



Proving the Strategic Value of UX Research

7 Real-World Strategies for Demonstrating Research Impact



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Introduction

It was a lightbulb moment when I was able to tie my storytelling and my qualitative work to something that made sense and was valuable to the business.

Janelle Estes

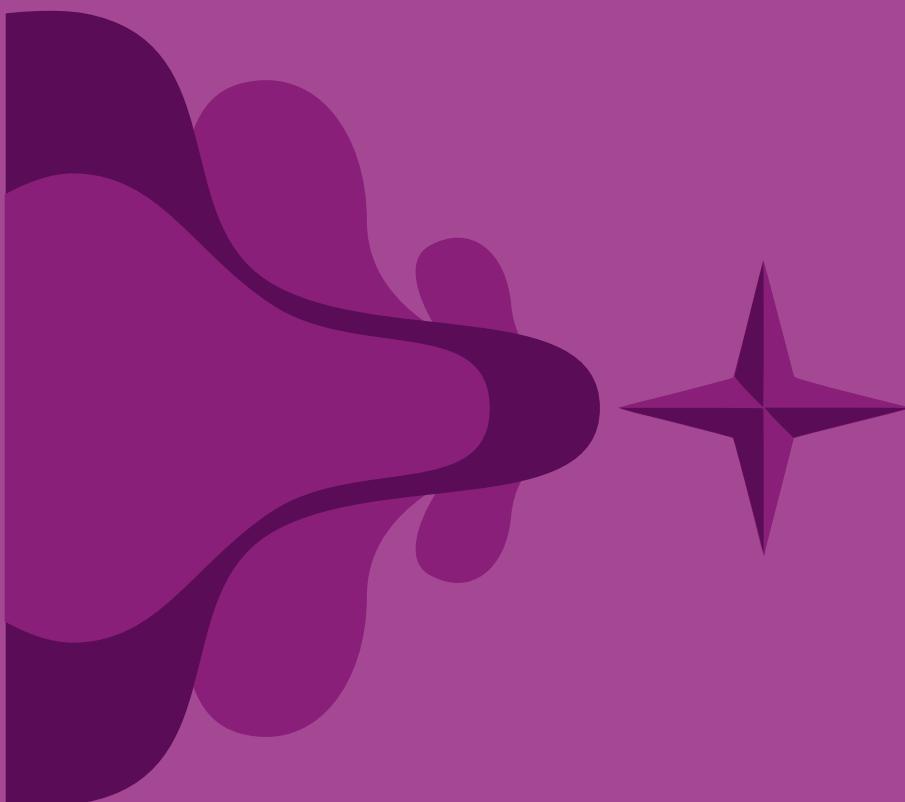
Experience Design Platform Director & Educator | Bentley University

Every researcher knows the drill: fewer resources, tighter timelines, higher expectations. You're expected to deliver insights that shape strategy while keeping pace with the speed of business. The pressure is on — but it's also your opening to prove how indispensable research is.

This guide shares practical, real-world strategies to make your work more visible, measurable, and valuable. Consider it your handbook for navigating the challenges every researcher will encounter in the next few years.

Strategy 1

Connect research to business impact



Impact is contextual. And to understand context, you need to understand your business, your industry, and your stakeholders.

Rebecca Oliveira

Strategic Research Manager at Happening

Challenge

If you can't connect the dots between research and business objectives, you'll struggle to get executive buy-in. And when that happens, research could be on the chopping block.

How to show impact

Spend time learning the lay of the land. Get curious about your company's market, industry trends, and business model. Study the strategic context so you can **link your findings to the metrics and goals leaders lose sleep over**.

Researchers who thrive in their orgs are as fluent in business acumen as they are in methodologies. You know how to talk about revenue drivers, market pressures, and business risks with the same confidence you use to explain a usability test. Business acumen will earn credibility and keep research in the conversation.

Closing the loop on research impact

Rebecca Costa de Oliveira, Strategic Research Manager at Happening, treats research like a business investment. She initiates every research project with clear business outcomes in mind. From the start of a project, she encourages researchers to define leading and lagging indicators that can be tracked for impact. After each project, researchers hold a postmortem meeting to document how their insights were implemented.

By setting these expectations, Rebecca equips her team to prove the value of their work and directly tie it to business objectives.

You need to be aligned with your leadership and your goals: your career goals, your KPIs, your OKRs. Don't do research just for the sake of it. Otherwise, you come to the point where it's just effort.

Rebecca Oliveira

Strategic Research Manager at Happening

Your next moves

- Identify your organization's top three business goals
- Align research projects to those goals
- Shadow other departments to collect passive insights
- Review quarterly earnings calls and investor decks

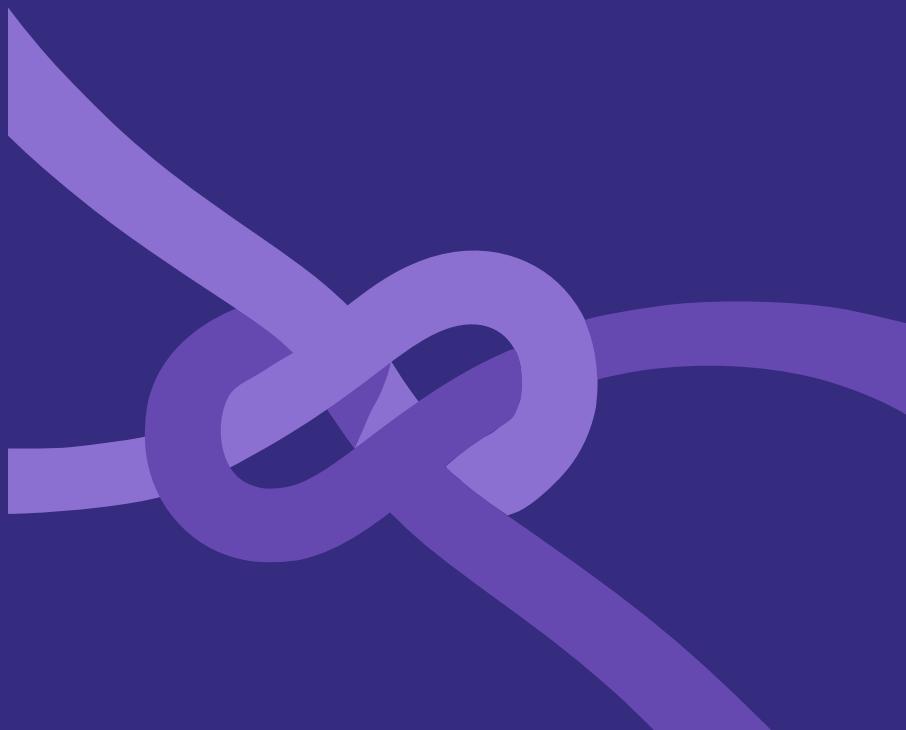


How Marvin helps

Create Insights templates to streamline your process and ensure consistency across team efforts.

Strategy 2

Build strong relationships with stakeholders



You need to start building relationships with your stakeholders so that you understand what their goals are, what their motivations are, what they're trying to accomplish, and the challenges that they have.

Kate Pazoles

Research Leader, Twilio

Challenge

Not all stakeholders care about research. However, they do care about how customer feedback and research insights improve decision-making and reduce risk. If they can't see how research moves the needle for the business, it will never be a priority.

How to show impact

Be curious about what makes your stakeholders tick. Talk to them about their goals, KPIs, and past experiences with research. **Map how your work overlaps with their priorities and where it can remove friction or open opportunities.** When they see research as a lever for achieving their objectives, you won't have to fight for their attention.



Show and tell

Rachel Suydam, UX Design Researcher at Xcel Energy, builds trust with stakeholders by including video clips in usability support tickets. Once her team identifies issues, they import them into Jira with embedded video clips explaining the issue. This helps them understand issues and make fixes without needing extensive back-and-forth communication.

Seeing users struggle with an issue drives home the need for change. Stakeholders immediately understand the problem. The more we're able to do that, the better.

Rachel Suydam

UX Design Researcher at Xcel Energy

Your next moves

- Classify stakeholders by their challenges, motivations, and priorities
- Define success indicators at the start of every project
- Document impact in a shared dashboard or project tracker
- Frame findings around stakeholder priorities

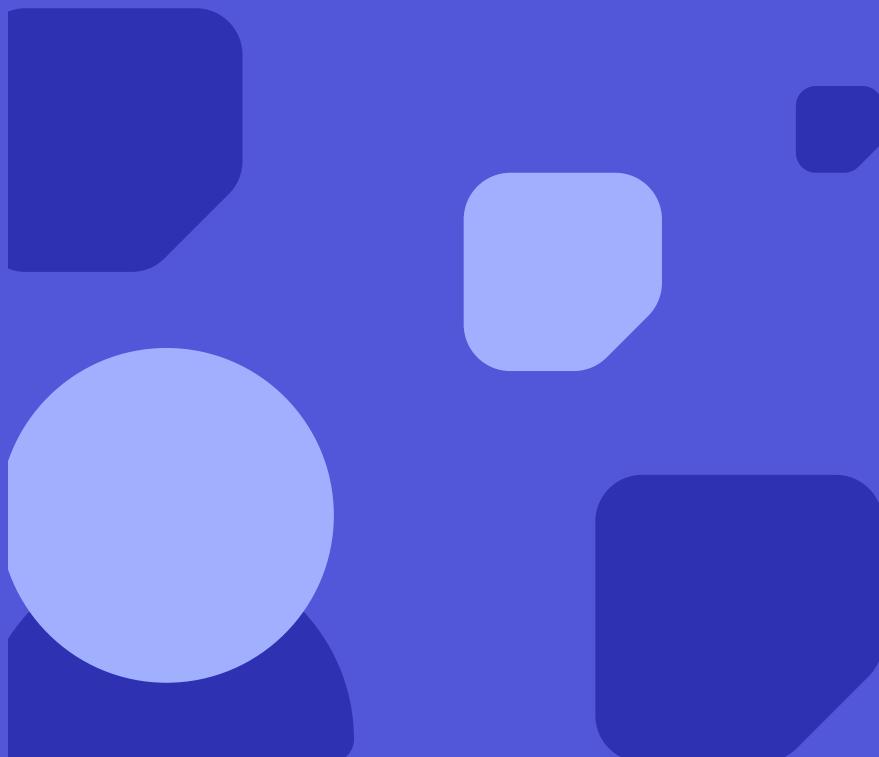


How Marvin helps

Use Marvin to record meetings and take notes, then prompt Ask AI to compile stakeholder questions and priorities.

Strategy 3

Own your role as a strategic adviser



There's no substitute for going around and talking to people, building those relationships and trust. And then follow through. Doing what you say you're going to do goes a long way.

Brian Verhoeven

Former Head of Design, Morningstar

Challenge

If people see researchers as order takers, you won't get looped in for big decisions. Instead of influencing the direction of a product, strategy, or business decision, you'll be stuck validating what's already been decided — even if you disagree.

How to show impact

Owning your role as a strategic adviser by embedding research into the company's everyday decision-making habits. Meet stakeholders where they already work by inserting insights into strategy documents, OKRs, onboarding materials, pricing conversations, and channels they check frequently (such as Slack, email, and all-hands meetings). **When research shows up in the spaces and moments that shape priorities, it stops being "optional" and becomes essential to decision-making.**

Spot the red flags

Vanessa Whatley, a research leader at Twilio, encourages her team to evaluate high-level objectives and assess if they make sense based on user feedback. By "heat seeking" opportunities to provide structure for larger goals, researchers can justify doing more strategic work over tactical work.

Recently, Vanessa recommended blocking a product launch based on user research findings. Engineering proceeded with the project, but post-launch metrics validated her concerns — leading to a ramp-down of the experiment. This built trust and taught teams to involve research earlier in strategic decisions.

Maybe next time they're a little bit more receptive, so we're not kicking off a study when we're halfway through building something. All of these are learning moments.

Vanessa Whatley
Research Leader at Twilio

Your next moves

- Ask to observe planning sessions, roadmap discussions, and strategy reviews
- Host insight briefings to share relevant insights and identify gaps
- Reframe research requests to understand them in the context of business goals
- Create an always-on feedback loop with a lightweight, ongoing input channel

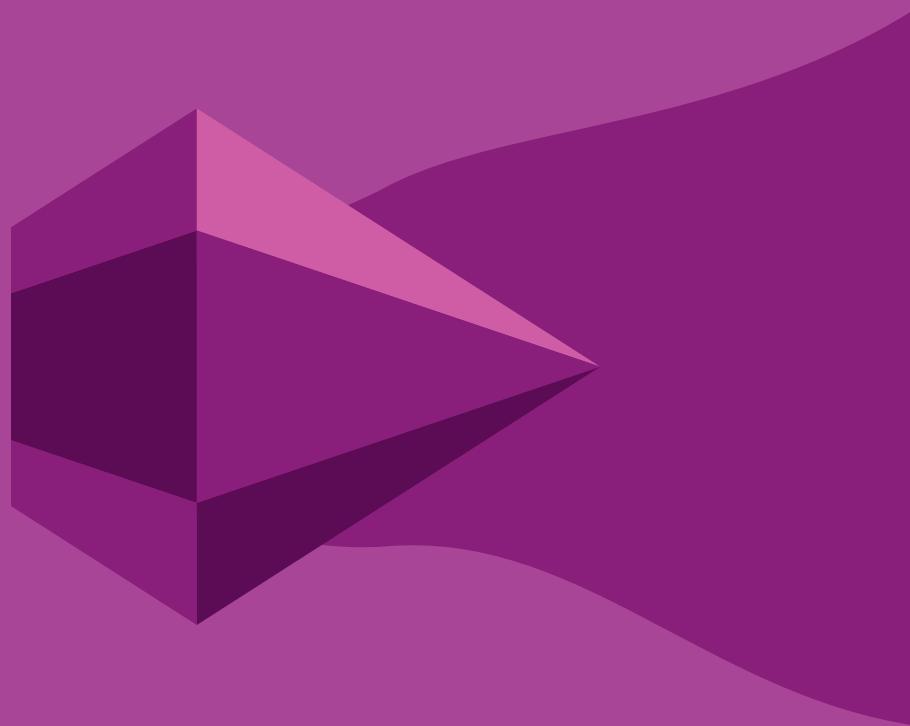


How Marvin helps

Analyze relevant historical data and uncover hidden patterns or nuances with Deep Research.

Strategy 4

Make research impossible to miss & easy to act on



Your main goal is to inform the product roadmap, but we are not the only ones collecting client feedback. If we triangulate all that knowledge, that will make much more powerful insights for the product.

Gaëlle Seznec

Senior UX and Lead User Researcher, Criteo

Challenge

A lot of valuable intel is already floating around, often buried in sales call notes, support tickets, and even random research reports saved on someone's hard drive. How much of your most helpful customer feedback never sees the light of day? This leads to duplicated research efforts, wasted time chasing down data, and insights that are ignored altogether.

How to show impact

Get all your insights into one central, searchable place, and ensure people know how to use it. Improve the value of your customer insights hub by pulling in feedback from every corner of the organization.

Helping the right people find and understand insights at the right time creates a culture where customer feedback is treated like a shared resource. Researchers can then act like a trainer, curator, and sense-maker for translating data into action.

CRITEO

From “hard to find” to “hard to miss”

As a large adtech platform, Criteo has multiple teams gathering customer feedback, including designers, product managers, and product marketers. After running an internal review, they learned that 80% of the stakeholders were dissatisfied with the existing research retrieval process. Their workflows primarily focused on conducting research, not consuming it.

This led them to adopt a new tool, Marvin, to centralize client feedback across teams so stakeholders can access data and self-serve relevant insights.

Our goal with this repository project was to be able to centralize everything and retrieve from this knowledge. We wanted to include everyone – designers, PMs, product marketing, and sales – for a single source of truth.

Anne-Sophie Guillou

Senior UX and Lead User Researcher, Criteo

Your next moves

- Identify which teams regularly collect customer feedback
- Use a searchable research repository to store and organize findings
- Train stakeholders how to access data, insights, and research reports
- Create enablement resources for interpreting insights

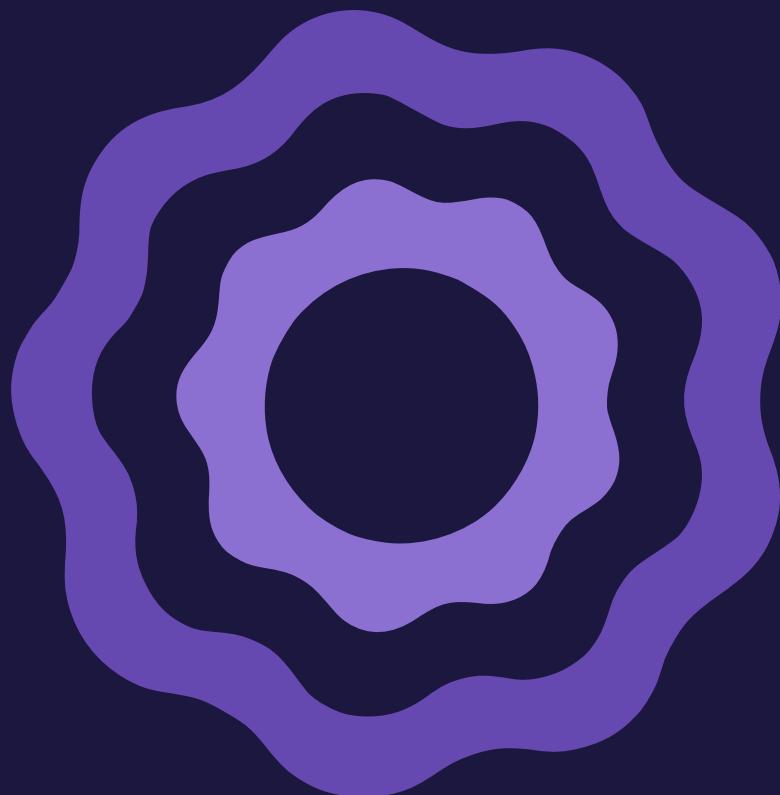


How Marvin helps

Create Discussion Guides with pre-approved questions to improve user interviews and simplify post-interview analysis.

Strategy 5

Practice your communication skills



“You need to make your findings relevant for your partners, while also resonating with leaders who are thinking about next steps and priorities.”

Kate Pazoles
Research Leadership at Twilio

Challenge

Stakeholders are swamped and pulled in a dozen directions. You can't expect them to dig through a 40-page deck to find buried insights, or to care about findings that don't speak to their priorities. Even the most rigorous, insightful research will be overlooked if it's not shared the right way.

How to show impact

Treat your insights like something you need to market internally. Don't hand over research, cross your fingers, and hope for the best. Instead, communicate through stories that make findings feel urgent, relevant, and impossible to ignore. The more you share insights internally, the more that research will get noticed, understood, and acted upon.

Extra! Extra! Read all about research!

Kate Pazoles, another research leader at Twilio, noticed that leaders were using language around "customer obsession" more frequently. She wanted to elevate the idea of "customer obsession" in the organization to help educate others. This inspired Kate to start a company-wide "customer obsession" newsletter that educates stakeholders about a key leadership goal and user insights.

Your next moves

- Lead with the decision at stake, then explain the supporting evidence
- Tailor the format and language to each audience
- Establish a consistent cadence for delivering predictable updates
- Share key insights in multiple channels to keep them top of mind



How Marvin helps

**Enable Research Digest to send
customized biweekly newsletters
highlighting your team's latest research.**

Strategy 6

Bring research to life with numbers & stories



When you're working with executive stakeholders, numbers are really important. This is the piece that connects the experience within the product to business-level outcomes and customer outcomes.

Jenna Harmon

Senior UX Researcher, Pantheon

Challenge

Impact is easy to dismiss when you're only sharing half the story. Qualitative findings can be explained away as anecdotal or unrepresentative. Quantitative metrics leave stakeholders guessing why. Without using both together, it's easier for decision-makers to dismiss insights for being incomplete.

How to show impact

Make your impact bulletproof by blending the **"what" with the "why"** and tying it directly to business outcomes. Triangulate three layers of evidence in every insight:

1. Quantitative business metrics
2. Quantitative research metrics
3. Qualitative insights and stories

Use these layers of data to help stakeholders make sense of research findings.

Data Points	Examples	Reasons
Quantitative business metrics	Sales, Retention, churn, product adoption, costs, ROI, NPS	Prove the scale and business relevance of the issue.
Quantitative research metrics	Repository usage, stakeholder adoption of insights, volume of customer requests addressed	Show how the research function itself delivers value.
Qualitative insights and stories	User quotes, survey responses, behavioral observations, video clips	Bring the data to life with contextual details.



Getting real about experience quality

Pantheon struggled with accurately measuring the quality of user experience in their products. Traditional metrics, such as CSAT (Customer Satisfaction) and NPS (Net Promoter Score), couldn't fully capture the user experience and design effectiveness.

Jenna Harmon, along with her team, led the development and rollout of a new metric called the "Experience Quality Score" to solve this problem. By blending quantitative behavioral data with qualitative sentiment data, the team created a framework for identifying issues sooner and driving strategic decisions.

Having a different kind of measurement based on information that we're getting directly from our customers facilitates better conversations about the experience customers are having.

Jenna Harmon

Senior UX Researcher, Pantheon



Find out more

How to measure UX with an Experience Quality Score

[Get the guide](#) >

Your next moves

- Maintain an insight log of relevant qualitative stories, quotes, and behaviors
- Use qualitative checks to validate and expand on findings from quantitative analysis
- Create stronger reports and insights by pairing metrics with quotes or anecdotes
- Conduct retrospectives to document learnings and iterate processes

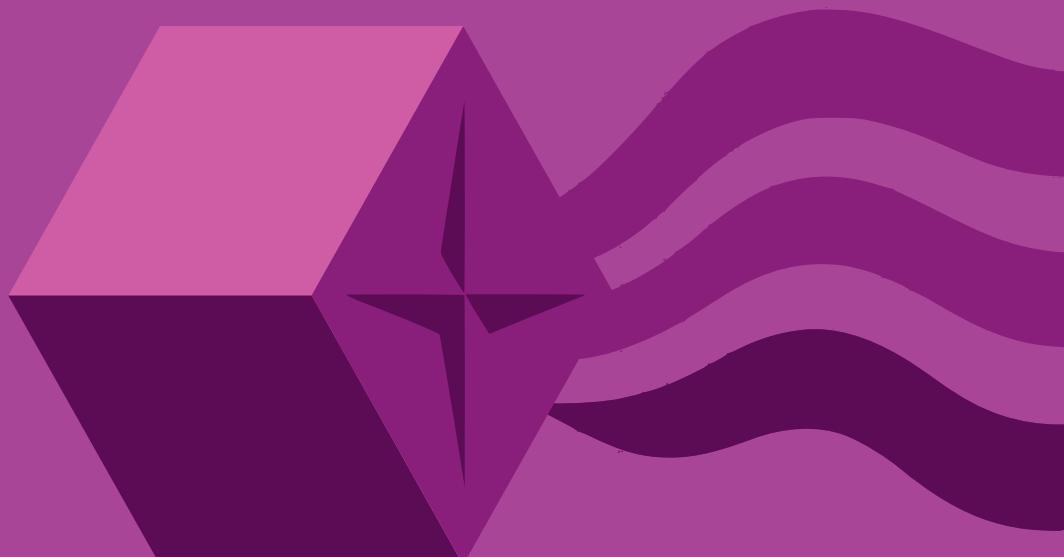


How Marvin helps

Compile video playlists with relevant clips from interviews and feedback panels.

Strategy 7

Recruit AI to scale your impact



We should be employing AI practices because it lightens the load of really intelligent humans who have expertise in research, so they can focus on things that are more complex and strategic — instead of having to take the time to do basic rote programs.

Susana La Luz-Hawkins

Senior Director of Design Research and Enablement, Best Buy

Challenge

If you're a small team, a team of one, or doing research alongside other responsibilities, you already know the math doesn't add up. There's barely enough time to run studies, synthesize results, package insights, share them in the right places, and track impact. And doing it consistently? Forget about it. You run the risk of valuable research getting delayed or blocked — and ultimately vanishing from decision-making.

How to show impact

Adopting AI gives you (and your team) the bandwidth to do your best work. AI can help you complete repetitive and time-consuming tasks faster. This gives you time back to focus on high-value tasks, such as interpreting data, building trust, and influencing decisions.

Check out how these researchers use AI in their workflows:

Research planning and script preparation

"The most time-consuming part of a research project is the prep work. AI changes the game on that."

Lauren Nitta, Sailpoint

Synthesizing data across departments

"We don't have a lot of people who have the time to sit and highlight transcripts and really think about it. But they do have time to engage with the outputs along the way."

Josh Litwin, Wave

Analyzing customer feedback

"I use thematic clustering to identify early patterns. I also use deep research to extract data about topics... It's not a replacement for deep synthesis — but it accelerates it. And it gives me a faster path from raw data to insight."

Maryam Maleki, Microsoft

Your next moves

- Identify AI tools to streamline your most time-consuming tasks
- Develop repeatable templates and prompts for research planning
- Analyze existing data before conducting new projects
- Create newsletters and other materials to communicate insights



How Marvin helps

Use existing files, notes, and reports to generate an AI Analysis before starting a new research project. Use what you learn to determine the best way to move forward with your study.



Your AI-powered feedback engine for the whole team

Marvin automatically turns scattered feedback into searchable, shareable insights available in the critical moments when business decisions are made.

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