

# Real-time insight a misnomer

 By [Andries Noeth](#)

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Gaining a good understanding of how customers view your business, brand or products requires a combination of research methodologies that are aligned with the company's strategic objectives.

There is a misconception in the business community that real-time research in itself provides business insights. Real-time feedback is beneficial - it happens instantly and provides companies with a way of keeping their finger on the pulse of what customers think.

While real-time measurement allows companies to collect megabytes of data at the push of a button, this functionality also comes with a risk of companies quickly becoming DRIP - Data Rich and Information Poor.

Most of the data collected in real time is transactional and operational in nature, and seldom provides the organisation with strategic insights. Instead, real time data should be combined with traditional research methodologies that are more detailed in nature to gain strategic insights.

## Checking how healthy your organisation is

To drive the point home, I like to compare the two research methodologies to getting your health checked.

Traditional research methodologies are compared to visiting your medical doctor for an annual full medical check-up, after which you develop a detailed action plan of lifestyle changes that should be made.

Real-time measurement, on the other hand, is more like checking your weight and blood pressure every day to see if you are still on track with your health plan.

Thinking that the availability of real-time operational measures on a daily basis can provide strategic insights is like comparing the daily measurement of your blood pressure to a full annual medical check-up. The cumulative effect of a daily measurement for 365 days a year is not equal to an in-depth measurement that happens once or twice a year.

## The measurement trilogy

Real-time methodologies constitute just one aspect of the measurement trilogy. Essentially, you would need to divide customer experience measurement into three main areas: international and national benchmarking, proprietary in-depth customer experience measurement and operational transactional feedback.

This type of measurement integration allows companies to understand customer experience and products on three levels - firstly by understanding how they are doing against competitors, secondly by developing and informing strategically driven action plans, and thirdly by tracking changes and improvements on an operational level.

The point is that metrics used in the organisation should be strategically aligned to specific research and organisational objectives. Using any real-time measurement in isolation is short-sighted, and could be a very dangerous strategy since it can cause knee-jerk reactions that are not aligned with the overall strategy of the company.

There are numerous new channels through which customers share their views and experiences with companies. Customers expect that their interactions with companies, products, and brands will have an influence on how that particular company treats them. Customers want organisations to show that they understand their needs and value their opinions.

There is no question that giving consumers exactly what they want will become the expectation rather than the exception. Companies should therefore have metrics in place that allow them to enter the minds of their clients. Being customer-centric will become the ultimate differentiator.

## ABOUT ANDRIES NOETH

Andries started working at Consulta in 2004 as a Client director managing the research portfolio of various large corporate companies in South Africa. In 2012 he was appointed as Chief Marketing Officer (CMO) at Consulta Research focussing on new business development and client relationship building.  
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