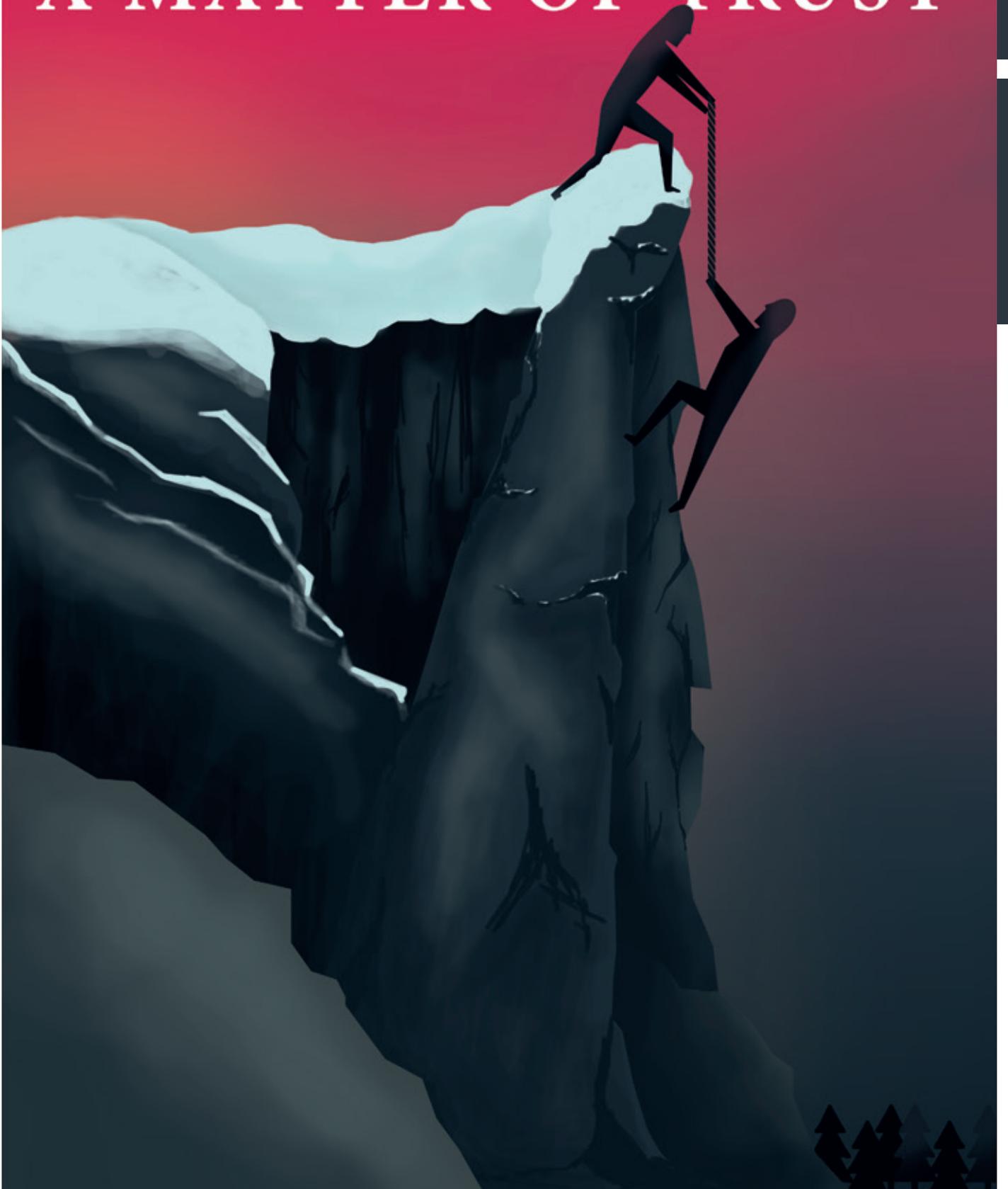


A MATTER OF TRUST



Andrew Cannon

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Andrew Cannon discusses the effects of technology on market research and the concerning results of the Network's global Trust and Personal Data Survey

Can you summarize the aims and objectives of the Global Research Business Network (GRBN)?

The mission of GRBN is to promote and advance the business and integrity of research through collaboration between strong, autonomous national research associations around the world.

We believe national associations play a vital role in the research ecosystem: they deliver training, organize conferences, collect statistics and make representations on behalf of research businesses. They are also critical in the determination of legislation and regulations, and in the maintenance of self-regulation, commerce, standards setting, business ethics and management, and client service.

Our key objective, therefore, is to strengthen national associations so that they can effectively achieve their objectives and, in particular, deliver value to their members. GRBN is also working on programmes to improve researchers' knowledge and skills across the globe, as well as to develop industry insight and advance the business of research.

How was GRBN formed? What inspired you to join the Network?

I have been President of the European Federation of Market Research Organisations (EFAMRO) since 2012 and in that role was involved in the foundation and development of GRBN. The formation of regional alliances such as EFAMRO, Asia-Pacific Research Committee (APRC) and Americas Research Industry Alliance (ARIA) was in response to the need for research business leaders to collaborate on common issues regardless of country of origin. The regional federations formed GRBN in recognition that many of these issues are not limited to regional concerns, but have global impact as well.

I have worked in the research industry for more than 25 years, and over the past decade, I have been actively involved on a national association and regional federation level. Last summer, when I was given the opportunity to work for GRBN, I jumped at the chance to continue giving back to an industry that I have gained so much from, while also receiving immense emotional and intellectual value.

The research industry is currently undergoing great change at all levels, and to be a part of that is fascinating; to help ensure that the research industry makes the most of the current changes in the world is a real honour.

What is the Trust and Personal Data Initiative?

The GRBN Trust and Personal Data survey highlights just how concerned people are about their data. It shows who they trust and distrust with their data, and poses the question: what needs to be done – and by whom – to improve trust?

Why was it created?

In many ways the Initiative happened by accident. I organized the original survey in Finland (where I am based) in late 2013 because I was interested in exploring the issue after the National Security Agency (NSA)/Edward Snowden news broke, since the research industry is very much dependent upon people's voluntary participation and willingness to share data, personal and otherwise.

In the spring of 2014, GRBN was offered a last minute presentation slot at the Insight Innovation Exchange Europe event, and we immediately jumped at the possibility of repeating the survey. Research Now then kindly offered to run the fieldwork for free in both the US and UK, and as soon as we saw that the results confirmed the conclusions we had made in Finland, we knew we were onto something big. Fortunately, Research Now agreed with us, and together we subsequently rolled out the Survey worldwide, collecting data in 24 countries overall.

Can you summarize the results of the Trust and Personal Data Survey? Did these findings surprise you?

The survey shows that many people across the world are very concerned about misuse of their personal data and are not familiar with how these data are collected and used. As a result, it is unsurprising that the survey indicated that people have a low level of trust in many different types of organizations to protect and appropriately use their personal data.

Trust in the market research industry is, likewise, quite low, but is significantly better than certain other types of organizations, such as media or social media companies, and we believe we have a foundation upon which we can build the level of trust.

I must say that the overall level of worry and distrust did surprise me – I did not expect it to be so high in so many countries and to concern many different types of organizations. An important finding was that many people consider a wide range of data to be sensitive, not just personal. I believe many of people and organizations using data do not necessarily realize how sensitive the 'data subjects' (people) consider much of it to be, and therefore do not appreciate how using it – even for legitimate purposes – can cause bad will and increase distrust.

How will this growing concern over the potential misuse of personal data affect research businesses?

Research businesses will have to work harder to earn and maintain people's trust. National associations, regional federations and GRBN must help businesses do this, because it is very much a reflection on the level of trust in the industry rather than on individual companies.

If we can succeed in increasing the degree of trust in market research companies to protect and appropriately use personal data, I believe we will

have a positive impact on people's willingness to participate in research. We will also need to help people distinguish between bona fide research businesses and those claiming to be doing research but that are in reality doing something else. At all levels, we need to be more transparent about what the industry does to protect personal data and proactively communicate this message.

Last, but certainly not least, research businesses must have the tools and procedures in place to ensure that data are well protected, both from deliberate attacks and human error, and associations have a role to play in helping companies achieve this aim.

Where do you see the research industry heading in the near future?

I can only see the speed of change getting faster and the role of technology more critical. The industry will continue to strengthen over the next few

years as research companies evolve their businesses to make good use of technological advances. I think it is fantastic that an increasing number of companies are seeing the core products of our industry – that is market/customer data and market/customer insight – as critical to their business success, and therefore the opportunities for research companies to do business will only grow.



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Back to business

Many of the issues research businesses face today stem from the move to digitalization. Andrew Cannon outlines the challenges caused by the paradigm shift to technology and the impact of the digital world on data protection

THE DIGITAL AGE

Technology has changed everything. Market research companies no longer have a monopoly on the production of data on markets, entry barriers have been lowered and cost of production has greatly reduced. Moreover, the number and nature of competitors has increased due to the following:

- Technology has enabled the automation of much of the research production process, from survey design through to reporting
- Business cycles are becoming shorter and technology enables companies to collect and employ data themselves, reducing the perceived need for traditional market research
- As more customers leave a larger digital footprint, companies are increasingly able to collect and utilize strategically valuable data on them – not just historic transactional data from market research companies
- As more businesses become digitalized, the lag between market research and marketing decreases even to the extent that it can happen in milliseconds. It can also be fully automated, such as with adaptive communications and pricing

The use of market and customer information now spreads far beyond the marketing department, and often beyond the control of the market research department, meaning that the needs of both the users and the buyers of this information are much more diverse. This audience does not necessarily understand the possibilities market research has to offer, nor are they necessarily comfortable dealing with market research companies and researchers.

FROM CHALLENGES TO OPPORTUNITIES

The role of GRBN, through regional federations and national associations, is to help research businesses take advantage of the changes caused by digitalization. Thus, GRBN supports the following activities to bring about opportunities:

- Demonstrating the relevance of research and its value to decision-makers, as well as to society as a whole
- Organizing events, such as conferences and webinars, to showcase and discuss cutting-edge ideas
- Implementing training to help businesses develop the expertise and skills of their employees
- Offering members various networking opportunities for navigating changes
- Providing guidelines and best practice to help research businesses expand into new areas, such as big data, social media and mobile research

A DIGITAL IMPACT ON DATA PROTECTION

Change through technology is also affecting the regulatory environment, particularly data protection, which is an area of critical importance to the research industry. It is also impacting on both citizens and consumers. As more data on people are generated, the more valuable those data become – while this allows governments and companies to use those data to create better products and services for people, it also attracts criminal activity, as can be seen by the recent increase in the amount and seriousness of cyber attacks.

In consequence, people's awareness around the value of their data and the risks involved in data sharing will grow, leading to a higher level of mistrust and a greater selectiveness concerning with whom they will share their data. If companies can create a trusting relationship with people, they will be able to create and sustain considerable competitive advantage. Collectively, by strengthening trust, the research industry has the potential to be even more successful in the future.