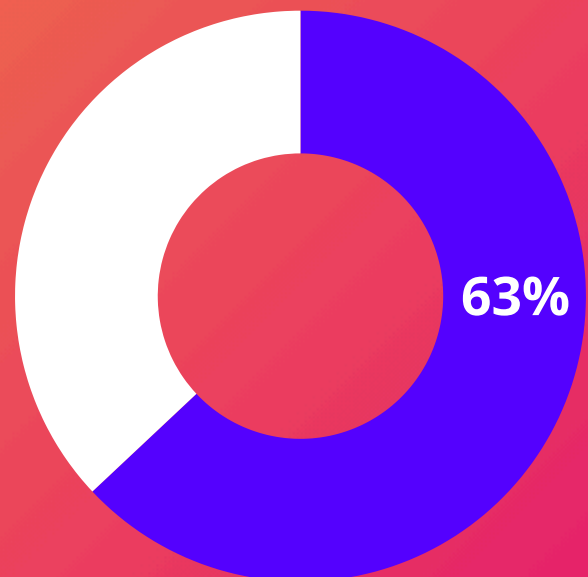
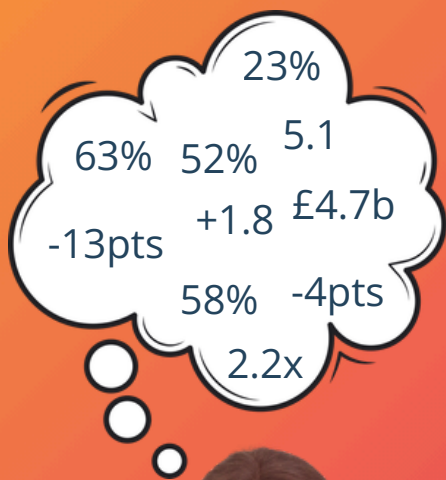
And here's how you do it...

The solution: Indices

The fix is to combine multiple data points into a single calculated score or index. This helps you go from data overload to a single trackable number.

Instead of a long list of separate measures, you create one score that summarises the bigger picture, something easier to understand, remember and repeat.

You can still show nuance by breaking that score down across sectors, roles, company sizes or countries, but the overall story stays simple.



Go from overwhelming data to a single trackable figure



Why do indices work

➔ It tackles complex data

A lot of scattered findings become one clear headline number or story.

➔ It creates a new view

The index becomes a lens your audience can use to understand the market and track change over time.

➔ It gives PR a powerful, ownable hook

Because the score is built on your framework and your methodology, it becomes difficult for competitors to replicate.

When done well, this is how a brand becomes known for owning a particular issue or conversation.

The Edelman Trust Barometer is a good example - it isn't just a survey result, it's a recognised measure Edelman has built credibility around over years.



How to use them

A useful index usually combines a small number of related sub-measures into one headline figure. For example, a market confidence index might combine:

- Demand
- Attribution
- Sentiment
- Volatility

Example index



Market Confidence Index

Q3 2026



Each sub-measure gets its own score, and they roll up into a single number the market can rally around, track regularly and quote.

The value is in creating a repeatable lens that your audience associates with your brand, and can come back to again and again.

Case study: Currie & Brown

The challenge

Currie & Brown, a construction consultancy, wanted to measure the cost of uncertainty in major construction projects.

Project delays, lost investor confidence and rescoping all create disruption and lost revenue across the sector, but quantifying or tracking that impact consistently was a real challenge.

Our approach

We interviewed 1,000+ senior construction decision-makers globally.

From this, we built a proprietary Construction Certainty Index to convert broad market sentiment into measurable, trackable data, asking about general confidence as well as the specific risk factors affecting businesses now and in the future.

By extrapolating the index against financial data, we were able to quantify the financial impact uncertainty was having on project timelines.

Case study: Currie & Brown

The outcome

The research was packaged into a recurring benchmark and thought leadership platform that Currie & Brown can produce year on year, building authority in the space with each release.

Construction certainty by sector

Sector	Time and budget	Risk	Sustainability	Technology adoption	AI impact	Overall certainty score
Healthcare	63	43	45	46	62	54
Pharmaceuticals	67	43	54	42	63	58
Hospitality	62	44	48	42	63	54
Education	63	43	46	41	61	54
Infrastructure	66	43	50	46	64	57
Real estate	68	44	50	44	61	58
Renewable energy	72	44	60	44	66	62
High-tech	69	42	52	41	64	58

The screenshot shows the top section of an event page. At the top is a navigation bar with 'FT LIVE' and links for 'HOME', 'AGENDA', 'VENUE', 'PARTNER', and 'HELP'. The main heading is 'BUILDING CERTAINTY INTO MAJOR CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS' in large, bold, black letters. Below this is a subtitle: 'Strengthening delivery in large-scale developments driving global growth' and the date '7 October 2025 | In-person & online | 150 Holborn, London'. A prominent orange button labeled 'VIEW AGENDA' is centered below the text. At the bottom, it says 'Presented by' followed by the 'FT LIVE' logo, and 'In Partnership with' followed by the 'CURRIE & BROWN' logo and tagline 'The Value of Certainty'.

The infographic is titled 'Conclusion: The Value of Certainty'. It features a graphic of a stylized building with a circular arrow around it. The text reads: 'This report underlines a critical truth: certainty is not a fixed state. It is a strategic advantage that must be built, maintained, and protected with intent. In a world where \$2.5 trillion in construction value can be lost in a year due to uncertainty, standing still is not an option. Construction must face this reality head-on. The organisations that succeed will be those that move deliberately, act early, and collaborate purposefully. They will treat risk not as a threat to be feared, but as a variable to be understood. They harness technology and data as levers for insight, not buzzwords for optics. They build collaborative teams with capability. And they seek partners who challenge the status quo and help them deliver with clarity, not complacency. Certainty isn't about avoiding risk; it's about absorbing it intelligently.' At the bottom, a dark blue box contains the text: 'So, here's the challenge: what will you do differently?' followed by a smaller line of text: 'This is a call to everyone involved in shaping the built environment: developers, asset owners, policymakers, designers, contractors, consultants, and investors, to reconsider how we plan, procure, and deliver. It's only by working together, with transparency, aligned incentives, and mutual accountability, that we can create the change the sector so urgently needs.'

What is uncertainty costing the world?

Step back, and the global picture is even more concerning. Applied to S&P Global's forecast for 2025 construction spending (\$15.6 trillion)¹ that 13.7% equates to \$2.5 trillion in lost value.



**This is a major lost opportunity.
And it's slowing down global economic growth
and infrastructure development.**

Frustration #5

No actionable takeaways

72% of research report readers use them to influence work decisions.

If a report doesn't give them anything to act on, it's unlikely to feel useful (*however interesting the findings are!*).

Research often tells us *what* people think. But there's a stronger opportunity to go one layer deeper, and show what actually drives change.

And here's how you do it...

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The solution: Regression analysis

Regression analysis sounds complex, but in a practical research sense it simply shows which factors are most strongly linked to the issue your audience cares about.

Take AI adoption as an example.

A report might show that employees are resistant to AI, and whilst it identifies the issue, it doesn't show the cause.

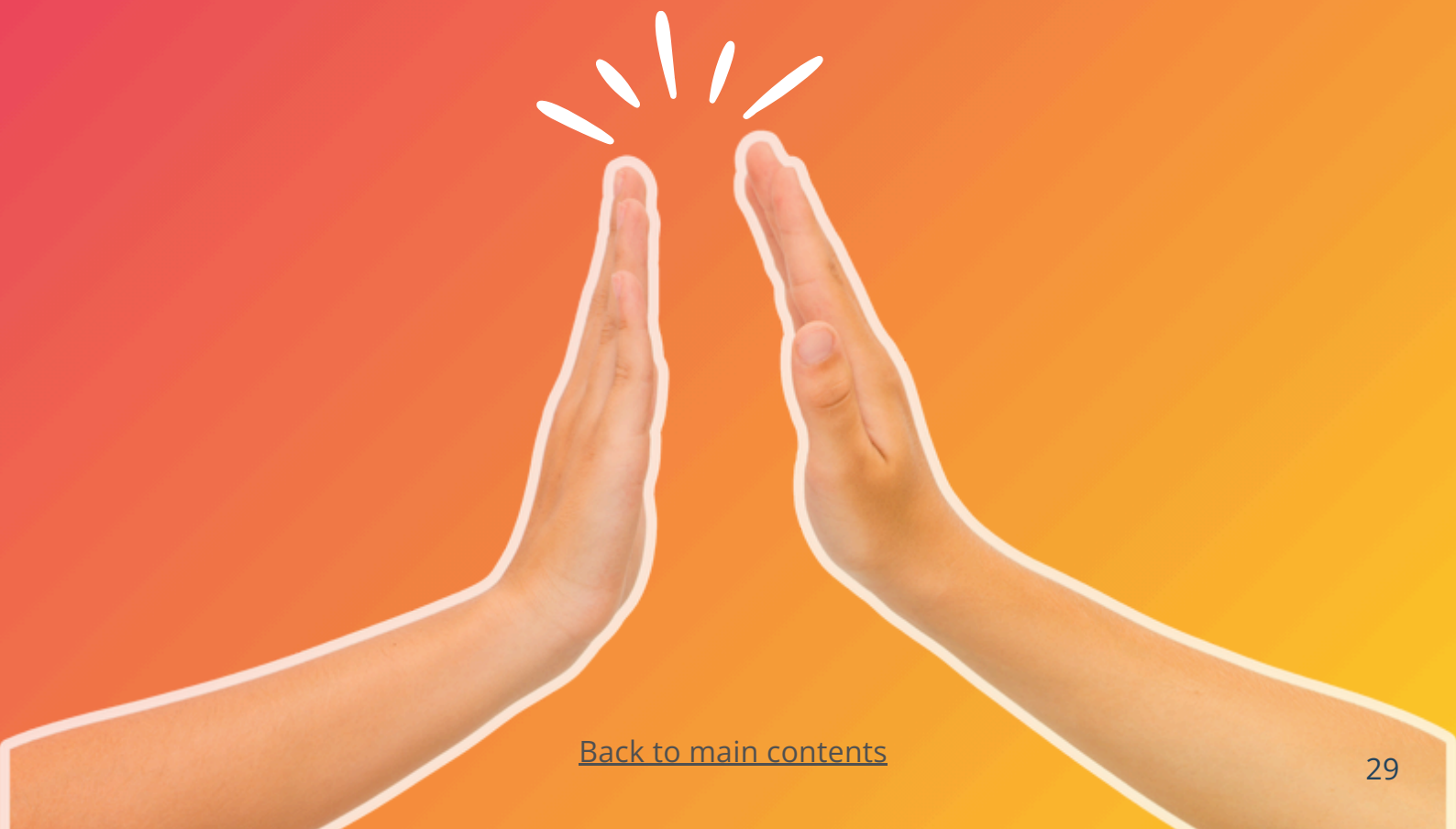
To make the report actionable, we recommend measuring that resistance against possible causes, such as limited training, unclear guidance or a lack of trust, and you can see which factors are actually driving resistance.



Why does regression analysis work

- It moves research from interesting to actionable
- It gives readers practical guidance on where to focus their efforts, rather than a vague sense of the problem
- It's more accurate than simply asking people what they think is driving an issue.

Perceptual questions introduce bias around a respondent's role and priorities. *But regression analysis, built from what the business is doing well or can improve on, gives a more reliable read on the real cause.*



Case study: UKG

The challenge

UKG, a frontline workforce technology company, wanted an educational report for operational decision-makers.

Running a business with hundreds or thousands of frontline workers creates real inefficiencies, from absence and burnout to costly agency staff. Even small improvements can meaningfully affect profitability, but UKG's audience needed to know which levers to pull.

Our approach

Working with UKG's Value Advisory team, we identified the main cost factors, such as high staff turnover, and the inefficiencies linked to them, including training and onboarding.

We asked decision-makers about their current approach in each area, then used regression analysis to see which inefficiencies correlated most strongly with which cost factors.

We also asked about the monetary impact of each cost factor, such as agency staff costs, and combined that with the regression data to estimate potential savings.

Case study: UKG

The outcome

The research became a white paper hosted on UKG's website, as well as a strong piece of standalone marketing content. Since the findings were actionable, UKG could use them in sales conversations with customers and prospects, positioning them as a helpful partner rather than a standard vendor.



Introduction and research methodology

This report is based on a quantitative study of 1,400 organisations with more than 1,000 employees.

Commissioned by UKG and conducted by Sapio Research in October 2025, the research examines the operational and financial impact of everyday workforce challenges across HR, payroll, and workforce management.

Summary

Frustration	How to fix	Technique
Data lacks credibility	Include in-depth perspectives from your target audience	Qualitative quotes
One dimensional findings	Compare multiple groups to build a bigger picture	Gap analysis
Insights are hard to relate	Make your audience part of the story	Maturity models
Data is overwhelming	Create a single, measurable metric	Indices
No actionable takeaways	Provide practical, evidence-based advice	Regression analysis

If you have any questions or would like some more guidance on which research techniques suit you best, feel free to reach out to us.

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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!



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