

PIVOT

BUSINESS NEWS AND EDUCATION

DECEMBER 2024

RUSSELL BRUNSON

*Selling Online...
from the World Record Holder*

UNLOCKING BUSINESS GROWTH WITH STRATEGIC RESEARCH



DENNIS DEVLIN

Chris O'Byrne

How do you help clients find clarity when they're overwhelmed by data?

Dennis Devlin

I believe in the importance of simplification. Whenever we

are involved in an engagement or discussion, the first step is to simplify and identify the core problem we are trying to solve or the issue we are addressing. We need to break it down, as people often focus on details that are superfluous to the main problem.

When I begin discussions with clients, I encourage them to reflect on why they believe research is necessary and what they hope to learn. Narrowing it down to these key points helps them focus more clearly on what they aim to gain. Ultimately, my goal is to deliver significant

value, and I want those I serve to fully recognize the value they are receiving through our engagement.

Chris O'Byrne

How does somebody go about simplifying? What does that look like? And what are they simplifying? Are they simplifying the overriding question of what they're looking for? Or do they have to go deeper into their business and find some areas to simplify there?

Dennis Devlin

A lot depends on who initiates the conversation—whether I start it, or the prospect or client does. If the prospect or client initiates the conversation, they likely already know they need research. In that case, I see it as my responsibility to ensure they get the greatest return on their investment. This typically involves a discovery session, as is common in the B2B world, where we have in-depth interactions.

During this session, I aim to understand the impetus behind their request. Why do they want to conduct research? What specific research do they need to address their problem or question? We work through a process to clarify these points, make clear statements about what they are looking to learn, and prioritize those objectives. This helps them focus on what is most important.

We first ensure their primary needs are met, and if we can also address the "nice-to-haves," that's great. However, there are times when certain objectives might be better addressed in a separate project, especially if they are not closely aligned with the main focus. This process helps us sort that out.

Chris O'Byrne

What is one common barrier to business success that research can help solve?

Dennis Devlin

It ultimately boils down to fear in all its various forms. When it comes to research, it is often a fear of uncertainty. This uncertainty may relate to the market, competition, or the potential success of their campaigns, products, or services. Research provides clarity, helping

to reduce that uncertainty. This clarity enables businesses to make more informed decisions, develop stronger strategies, and achieve greater success.

Chris O'Byrne

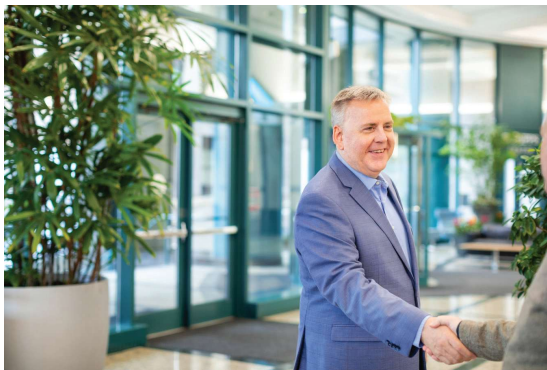
How do you ensure your research delivers clarity and actionable insights?

Dennis Devlin

Much of my focus is on maintaining clarity throughout the process. However, the goal is to ensure clients gain value and learn from the experience. These aspects are integral to what they invest and deserve.

Chris O'Byrne

What is the most surprising insight you've discovered through your thirty years of experience?



Dennis Devlin

Most people do not have all the answers regarding marketing and branding. They need to test different approaches and try new strategies to grow their businesses. Typically, we do not have readily available solutions; we must dig deeper and investigate to discover what will work best. This is especially true for business owners, as no two businesses are alike. What works for one industry or company may not work for another, so exploring and tailoring strategies is essential.

Chris O'Byrne

Can you share a time when a client's growth was transformed through your research?

Dennis Devlin

Yes, this has happened many times, but one example I would like to highlight is from my work with Procter & Gamble, specifically within their Baby Care division. Pampers is a key brand in this strategic business unit, which also includes other Baby Care brands.

At the time, they had a process for developing ideas that could be commercially beneficial, but they wanted to create a more effective system that could be implemented across different product platforms and regions. I helped them design a process to

address the necessary insights for making that happen.

As a result, they developed a product line concept called "Toy Box." The name aligned with the Baby Care theme and represented the idea of generating new concepts, like toys and testing their effectiveness in the marketplace. Implementing this program significantly improved their success rate, although I do not recall the exact percentages. The research provided the direction and solution they needed to address their initial challenges.

Chris O'Byrne

This is part of how you're finding that success; you focus on curiosity, discovery, and honesty. How do those values shape your research process?

Dennis Devlin

These principles must be ingrained in our work with clients. Our approach is rooted in the idea that curiosity is essential. To gain certainty and overcome the uncertainty I mentioned, we must be deeply curious about our clients, their products and services, their competition, their audience, and their target market. Only by focusing on these areas can we truly address what we are trying to accomplish.

Building on that foundation, we go deeper through discovery. This involves, for example, examining social media to understand what people are saying about the industry, products, services, or brands, including competitors. We keep asking questions—one after another—and while we may never feel we have learned everything; we learn a great deal in the process.

As for honesty, it is about being truthful regarding what your brand represents. One challenge we face as marketers and branding professionals is the negativity often directed at us, usually due to the actions of a few bad actors. For example, industries like used car sales have historically faced a reputation for dishonesty, complicating things for everyone.

By being honest about what our products and services can accomplish and by avoiding overpromising and underdelivering, we stay true to our brand. Honesty helps us serve our customers ethically and ultimately benefits us more in the long run. We aim to embed curiosity, discovery, and honesty into every project and client relationship.

Chris O'Byrne

You talk about asking questions and going deeper. How do you know which questions to ask, and how do you know when to stop

asking because you have reached the depth you're looking for?

Dennis Devlin

Often, asking the right questions depends on how the responses to previous questions unfold. We strive to give our clients the flexibility to tell their stories in their own way. We take pride in being attentive listeners—good, strong, and deep—just as we are deeply curious. Part of that curiosity involves being open to the natural flow of conversation. If the discussion remains productive for the client, we know we are doing our job.

I use this as a litmus test: Am I getting the information I need to effectively support them? Over time, you can sense when people become fatigued by answering questions and when the process starts to lose productivity. It is more of an instinct than a specific type of response. At that point, I know it is time to stop or adjust my approach—perhaps shifting to a different question or sub-question to keep the process moving forward.

Chris O'Byrne

I partially asked that question because that's what I do in my interviews. I sometimes ask myself when to stop digging deeper and what's deep enough. It is helpful to hear why you think research or investing in research offers such a high return.

Dennis Devlin

It all comes down to commitment. It is not only about the person investing but also about my commitment to delivering a meaningful return on that investment. Both sides must be fully engaged to extract as much value as possible from the process. Value should be delivered at every stage of engagement to ensure a significant payoff. The impact we aim for is exponential rather than merely additive.

Investing in your business, particularly in understanding your customers, your competition, and how to position your brand effectively, results in an exponential payoff. This includes gaining clarity about your customers, understanding your competition more effectively, knowing where to position yourself in the industry, and ensuring your brand is honest and well-positioned from a messaging standpoint.

The return on investment comes from this broader payoff of accumulated learning. However, the client must embrace and integrate that learning into their strategy. If the insights are not applied—whether to improve products, services, or processes—the investment will not be as valuable, and they will miss the opportunity to serve their customers better than before.

Chris O'Byrne

We tend to gloss over the term exponential without understanding what it means. We think, *Oh, it's a lot*, but it's the difference from going from ten to twenty to ten to one hundred in a step. That's what exponential is. I want people to understand the value of this kind of research because many business owners are visionaries; they're big-picture thinkers and tend not to focus on the details to the detriment of their businesses. And this is a way of solving that.

Dennis Devlin

Strategic research can be transformative for a business financially because it directly impacts the bottom line. Understanding your customers better can increase revenue through more effective sales. Research may also reveal areas where operational processes need to change, allowing you to improve margins by aligning operations more closely with expenses. Additionally, you can grow market share by gaining a deeper understanding of your competitors and identifying your optimal position in the marketplace, which may lead to adjustments such as rebranding.

In short, strategic research can positively affect all three key financial performance indicators: higher revenues, improved margins, and increased market

share. This is accomplished by applying the insights gained from research investments.

Chris O'Byrne

It pays to take a more scientific approach instead of just what we're used to doing. What advice would you give to businesses that struggle with clarity in their strategies?

Dennis Devlin

Business owners should remain open to considering research as a tool for business growth. In my experience, I often encounter people who are somewhat close-minded about what they believe is necessary for growth, and they struggle—sometimes due to inaction. Being open to the possibility that research could unlock significant growth opportunities is crucial. An open mind is essential.



Over time, people can develop a greater appreciation for the value of research. When I speak to potential clients, they typically fall into two categories: those who already understand and appreciate the value of research and those who do not. These are two very different conversations for me. For those who already see the value, I do not need to "sell" them on the benefits of research. Instead, it becomes a matter of demonstrating why my services are the best choice compared to other providers.

For those who do not value research, yet, I have to educate them on its benefits. Too often, they view research solely as a cost—a limiting belief. When they see it only as an expense, they fail to recognize the opportunities that come from investing in research. By closing the door on this possibility, they miss out

on potential growth for their business.

Chris O'Byrne

In addition to the cost factor, what are some other big misconceptions businesses have about market research?

Dennis Devlin

Many companies assume that a research provider will operate independently, much like a consultant who comes in, tells you what to do, and handles everything alone. However, the reality is that it is a collaborative effort. When I first speak with a prospect, I do not claim to know their industry as well as they do—far from it.

The process requires us to work together to move their business forward. The more I understand their business, competition, and customers, the better I can help them. I need to know where they currently stand and where they want to go. Some may expect a consultant or researcher to come in and handle everything, but success in this work requires mutual buy-in and commitment. It is this collaborative approach that leads to long-term benefits.

Chris O'Byrne

Why did you write your latest book, *Three Wise Monkeys*?

Dennis Devlin

Three Wise Monkeys was a passion project for me. It felt like a story I needed to tell—an idea that had been brewing for some time. Having co-authored a book before, I was familiar with the commitment required to write one, but I still felt this was something important to share.

I structured the book around the Japanese axiom of the Three Wise Monkeys, which many of us know. I used the concepts we discussed earlier—curiosity, discovery, and honesty—and aligned them with understanding customers, competition, and one's brand. This structure allowed me to effectively convey the story I wanted to tell.

Chris O'Byrne

Who is the ideal reader for that book?

Dennis Devlin

The book primarily appeals to heads of marketing and business leaders. Our goal is to encourage those leading marketing efforts to reflect on their responsibilities in a way that is easy to understand. The process can seem daunting, especially for those unfamiliar with research. There is a sense of vulnerability in sharing detailed information about their business and allowing someone to uncover even more. By simplifying the approach,



we make it easier for them to understand and, in turn, be more open to considering research as a valuable tool for business growth.

Chris O'Byrne

What advice do you have for other business owners thinking about writing a book? What have you learned in the process?

Dennis Devlin

The most important advice I can give is twofold. First, thoroughly map out your content. From an outline perspective, clearly define what you want to cover and how you want to cover it. Storytelling becomes far more effective when you have a plan in place before writing. In both books I co-authored, we included the outline in a graphic format on the back cover to make it clear and straightforward for readers. This approach simplifies

the content and makes it more accessible. You want to make the book easy for readers to engage with; if they perceive it as challenging, they may not pick it up.

Second, be disciplined. Writing takes time, and it is essential to break that time down into manageable chunks. Once you have an outline, focus on writing chapter by chapter rather than getting overwhelmed by the entire book. Many people never finish writing because they see the process as a massive undertaking and put it off indefinitely, waiting for "someday"—which may never come. To finish sooner, in addition to outlining, set specific writing times when you are most productive. For many, that is early in the morning. Establish a daily writing routine and commit to it consistently.

There will be days when you do not feel like writing, but if you stay committed, you will make progress. That is what helped me co-author both books. By focusing on consistent progress, you can steadily move forward and eventually complete the book, tackling one chapter or section at a time.

Chris O'Byrne

If you were to write a third book, what would it be about?

Dennis Devlin

I already have a book in mind centered on the concept of clarity. Clarity is especially crucial for businesspeople, marketers, and those in branding. It is essential not only in marketing and branding but also in how businesspeople think and act within their business. Intention and clarity are two powerful drivers of success, and gaining clarity about how to move forward is vital for progress.

In this book, I will incorporate elements of research and explore the various types of research that help achieve different forms of clarity. Ultimately, any gain in clarity is a positive step toward success.

Chris O'Byrne

What do you mean by different kinds of research? How would you define the various research

types that somebody should consider?

Dennis Devlin

There are various research approaches, but one fundamental distinction is between qualitative and quantitative research. Qualitative research focuses on understanding the underlying motivations, desires, wants, and needs of the people you serve. Quantitative research, on the other hand, seeks to determine how many people think, feel, or act in a certain way—often based on insights gained from qualitative research. In other words, it allows you to quantify those findings and assess their broader impact.

For example, if you are selling a specific type of wrench, qualitative research might help you understand why someone needs or wants that product

and how its features solve their problem. Once you have that understanding, quantitative research can help determine how many people share those motivations, providing a clearer sense of the product's potential impact on the market. The greater the effect, the more significant the potential payoff when bringing the product to market.

This is one way to think about different kinds of research and the clarity they provide. There are other types, and I am considering including more of these in my next book. Ultimately, the goal is to highlight the importance of clarity—particularly in a marketing and branding context—because it significantly improves your chances of success.



Chris O'Byrne

I like that. What tips do you have for people who want to get started doing market research on their own?

Dennis Devlin

There are many online tools available today for conducting research. A simple Google search can reveal numerous do-it-yourself research platforms. These tools can be helpful for those with a basic understanding of research. For instance, if someone wants to survey their customers, they can find affordable online survey platforms. SurveyMonkey is one example, though there are others. Users can access these platforms for less than a thousand dollars a year and learn how to use them effectively through tutorials.

The biggest challenge for someone conducting their own surveys is knowing the right questions to ask to get the answers they need to move forward. Even if you want to handle most of the process yourself, it can still be beneficial to seek help in certain areas. For example, assistance with developing survey questions or creating discussion guides for qualitative research, such as interviews or focus groups, can be invaluable.

There is a saying: "Garbage in, garbage out." We save time,

effort, and money by asking the right questions to obtain meaningful answers. I encourage people to consider whether having someone with experience in research could be beneficial, even if they aim to keep costs down and do much of the work themselves.

Chris O'Byrne

What parting words of wisdom do you have?

Dennis Devlin

My message has always been and continues to be about the importance of clarity. I encourage people to recognize its value not only in business but also in life. Often, our most challenging experiences in life can have the most positive impact on us. I did not always feel that way about my difficult life experiences—certainly not at the time—but with time comes wisdom, and we learn how to respond to life's events more positively over time.

Chris O'Byrne

Where can people learn more about you and what you do and perhaps find some clarity?

Dennis Devlin

You can easily find me on LinkedIn under Dennis Devlin. I'm based in Cincinnati, which will likely narrow it down. My website is clarity-us.com, where

you'll find case studies, blog posts, and ideas related to clarity and other topics. There are plenty of opportunities to learn more about me and my business there.

Action Steps

- 1. Simplify your approach to decision-making:** The author emphasizes the importance of breaking down complex business problems. After reading the article, focus on identifying the core issues in your business and prioritizing what matters most for growth.
- 2. Invest in strategic research:** The article highlights how research can reduce uncertainty and guide your business toward success. Use market research to better understand your customers, your competition, and the best expansion opportunities.
- 3. Embrace curiosity and continuous learning:** The author encourages a mindset of curiosity. Apply this by asking deeper questions about your market, exploring new strategies, and staying open to new insights that can drive growth.

About the Author

Dennis Devlin is the founder, visionary, and CEO of CLARITY Research & Strategy. Through research and strategy support, he helps growing businesses gain clarity—including knowledge, understanding, and insights about their customers, competition, and brand—to develop more effective marketing and branding to grow their businesses. Dennis is an in-demand public speaker and a bestselling author. His latest book is *Three Wise Monkeys: How a Culture of Clarity Creates Transformative Success*. Learn more at clarity-us.com.

AI THAT SOUNDS LIKE YOU

CASTMAGIC



TURN  AUDIO 
INTO  CONTENT 
 LIKE  MAGIC 

Upload your MP3. Download ready-to-post content.

TRANSCRIPTION

Transcribe any audio or video in seconds with out of this world accuracy.

CUSTOMIZABLE AI

Summaries, shownotes, blogs, & more, all written in your own tone and style.

TRY FOR FREE

Turn your audio into revenue in seconds. Use code PIVOT20.

WWW.CASTMAGIC.IO