30 Experts in 30 Days - Top Tips

Interview with Paul Laughlin

Tip #1

Pull multiple sources of data together to gain real insight into your customers.

Normally, you don't get what I'd really call insight. Doing just a piece of analysis or research doesn't provide real customer insight. You need to bring multiple sources together to get a deeper understanding.

Tip #2

Avoid the fracturing of insights.

Too often, I see businesses where data, analysis, and research are siloed in different departments. When they are divided, you don't get the convergence of evidence and you don't get the joined up use of all that information to do something that is consistent and intelligent for your customers.

Tip #3

Use Socratic Questioning to gain deep understanding of needs.

Socratic Questioning is really just ways of asking questions to drill down a bit deeper with your client, to get to what they really need, not just what they're asking you initially. When asked for data, we can question why they want the data and other questions to uncover assumptions, get clear on requirements, and focus on the data that will provide the most value.

Tip #4

Focus on gathering and analyzing data that you can act on.

Don't waste time and money on data that is interesting to know. Focus on data you can take action on in your business. It's got to be something that can cause customers to change their behavior.

Tip #5

Don't ask for the world all at once. Provide proof first.

Don't start by asking for a large data and analytics solution. You probably won't get approval and if you do the expectations will be very high for a quick, big return. Instead, get a play pen where they can store some data and work with it in a more manual way first. Use that data to do something different with customers and prove that it makes money. Then build from there and ask for a larger investment.

Tip #6

Gain stakeholder buy in by providing support to others first.

Get to know who your stakeholders are, what their needs are, and what their agenda is, and work to get real buy in. Help them meet their needs and they're more likely to support you in return.

Tip #7

Analysis done tucked away in an ivory tower usually stays in that tower.

Make sure that the requirements and analysis are done in close interaction with the marketing and customer service departments and the frontline customer experience to really understand where the problems are at the moment and to stay relevant to what works and what will gets used in the business.

Tip #8

Doing quality analysis is necessary, but communicating that analysis well is just as essential if we want people to take action.

If no one is responding to the analysis, it is probably because it needs to be communicated in a more emotionally engaging and concise way. Sometimes, the solution is to communicate via a story. If you can, get it down to one impactful slide that gets across the real risk, the issue, the burning platform that requires business action.

Tip #9

On your path to greater employee empowerment, start by identifying some very practical areas where you know it's safe to give more freedom.

> We need to move increasingly away from scripted responses. But don't try to change it all overnight. Do structured pilots where you can do some A/B testing to measure the impact of the changes. As you give your employees greater freedom to override recommendations, have them record when they do and why they do so to provide feedback for improving the model for everyone.

Tip #10

We need more mentoring within organizations.

> Set up mentoring relationships with people in other business functions who are very skilled at communication, stakeholder management and influencing, questioning and challenging, and get those people to mentor some of your technical analysts to develop those softer skills.