



MRX Summer Pulse

We recently asked the research community: *How are you really feeling about the market research industry this summer?* From AI to budgets, client requests to daily rituals, we gathered candid insights on what's energizing us, what's draining us, and how we're navigating change together. Here's what we heard from 100 of you.



Kerry Hecht

CEO

Kerry Hecht, CEO of 10K Humans, is a visionary leader in the MRX industry. Her innovative solutions and dedication to excellence have helped set new standards in combating fraud and ensuring data integrity. Beyond her professional achievements, she champions causes like Civil Rights and Poverty Alleviation, inspiring a culture of innovation and ethics. Kerry Hecht's leadership continues to shape the future of market research.





Jay Tye

Head of Innovation

Jay Tye has over 25 years in the research industry, blending creative problem-solving with a knack for rallying teams and harnessing technology. Known for pushing boundaries and turning ideas into action, Jay thrives at the intersection of insight and innovation. Outside of work, he's composing music, riding his motorcycles, and exploring the outdoors.





MRX is having a moment.

Not a crisis. Not a renaissance. Just... a very *human* moment.

AI is everywhere, budgets are tight, and the pressure to move faster with less is real. The hype machine is churning out tools, trends and takes at record speed, and somewhere in the middle of it all, we're still trying to do great work.

So we asked: How are you actually feeling this summer?

Because under the surface of every "we should talk about AI" meeting, every "let's be strategic" pitch, and every project plan, there's a real person navigating change and trying to find clarity for their business and their clients.

This survey is about those humans. Their optimism, their concerns, their rituals, and their real feelings about where the industry is and where it might be going. Let's dig in.



What We Did

A Quick Pulse Check on Industry Vibes 🙌

- 10-question open-ended AI-assisted survey using [Formless.AI](#), posted on LinkedIn
- 75+ industry voices: researchers, strategists, consultants, and other MRX professionals
- We promised to share the findings, so everyone benefits

Approach:

- Thematic analysis: What's rising? What's resonating?
- Emotional tone-check: Optimism, concern, exhaustion?
- Actionable insights: What's next for all of us?



THE MOOD RIGHT NOW

Industry Sentiment Snapshot



Neutral Observers (51% of you)

- **Watching, waiting and working through it.** Neutral observers aren't panicked or pumped, just grounded, cautious and navigating change one client brief at a time.
- **They see shifts.** AI, budgets, expectations, etc. but aren't rushing to change based on hot takes. They have steady hands focused on adapting without losing what makes research meaningful.

"It doesn't feel like boom or bust, just a complete recalibration. We're adjusting, staying flexible, and trying to deliver value without losing our sanity."



Worried Wanderers (30% of you)

- **Feeling stretched thin, and scanning the horizon.** Worried wanderers are navigating budget cuts, AI anxiety, and mounting pressure to do more with less (and faster!)
- **They're questioning what's sustainable.** Between tool fatigue, and client demands, there's a sense of unease about where the industry's heading and what's getting lost along the way.

"I used to feel energized by the pace of change. Lately it just feels like chaos- more tools, more pressure, less clarity."



Hopeful Hackers (19% of you)

- **Hopeful hackers are energized by possibility.** Embracing AI, experimenting boldly, and seeing the disruption as a catalyst to reimagine how insights get created and shared.
- **Innovation is their playground.** They're not waiting for perfect conditions- they're testing, winning, failing, learning and proving that risk taking can drive both impact and momentum.

“I feel like we’re entering a golden age of insights, where tech does the heavy lifting and we get to do the meaningful thinking.”



TL; DR

**We're in a *rebuilding phase* -
cautious, a bit weary, but still
showing up!**



TL;DR = Too Long, Didn't Read



💡 **Pro-Tip:** Visit www.insightplatforms.com and find the next date for their “Demo Day” virtual conference. It’s free and you get to interact with and demo new platforms for everything from AI moderation tools, synthetic persona tools, to analysis. Connect with Mike Stevens (founder of Insight Platforms) and tell him we sent you!

Biggest Shifts in 2025

What’s Really Changed?

1. AI Integration Everywhere All at Once:

- From proposal writing to moderation, and analysis, AI is touching every step - not perfectly, but pervasively, reshaping how we think about time and value.
- Teams are no longer asking *if* AI fits- they’re deciding *where* to trust it, *how* to train it and *when* to let it lead.

2. Tool Overload

- The pace of new platforms is dizzying. Researchers are juggling too many choices and learning curves for every shiny new platform and pressure to prove ROI on each.
- Fragmentation is real. Instead of streamlining workflows, too many tools are creating noise, decision fatigue and a longing for simplicity.





Continued...

Biggest Shifts in 2025

What's Really Changed?

3. Budget Crunches

- More for less is the new normal. The squeeze is real, and it's reshaping how we scope, staff and expectations.
- Teams are getting scrappy- remixing methods, trimming the fat and finding creative ways to deliver big impact on tighter margins.

4. Transparency Push

- Clients want to see behind the curtain. Not just the insights but WHO the insights are from and how they were sourced and verified. The fraud in data collection concern is real.
- There's less tolerance for black-box tools or vague claims. Process clarity is the new currency.





Outlier Insight

💡 One respondent noted, *"The industry feels faster, but flatter."* In the race to be more efficient, there's a real risk of losing the depth, color and nuance that makes insights meaningful. The biggest shift is about the need to find ways to move quickly without sacrificing the soul and authenticity of the work we do.



Where We Really Stand Right Now

AI Sentiment Check



80% Are Confident AI Users

They say they feel confident using AI in their day-to-day work. These folks aren't just dabbling- they've integrated tools like ChatGPT and Perplexity into their workflows for everything from back of the house workflows, to brainstorming and analysis, to crafting deliverables. For them, AI is no longer a experiment- it's essential!

These users are focused on efficiency with intention- using AI to save time, spark creativity, and elevate the strategic value of their work.



Quote :

"AI has become my research sidekick. It helps me think faster, work smarter, and spend more time on what actually moves the needle with my clients like the consulting component of research."



15% of You Are Cautiously Optimistic

Some respondents are still testing the waters, one prompt at a time. They're curious about AI, using it occasionally, but not fully confident. They're experimenting with tools like ChatGPT and Perplexity, but still navigating trust issues, learning curves and figuring out where it truly adds value.

For this group, AI feels promising but not plug-and-play. They're cautious, not because they're resistant, but because they care about quality, nuance and control.



Quote 💬:

"I'm using AI more each week, but I still double-check everything and find mistakes it made. It's definitely helpful but I just don't blindly trust what it gives me."



5% of You Are AI Resistant

While most are diving into AI, a small but vocal 5% of you are keeping it at arm's length. For them the hesitation is less about fear of change and more about trust, ethics and quality control. They're concerned that over-reliance on AI could erode the craft, the context and credibility of good research.

This group is asking important questions: Who owns the data? How reliable are the outputs? And what happens when speed and efficiency trumps substance?

Quote :

"AI feels like a black box. I worry that in chasing speed, we're losing the thoughtful, human lens and voices that make insights actually matter."



Favorite Tools:

**ChatGPT, Perplexity and One Lonely Vote
For Gemini.**





What We'd Love to See Change

Wishes for the Industry (from Insiders)

- "Stop philosophizing AI to death- Not everything needs to be a think piece or debate. Just show what's working- real use cases, real outcomes."
- "Let's get real about recruitment. Panel companies need to be honest about how their sample is built and verified. Transparency will build trust in our industry."
- "Want better data? Pay for it. You can't demand quality while lowballing costs. Buying \$4.25 sample and complaining about quality is peak cognitive dissonance."
- "Respect your respondents. Low incentives, clunky surveys, bad UX, it's driving good people away."
- "Stop bitching about AI, start experimenting. Nuff said."



HOW YOU FEELIN' THIS SUMMER?

(A few verbatims)

"Oof, rough year! Hoping there's light at the end of the tunnel if/when clients release budgets in Q4"

"I think it's an amazing moment in our industry but people are letting fear cloud their thinking about what is possible."

"Concerned. A lot of changes, AI hype, feeling overwhelmed."

"We can get better! Show up, step up to the plate and give great quality- no more talking about it- do it!"

"I'm both excited and nervous about AI and our industry."

"All of the shifts we're seeing are necessary and will make the industry better, but the short term effects are unsettling."

"Data quality continues to be a big issue. Losing 35% of sample on pre-survey fraud detection, another 10% on in-survey quality checks, and still having to remove 10% is insane!"

"I'm tired."

"Work has been a bit slow but it's given me time to recharge my batteries for the rest of the year"

"So many opportunities to be creative yet so much happening all at the same time it can be difficult to know what to focus on!"



STANDOUT VERBATIM

"This summer I feel both optimism and pessimism, and they are directly linked. I feel pessimistic about the effects AI-moderated platforms and this 'faster, cheaper, at scale' message may have on clients. But I'm optimistic because these are getting the MRX industry to ask a lot of great questions. Questions, that when answered, have the possibility of pushing us in a better direction."



An underwater scene with a wooden signpost in the foreground. The signpost has a horizontal wooden sign with the words "THIS WAY" in white capital letters, pointing to the right. The signpost is made of a vertical wooden pole. In the background, there are several small, colorful fish swimming in the clear blue water. The sandy ocean floor is visible at the bottom.

Here's Where We Go From Here - Together

For Agencies/Research Providers:

- **Audit your AI stack:** Keep what's driving value and reconsider WHY you invested in the things that aren't - then, drop what's noise.
- **Invest in transparency:** Show your process, not just your product.
- **Respect your respondents:** Incentives, their experience, and communication matter more than ever.

For Clients:

- **Pay for quality:** Better insights require better inputs, including fair sample/recruitment costs.
- **Ask for proof:** Demand clarity on how respondents were verified, data was sourced and insights were generated.
- **Collaborate early:** Bring your research partners into the conversation before the brief is final.

Bottom line: The future of insights won't be won by the fastest or the cheapest- it'll be built by those who choose quality, clarity, and courage over convenience.





Final Thoughts from Kerry Hecht

We're in a season of rapid change, and honestly, it's not always comfortable. But something to keep in mind here: discomfort isn't a red flag. It's a signal. It means we're paying attention. We're not keeping our heads in the sand.

This year, I've been thinking a lot about what's beneath the surface... not just the tech shifts or budget pressures, but the way we treat each other, our respondents, and ourselves. It's easy to get caught up in AI debates and tooling chaos, but at the end of the day, this is still a human business and we don't just measure behavior, we shape it. And that responsibility matters.

So here's what I'm holding onto: more experimentation and openness.. More transparency, less spin. More collaboration, less ego.

Let's keep asking bold questions and making space for real answers. Because we're not just reacting to change, we're building what comes next in the research industry.

KH



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