

How to innovate your research by thinking *inside the box*

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Inside the box thinking



How conventional wisdom can fail us when innovating new methods or approaches



Using your constraints to discover the right box in your research



Three case studies of how researchers applied this thinking



**“Let’s think outside
the box!”**



How constraints can drive innovation

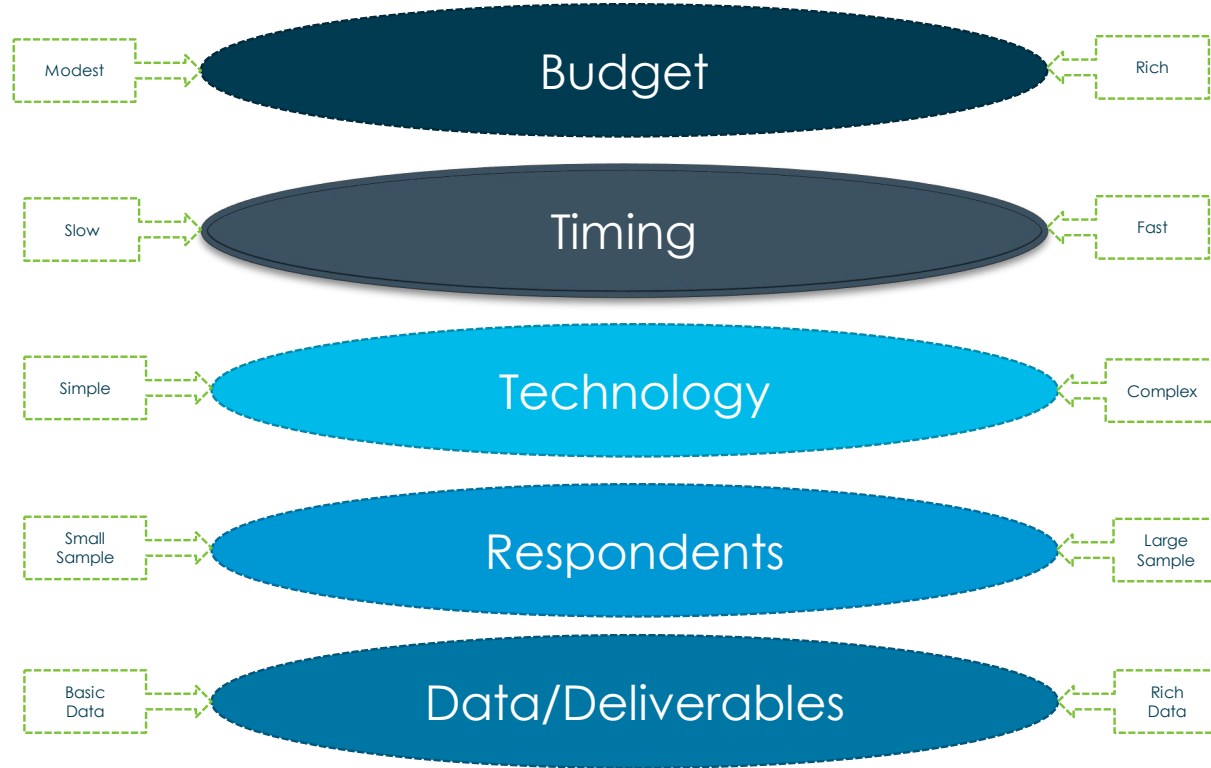
Finding “a better box”

- When clients try to innovate by radically shifting their research plans or chasing a shiny gizmo, they often ignore key constraints
(often done to stand out in proposal phase)
- This results in research that might feel “new” but in fact delivers lower quality/quantity of insights than yielded by previous approaches
(and can make clients reticent to try new things)
- We have found one of the best frameworks for creating change is not to think outside the box, but to use a constraint-driven framework to find a better box



Finding the better box

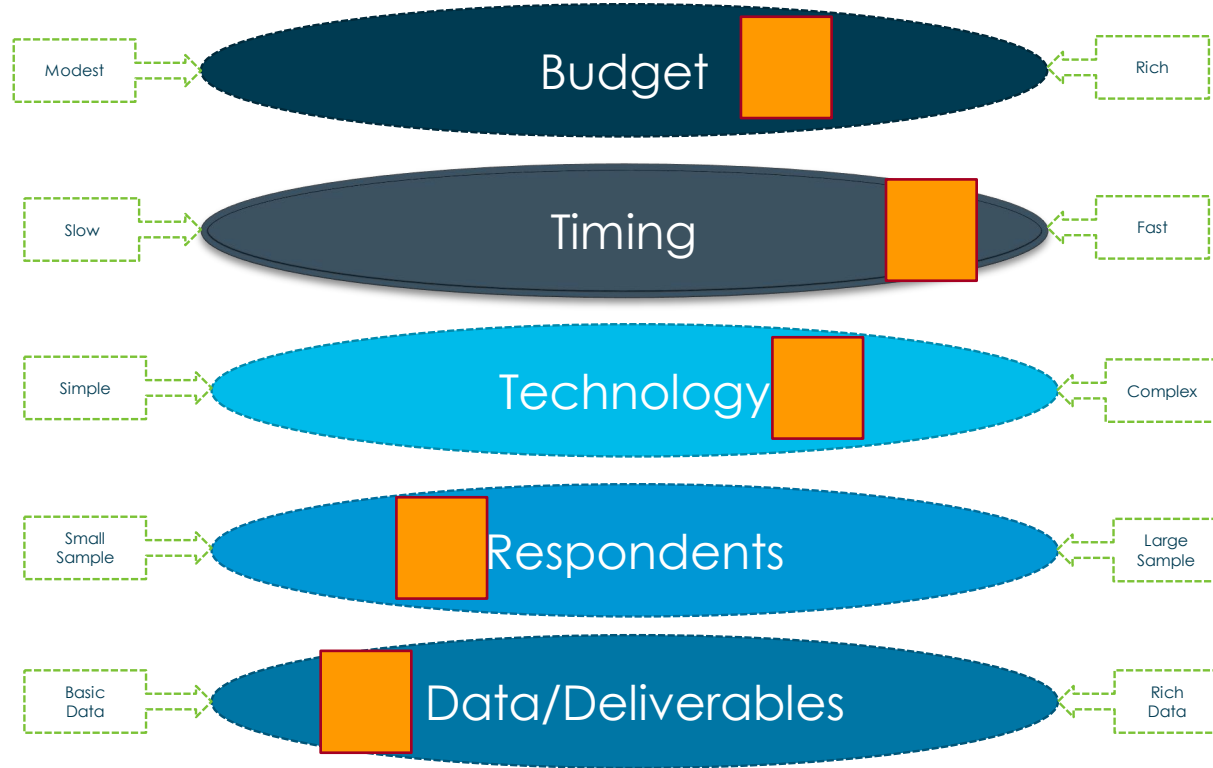
- Think about all the possible constraints of a project as a range of options for your project
- Anything that is outside of one of these boxes ignores a constraint or causes friction
- EVERYTHING cannot be important!



Finding the better box

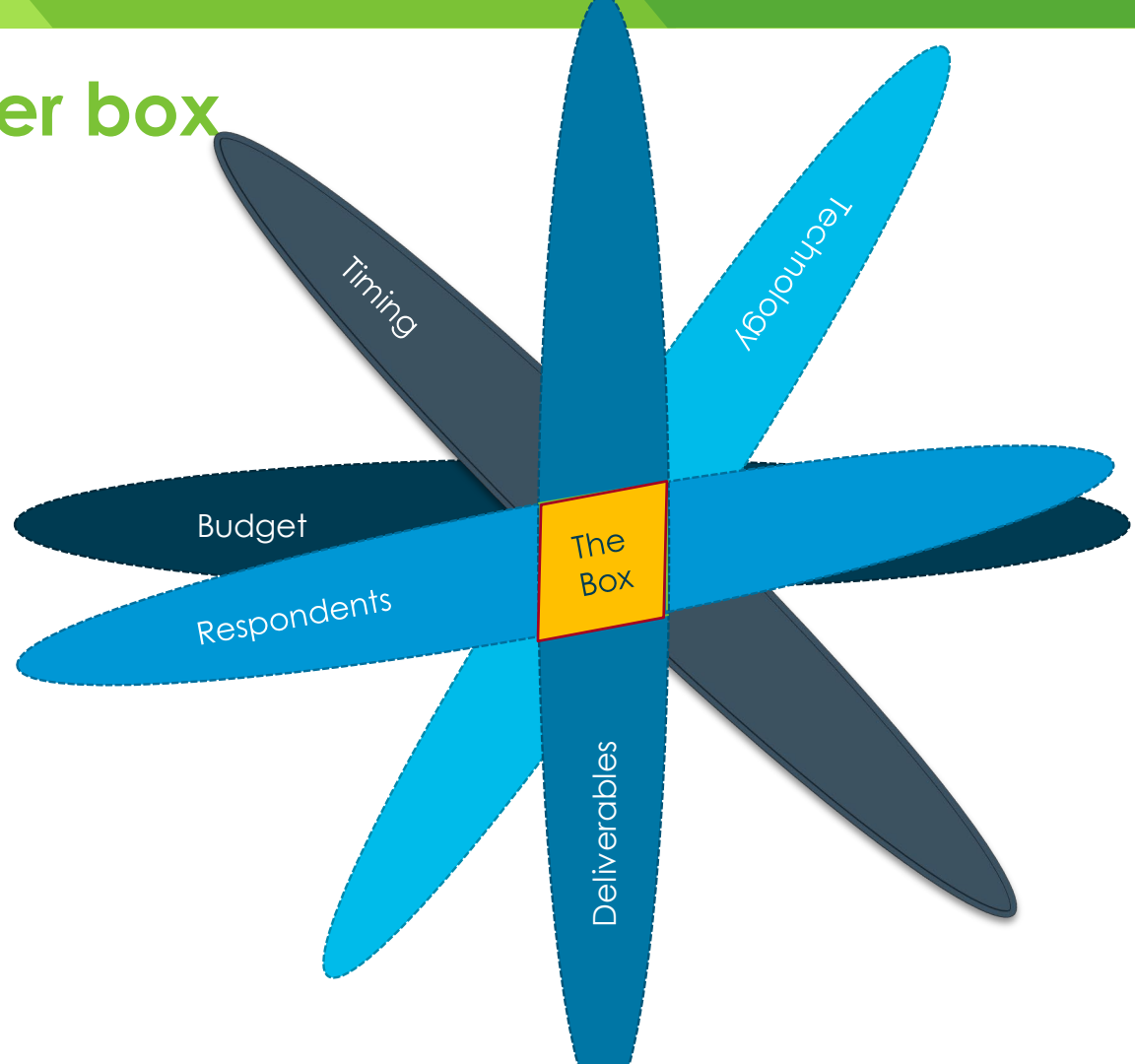
Core
Project
Need

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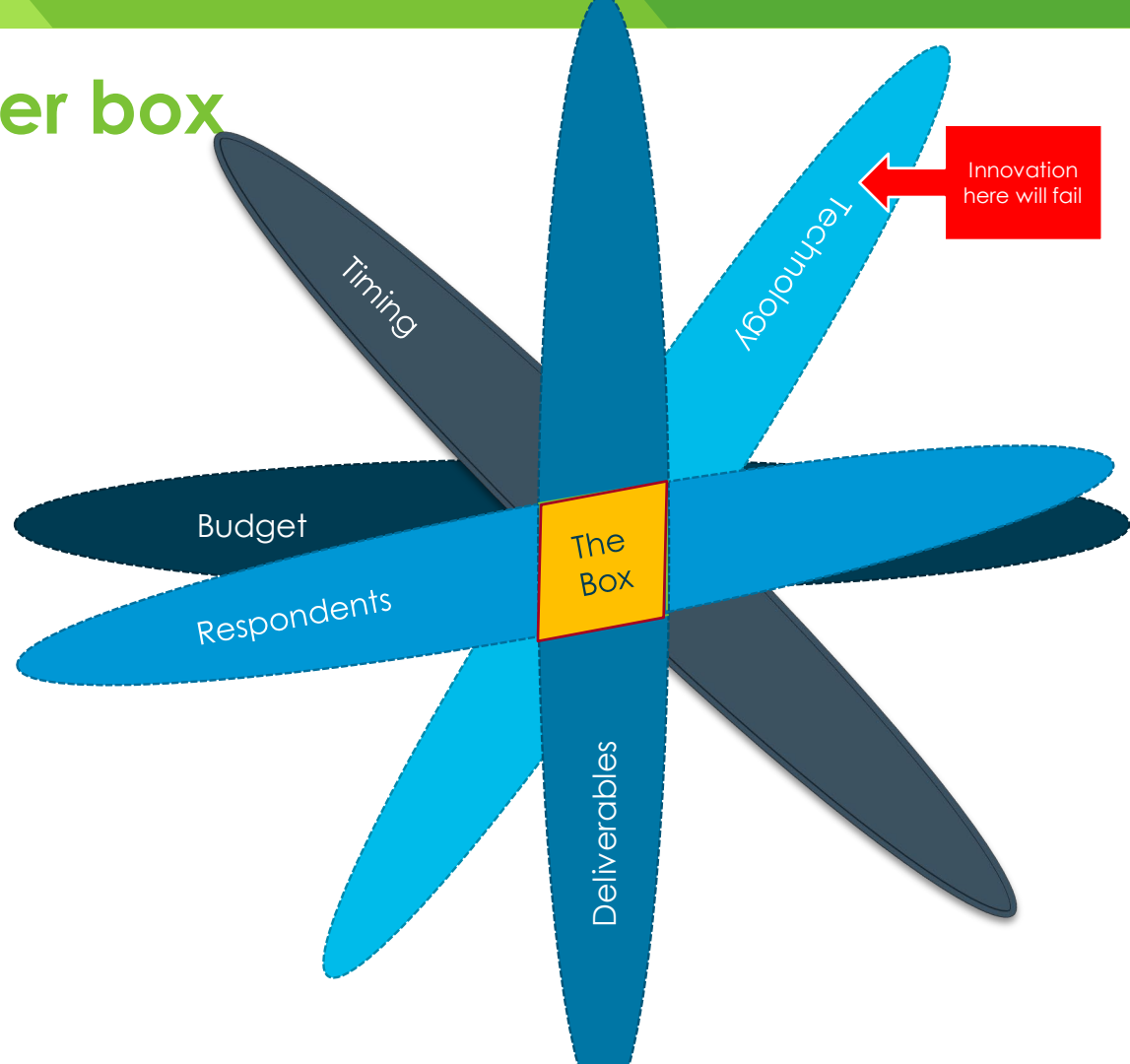
Finding the better box

- Where these boxes all overlap is where you have the highest match for all your constraints
- Not all constraints are equal in every project
- Defining (and communicating) your constraint map is key



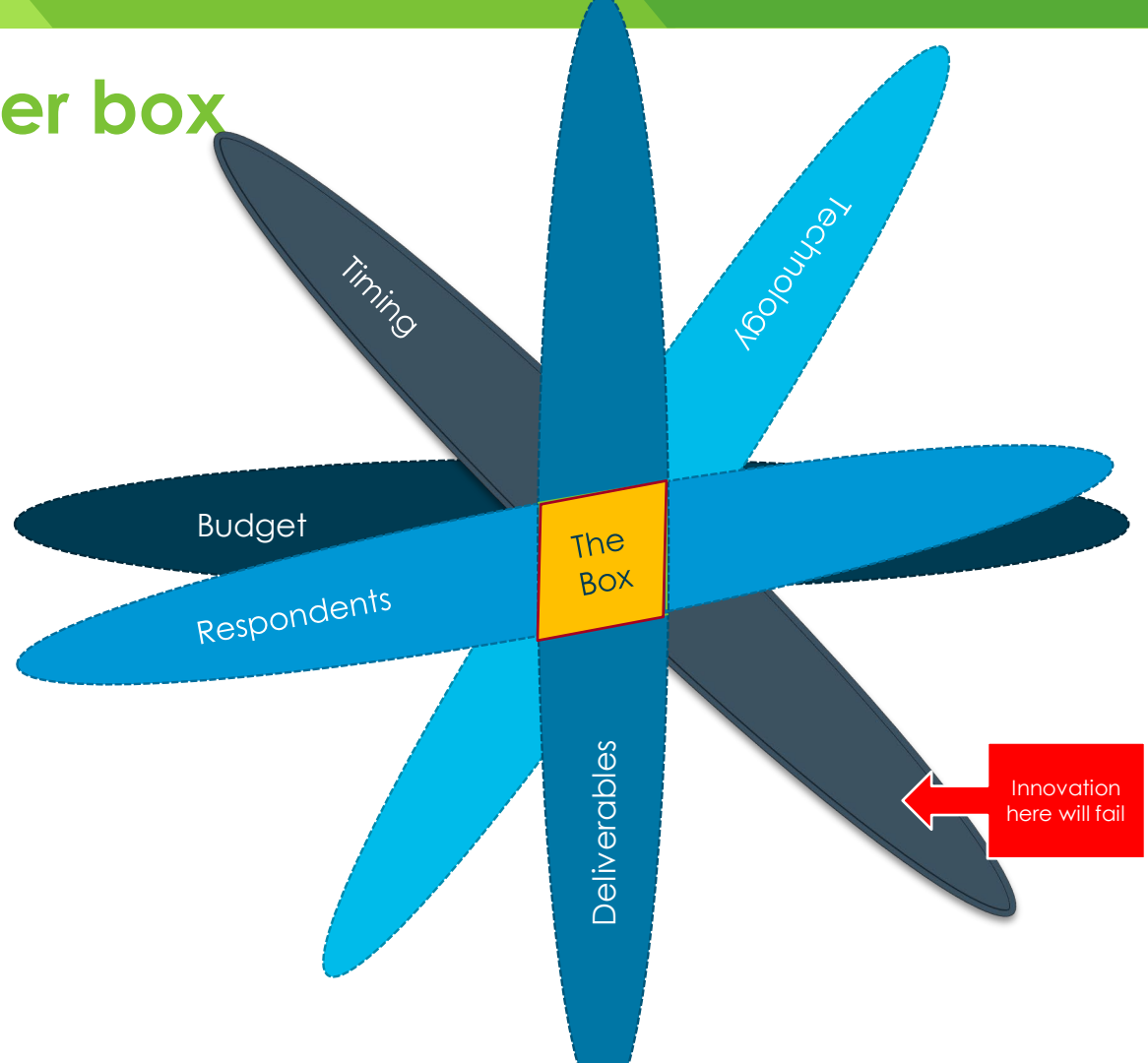
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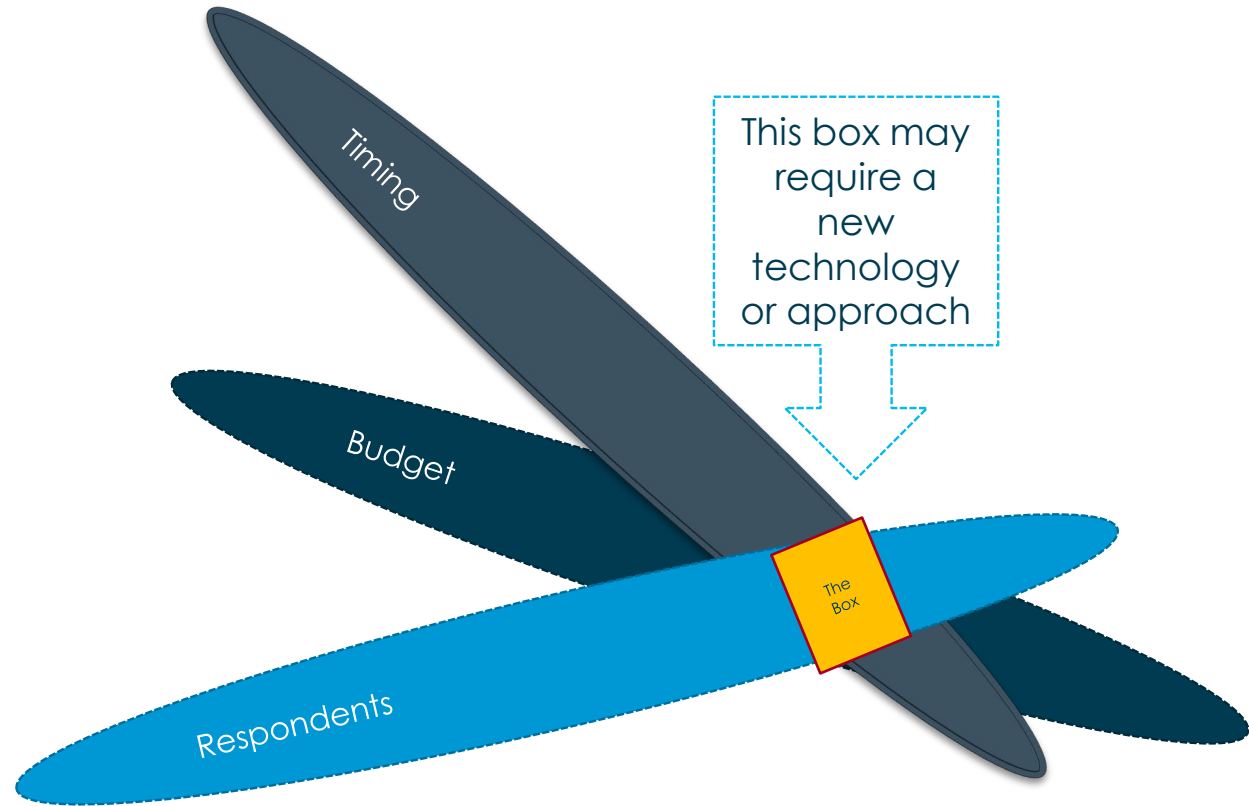
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Finding the better box

Example:

- Highest priority is timing- must be fast
- Second priority is respondent engagement, must have large sample to satisfy stakeholders
- Budget is critical



Turning Theory into Practice

Prioritize constraints, then communicate to everyone

- ✔ It is exceptionally rare for technology partners and fieldwork providers to understand the priorities and constraints of the research
- ✔ If partners aren't clued into the priorities and constraints we are back to "everything is important" and cannot help identify new technologies or methods or ensure projects hit their mark

Case Study 1

Misunderstood Constraints

Cosmetic dental device manufacturer

- Maintained a continuous product testing process built around CLT testing, IHUTs, and recontact interviews
- What was most important: Capturing high compliance during IHUT phase (surprise!)
- Within a few days, we worked with the client to:
 - Redesign the hands-on phase for remote interviews
 - Engage in an ongoing QualBoard project for IHUT data collection to gather **CRITICAL compliance data**
 - Conduct 1:1 and small group interviews during the entire project whenever a new insight was revealed or a compliance issue was identified

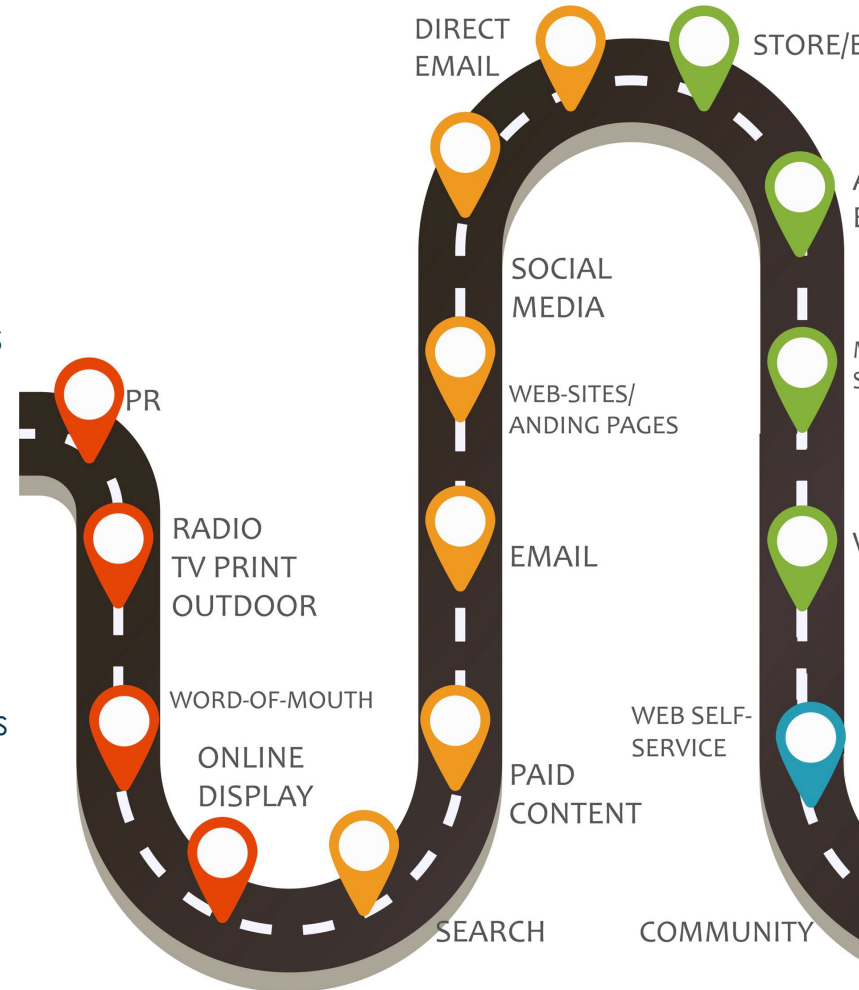


Case Study 2

Fast Path To Purchase

Discount retailer

- A new CMO wanted a refreshed path-to-purchase analysis with rich verbatim...in 9 weeks
- Client had no idea if this timeline was possible, but willing to compromise on most other constraints to deliver results on time
- We worked with the researcher and brand to focus on the constraints and design for speed
 - **Threw out multi-phase project** and fielded an agile community with highly engaged consumers
 - Designed a simple research event around each key step in the path



Case Study 3

What's the frequency, Kenneth?

Consumer electronics company

- Smart home speaker struggling with market share and looking for real-world product experiences to drive innovation
- Small budget but needed deeply involved respondent participation
- **Abandoned the large-sample** (n=500) quant survey in favor of a small (n=20), highly engaged mobile qual ethnography
- Video usage diaries to capture key product moments and critical insights for product development team



Final Thoughts

Innovating by finding the right box

✔ Trying to innovate by thinking way “outside the box” is often unproductive

✔ A clear understanding of constraints uncovers the priorities and helps identify the right method

✔ Communicating priorities to your providers is absolutely critical for success



The background of the slide is a dark teal color with a blurred image of several hands in business attire pointing upwards. The hands are out of focus, creating a sense of motion and engagement.

QUESTIONS?

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