



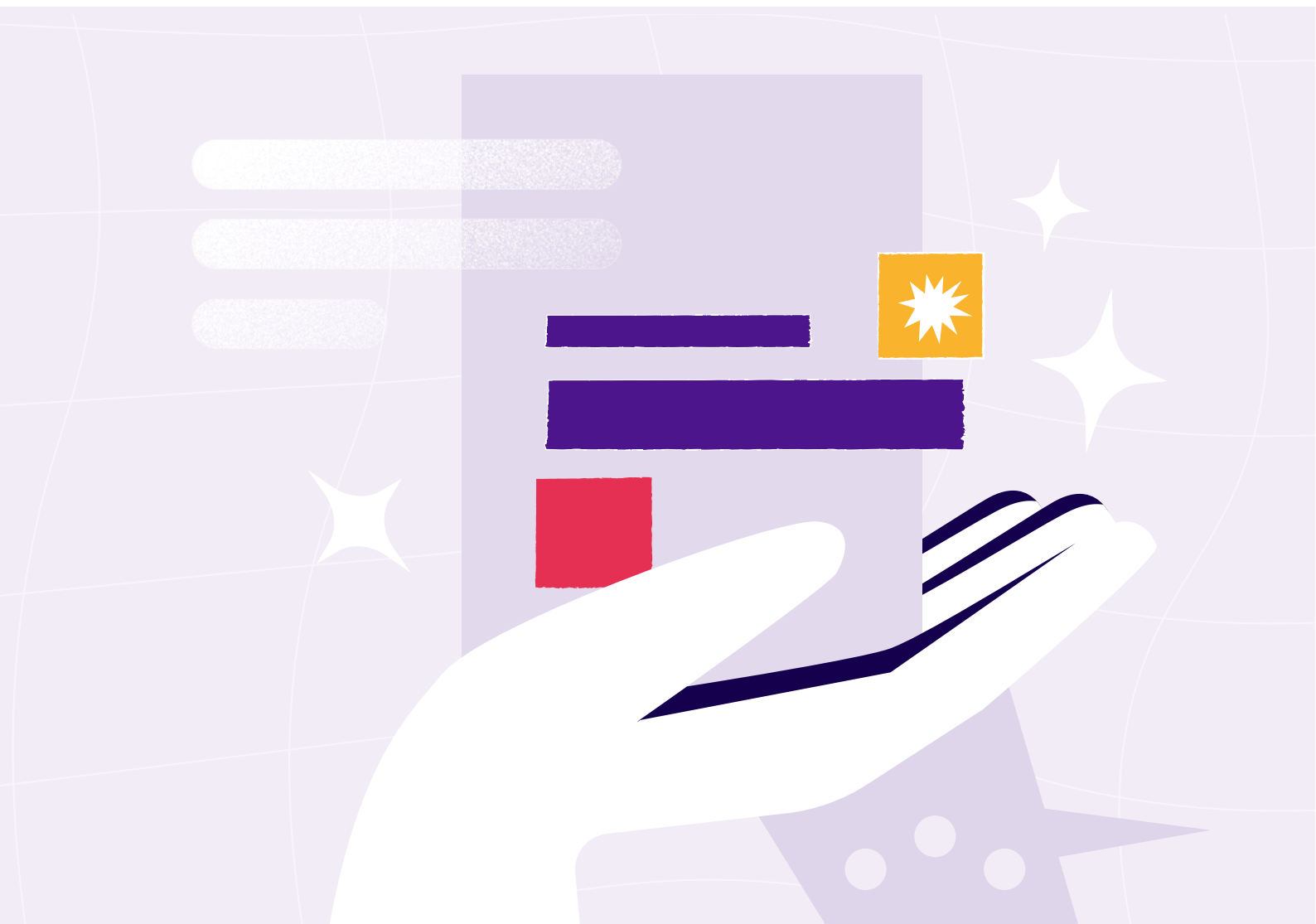
How to craft a winning text analytics RFP

If you're on the hunt for a text analytics solution, it's important to know what great looks like. But it's hard to keep up with the latest advances in technology. Here are the key things to consider when putting together your request for proposal (RFP).

It can be challenging to create an RFP that covers your company needs and speaks to the current solutions available. Text analytics platforms all claim to have the best AI and make analysis easy. But very few solutions are truly great.

In this guide, we'll help you build a solid RFP so that you can differentiate providers who over-promise from those who deliver true ROI.

[We've also created an editable RFP template to get you started.](#)



Text analytics: Getting the basics right

First, let's help you cut through the jargon! Vendors are quick to share that their solution uses NLP, NLU, Deep Learning and the all mighty AI. But in the end it's the user experience that really matters.

If you're thinking of implementing text analytics at your company, you want to:

- a) organize your text data,
- b) save your team time on analysis.

Go ahead and ask: "Can your solution organize text by themes or topics and by sentiment?" "How much effort do you expect from me to get started and to maintain accuracy over time?"

Modern text analytics solutions organize text data for you. They discover themes (also called topics) and they categorize text in a useful way. They don't require you to create rules or label data. So, in your RFP, focus not on the fancy terms but on the outcomes you'd like for your team:

- All text is categorized by theme or topic
- Themes are specific and actionable
- Each theme links back to the exact location where it is mentioned
- Sentiment ranges from negative through neutral into positive
- Different sentiment can be detected within a sentence
- You can edit and organize themes to bring in domain knowledge
- You can flag inaccuracies when they happen

Text analytics capabilities to include in your RFP

To write an RFP for a text analytics solution that delivers best-in-class analysis and insights, you need to know what to expect, and what to ask for.

Features to consider for your RFP include:

1. Connecting important data sources
2. Actionable Natural Language Understanding
3. Emerging themes and trends
4. Self-service functionality
5. Ensuring company-wide adoption
6. Alerts and workflows to speed up response times

Let's take a closer look at each of these to understand why they're necessary, and how they can help drive growth for your business.

01

Connecting important data sources

Your text data lives in different places and tools. Many tools and solutions provide built-in text analytics. But how can you reconcile the insights across all of them?

You need to gather or connect your sources to ensure consistent analysis.

Is your main priority to get insights from text data? Then make sure that your RFP doesn't balloon into a search for an all-in-one solution. Those that truly deliver are as rare as hen's teeth!

First, separate your priority data sources from those that are nice to have. Priority data sources should be those that you (or different teams at your company) are already trying to analyze manually. Here, you know what insights are truly there and the effort it currently takes to extract them.

Second, ask which types of integrations and connectors are supported:

How does your solution connect to our priority data sources?

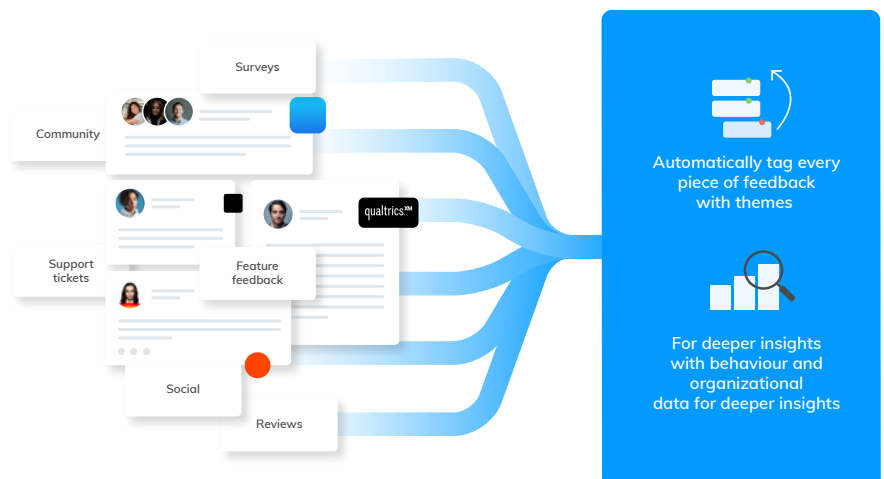
What kind of support do you offer for our nice to have data sources?

Can I aggregate data to see what's happening in individual datasets and across all of them for a unified view?

Coming back to the ideal user experience, ask in your RFP if users can create datasets themselves and upload data manually if needed.

Make sure to ask about data cleaning options. Does the uploaded text need to be pre-cleaned and prepared in a certain format? Does the solution resolve duplicates?

Depending on the data source, text data can be messy. For example, a live chat conversation lists not only problems, but also greetings, discussions and solutions. These need to be filtered out, and many solutions simply can't do this.



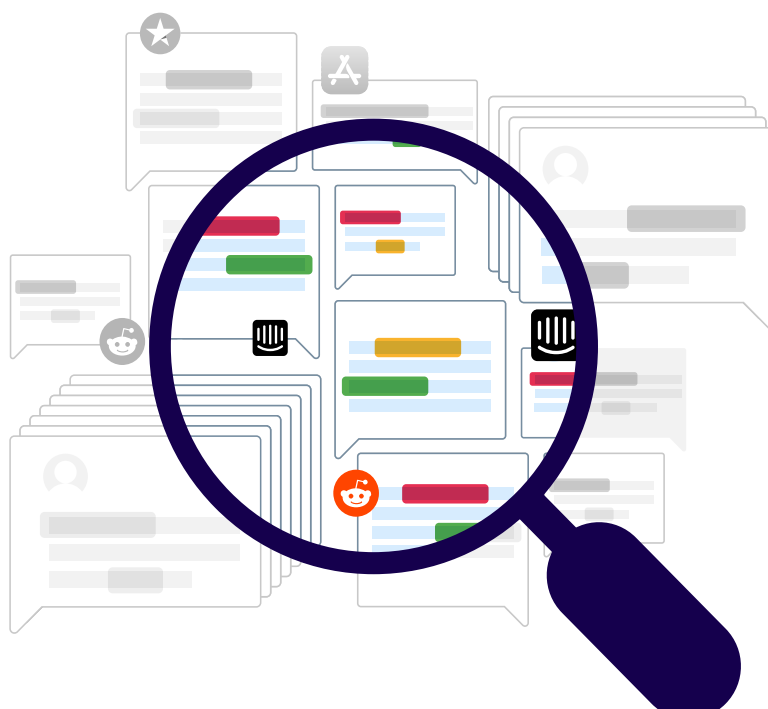
02

Actionable Natural Language Understanding

Natural Language Processing and Understanding (NLP and NLU) can do so much with text: detect themes, language, named entities, parts of speech, emotions, sentiment, sarcasm, genre, author's gender etc. But do you actually need all of this?

Your RFP should focus on things from customer feedback you can act on. Companies that care about the usability of text analytics ask for the specific process of:

- Discovering themes that are unique to our company/product vs. using pre-canned taxonomies
- Grouping themes by meaning regardless of phrasing and typos
- Organizing themes into a hierarchy
- Dealing with negation, e.g. "it wasn't an easy user interface"
- Seeing the most positive/negative things people say about my product
- Seeing the biggest issues with my product
- Seeing the most common questions about each topic
- Seeing the most common feature requests
- Finding the most common product suggestions



03

Emerging themes and trends

In your RFP, ask about the specific approach to text analytics used by the vendor.

Here are two of the most common approaches. They both sound great in theory, but should be avoided:

Pre-canned taxonomies.

For example, a hotel taxonomy covers all topics relevant to booking, check-in, room, service and facilities. This approach sounds useful because it can quickly find a common issue typical for the industry, like being placed on hold for too long or dealing with rude staff.

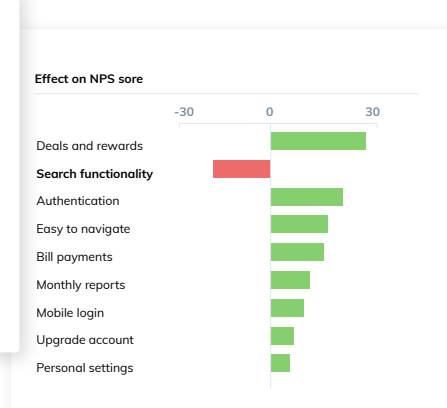
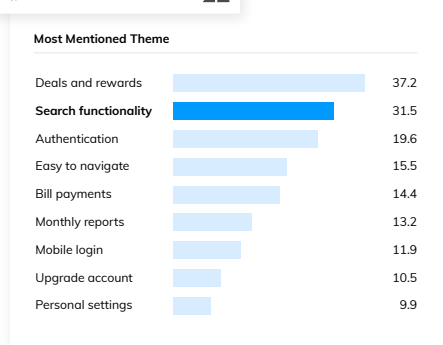
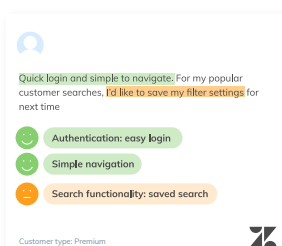
Supervised categorization.

You don't need to create rules, just label some data and the algorithm will learn to analyze new text. It scales well once you've trained perfect categories.

Unfortunately, both approaches completely fail to identify issues that you haven't considered or those that might happen in the future.

So, in your RFP, ask how this solution will tell you about product features or specific processes unique to your company. How can it tell you things you didn't know? How will it alert you to emerging issues as they happen?

What professional support - either in-house or provided by the vendor - will you require to get this level of insight?



04

Self-service functionality

In your RFP, you need to understand the total cost of the solution. This includes not just its price and the level of support required, but also your own resources. Break it down in the RFP by asking for:

- The time and manual input required for initial set up
- The time and effort required to maintain accuracy over time

In your RFP, ask for clarification on how much time is required by your team vs vendor-provided support.

Solutions requiring manual rules or labeled training data usually take 3 months to set up. During this time, you have to attend meetings with configuration specialists to explain the meaning of words and phrases used by your customers.

With a modern solution, you can get started within 2 weeks and 1-2 sessions to set up. Some solutions offer an easy interface to tailor the AI's output to your needs in your own time. Make sure to ask what skill level is required to operate this interface.

You also want self-service options for maintaining accuracy over time. If you are preparing a report and notice an issue, you don't want to wait for the vendor to fix the model.

As a rule-of-thumb, if the AI models are based on manual rules, lengthy set up times and ongoing upkeep is a given. Any slack in upkeep can lead to reduced accuracy and loss of trust in the analysis.

Ideally you're looking for balance - an AI solution that can be enhanced with input from your team. AI should be doing the heavy lifting, but be responsive to human input to improve the accuracy and quality of your analysis.



05

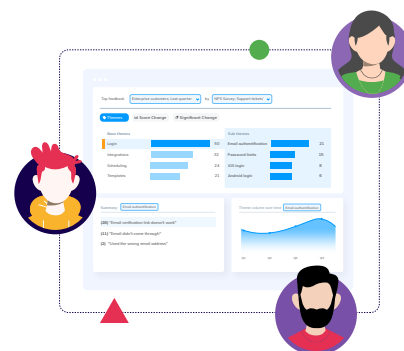
Path to company-wide adoption

It's a good idea to include clarification on ease-of-use and accessibility in your RFP. Old school text analytics solutions require NLP experts to operate them. Consider your specific team and their level of NLP acumen.

Modern solutions are straight-forward for multiple teams in your company to access insights specific to their focus. The more users are looking at issues found in text data, the more likely they are going to be resolved. When a solution is leveraged by a larger user set, it increases the ROI of the platform and it is more scalable to broader teams.

Include an RFP question asking how the text analytics solution handles user permissions and role designations. This is critical in making sure different users are able to dive in and find exactly what they need quickly.

Additionally, think about how your text analytics solution integrates with your existing work systems. If you use PowerPoint, how easy is it to export your findings to this format? Can you store analyzed data in your data warehouses, or display it in other visualization tools like PowerBI or Tableau? Knowing your solution will fit into your existing workflows will help ensure company-wide adoption.



06

Alerts and workflows to speed up response times

It's important to be able to act on insights and changes in your data, whether it's daily, hourly or in real time. There are three things to consider here:

- The speed and regularity by which your text analytics solution ingests and analyzes data
- Who is notified when changes are detected in your data
- What kinds of alerts you find useful

To assess this, find out in the RFP what types of workflows are supported by your solution. Can you set up alerts for specific keywords or themes in your data? For example, can you automatically route all feedback relating to "fraud" and "scams" to the security team? Can you set up alerts based on spikes in particular themes or metrics?

Additionally, consider how alerts are communicated to users for the fastest possible response time. Are alerts restricted to email, or can you enable slack notifications? These capabilities will impact the efficiency and effectiveness of your solution.

Key takeaways

Text analytics software can be a true silver bullet for customer and product feedback, quickly turning it into actionable insights for your company.

The right solution is the one that delivers best for you and your team, which is why it's so important to create an RFP that matches your needs and cuts through industry jargon. We hope this guide helps you do exactly that!

To get you started crafting your RFP, we've created a template that you can edit as needed. Choose the format that you prefer: Google Doc or Google Sheet.

If you have any further questions or concerns feel free to reach out - we're happy to help. All the best on your quest for a text analytics solution!

Thematic is a text analysis platform used by leading companies like LinkedIn and DoorDash to help you make better decisions and drive growth. Powered by AI, Thematic is built specifically to make sense of customer feedback at scale. Feedback is transformed into actionable insights in real time, making it easy for everyone to make the right decisions at the right time.

Keen to see how Thematic can help?

Talk to one of our experts about summarizing feedback at scale, prioritizing issues for products and services, and discovering and tracking drivers of NPS scores.

[Talk to one of our experts](#)

