

## Microsoft | Gold Winner

### Transforming Marketing with Data, Analytics & Insight

Microsoft believes it is just getting started on the journey to be the digital partner of choice amongst IT vendors and is guided by two principles:

1. To better understand customers, Microsoft must shift from a “know-it-all” culture to a “learn-it-all culture” with a deep growth mindset and a bias for action.
2. Microsoft has to evolve at scale: from a technology vendor to a trusted advisor with market perspectives capable of teaching customers how to think differently on their own businesses.

In 2017, Microsoft’s sales professionals were challenged to embrace challenger-sales behaviors. Challenger-sales courses for the entire sales force were mandated; however, the skills and capabilities required to tease out customer’s needs were not consistently prevalent in the sales force. Taking a closer look, the team observed that while sales professionals started with customer needs, they quickly jumped to solution/product talk and glossed over the opportunity to prolong the collective learning with the customer stakeholders in a structured manner. A process or tool to focus on this was needed immediately.

To bridge this capability gap, the Marketing team explored collaborative experiences that promoted collective learning and were inspired by casual gaming experiences like Cards Against Humanity and Truth or Dare. It then embarked into iterative rapid prototyping-testing for several weeks until it invented Truths & Insights, a business card game to enable customer collective learning. The game was launched at an internal conference in February 2019.

Truths & Insights is a structured qualitative customer-insight gathering experience that organically facilitates collective learning across a customer’s organizational divisions by empowering them to share stories of their current needs, wants and aspirations.

Designed as a competitive storytelling card game to foster empathetic active listening, this game has started to transform the culture in the teams that embrace it. The Covid-19 pandemic in January 2020 accelerated the adaptation of this in-person initiative to a purely digital experience integrated with existing Microsoft technologies.



The nine critical elements for the Truths & Insights Initiative were:

1. Clarity in Strategic Purpose
2. Pivotal Decision on choosing Cooperative Gaming as the Implementation Modality
3. Game-Psychology User Research

4. Business-infused Experience Co-creation
5. Rapid Prototyping with Customer Playtesting
6. Marketing/Evangelism
7. Software Development
8. Executive Buy-in
9. Resource Management, Cross-organization Collaboration, and Funding Frugality

Truth & Insights works like this:

- Players are dealt cards, and game play starts with an open-ended business challenge posed as a question on a black “Insight card” (Example: “I’ve got 99 problems but \_\_\_\_ is my biggest one”).
- Players take turns to get rid of cards from their hand by playing white “Truth” cards (Example: “Attracting new customers”) and back it up with a personal anecdote from their own vantage point in their business. (in one example, sharing an anecdote for the statement “I’ve got 99 problems but attracting new customers is my biggest one” is true for them).
- Wildcards are also included in the deck to make the game dynamic and competitive (Example: Draw 4, Reverse, Skip).

In February of 2020, with Covid-19 making customer meetings more digital, Microsoft released the digital version of Truth & Insights, where customers, field, and partners can engage with each other. Using AI algorithms to do real-time transliteration of the stories and categorizing them under Microsoft’s Digital transformation strategy pillars and solution areas, the digital version of the game helps further review these stories individually for insights and enable qualitative analysis through word clouds within seconds.



Gamification of customer experiences digitally to facilitate collective customer listening, while enabling qualitative insights analysis with AI, is an industry innovation.

Coming out of Covid-19, ABM with hyper-personalization is even more essential than ever before. Challenger-sales execution enabled by collective listening helps Microsoft’s sales teams align with its ABM strategies. Truths & Insights is one of the engines that makes this possible while embracing Microsoft’s mission “To empower every person and every organization on the planet to achieve more.”

As a project with equal emphasis on excellent strategy implementation and a well-aligned business model execution that impacts both strategic and financial performance, Microsoft took a balanced scorecard approach to look at traction and results. Over the last year there has been a good traction in our influenced revenue, but the real impact to the business at scale will be in the next two years as it connects to the global Microsoft machine integrating ABM strategies with operations at Microsoft-scale.