challenging research norms
positioning qualitative research to succeed

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greetings + thanks
experiences with products, services, spaces and interfaces can be a struggle.
understanding these moments require budget, time and resources: a struggle in every organization.
we seek to balance and care for the needs of consumers and creators.
these moments also leave us with a steady stream of questions needing answers.
questions are often about people and product.
the challenge: we often equate our understanding of people to their use of our product.
in doing this, we disconnect ourselves from people.
we then accept answers based on extrapolation, intuition and guesses that seem “good enough”.

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“good enough” acts as a proxy to feeling connected, but with low confidence answers.
reduced connection + confidence is then seen in the products we build.
how can we deepen connections and bolster confidence when designing anything...
...while deepening our connection to consumers and inspiring teams to feel confidence in what they create?
this is the service that qualitative research can provide to the organization.
twig + fish

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look for takeaways and reflect on your own organization’s approach.
structure and transparency lead to confidence and connection.
the twig+fish five-phase learning process.

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create language around gathering and socializing human learning.
the City of Boston sought to understand how City information was obtained in some neighborhoods and cultural groups.

why weren’t residents using the City of Boston website?
the question quickly became –

*Does the City of Boston website create a sense of trust and confidence?*

**1 ALIGN**

organize questions and study intent

typical solutions would begin by asking designers to increase the trust and confidence characteristics of the website –

OR

ask residents why they didn’t use the website as an information source.
How do residents determine if information is trustworthy and generates confidence?

Definition of trust and confidence from resident stories about interactions.
Highest confidence.

How do residents determine if information from the City is trustworthy and generates confidence?

Definition of trust and confidence from resident stories about City interaction.
Increased confidence.

How can the City of Boston website generate a sense of trust and confidence?

No definition of trust and confidence from the resident point of view.
Information based on intuition and guesses.
Low confidence.

Does the City of Boston website create a sense of trust and confidence?

Little contribution to meaningful improvements.
Not primed for ideation.
unpack the confidence in existing knowledge and connect the human story to the team.
## 2 PLAN

recruit and create protocol

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| THE STUDY                              |
| what the learning will look like       |
|                                        |
present the ideal and then the constrained study design – and call out what is lost to show the impacts of constraints.
3 GATHER

capture and
debrief data / 
stories

RESIDENT  

EXPERIENCE 1

IDEAL WORLD

---

story

story

story
use activity-based protocols to generate stories that evidence patterns.
I trust information when it is presented in simple language, bite sized pieces and can be translated to….

The Facebook group I belong to has someone who makes sense of City information using language that I trust and understand….

With something new to me, I prefer personal guidance from my son to avoid going in the wrong direction. I trust him….
don’t reduce rich data to numbers – it is about the variety of data, and how that variety provides inspiration to the team.
5 APPLY

develop final findings deliverable

resident deconstruction of trust and confidence characteristics

inspiration based on attitudinal and emotional resident recounts
evidenced resident experiences
connection and confidence

YIELDED HIGH CONFIDENCE TO PRIME THE DESIGN TEAM FOR IDEATION:

“HOW CAN THE CITY OF BOSTON WEBSITE GENERATE A SENSE OF TRUST AND CONFIDENCE?”
socialize and leverage the human story to bring meaning to what is created.
the City of Boston confidently incorporated human stories to improve its services to residents.
is "good enough" an option when designing products?
position qualitative research activities in a way that builds confidence and connection, through structure and transparency.
thank you.