

From Reformulation Risk to Confident Launch

How Unilever Protected a
Multimillion-Dollar SKU

HighlightTM



Who we are -



Matt Annecharico

**North America Consumer/Market
Research - Personal Care, Unilever**

Consumer Research Specialist |
Technical Marketing | CPG Strategy |
Science Communicator | Eternal
Optimist



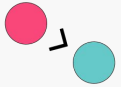
Dana Kim

CEO and Founder, Highlight

Consumer Insights Nerd | Entrepreneur
| Passionate about Consumer Products
| New Mom | Restaurant Lover

What breaks when insight becomes a bottleneck

We consistently hear five pressures from modern insights & product teams:



Disconnected Data & Tools

Disconnected tools and data scattered across emails, inboxes, and drives makes cohesive learning hard.



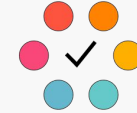
Speed

The business needs answers in hours and days — traditional research doesn't move fast enough. 'Not enough time to test' is said too often.



Low Quality Data

Teams need data they can trust – from vetted people giving real feedback – so they can make critical decisions with confidence.



Manual Project Management

Lean teams, growing research demands, and all of the manual steps required to execute research create capacity constraints, bottlenecks, and are error prone.



Actionable Insight

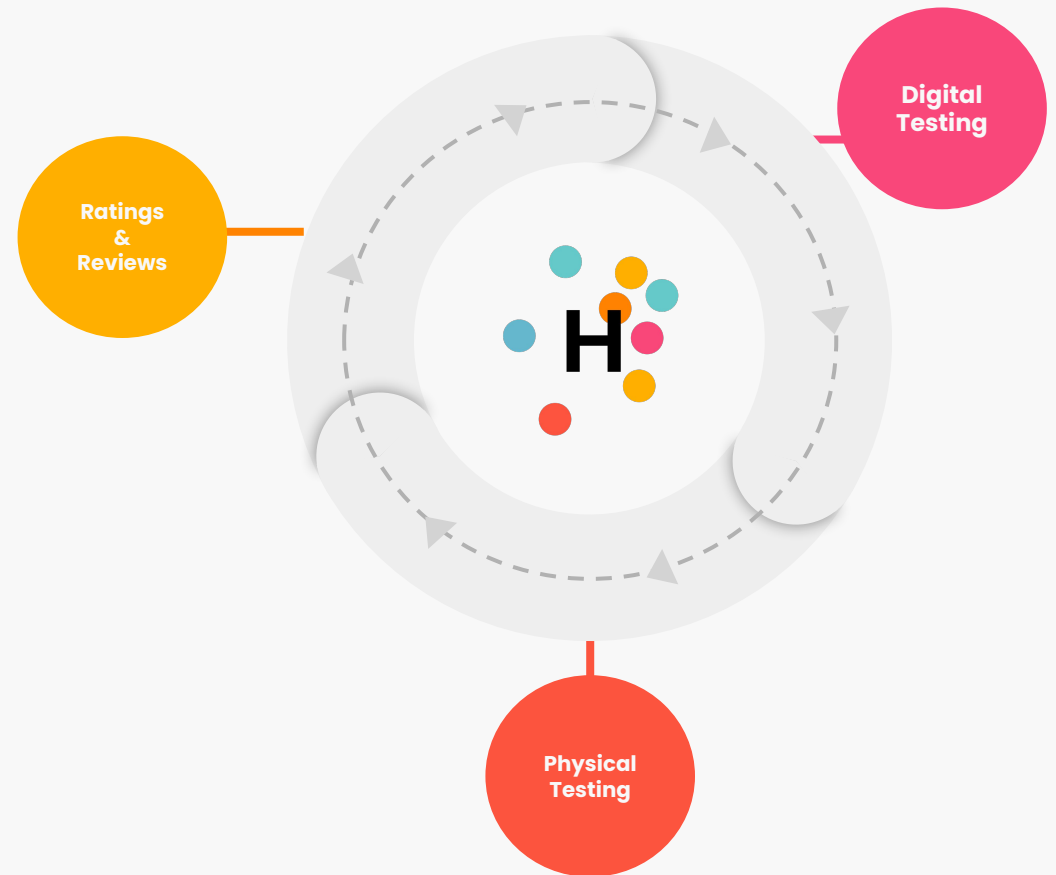
Research happens, but is often episodic, siloed, or too slow to guide decisions.

One platform for all of the testing & insights you need.

Highlight is the only platform purpose-built for product builders –

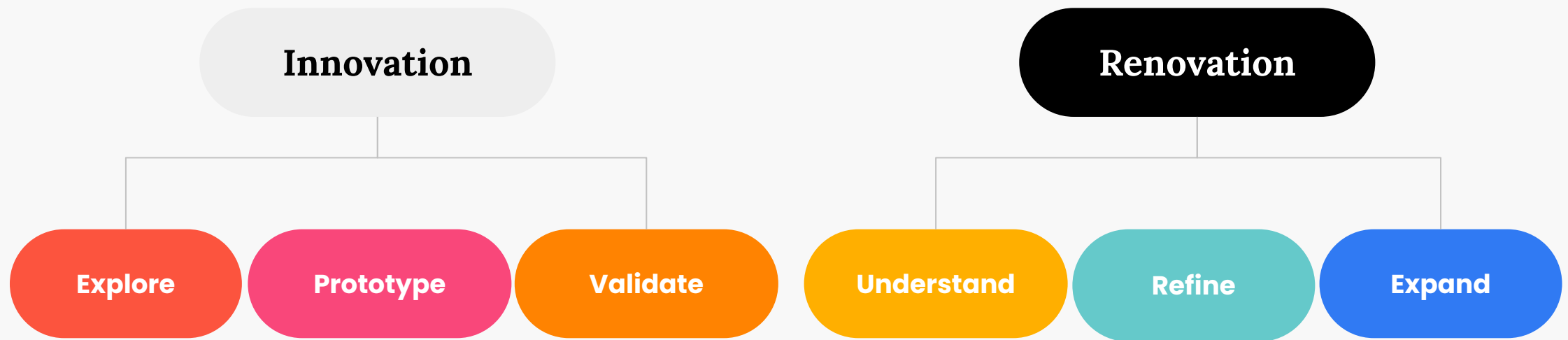
- Reach verified consumers (your community or ours)
- Real usage environments (on site or in home)
- Fully integrated logistics for physical testing
- AI-powered workflows for quality control
- Embedded expertise to fuel smart study design + powerful insights

With Highlight, quickly get the data you need to win.



Highlight makes product research your strategic growth engine

Reuse, compare, and connect research across **teams**, **product types** and **development stages**, so every project strengthens the next and learnings multiply over time.



Let's start by teeing up the context of this research & what it was so important to get it right.

When regulatory changes threaten a beloved product, the stakes aren't just financial — they're about consumer trust built over years.

The Stakes



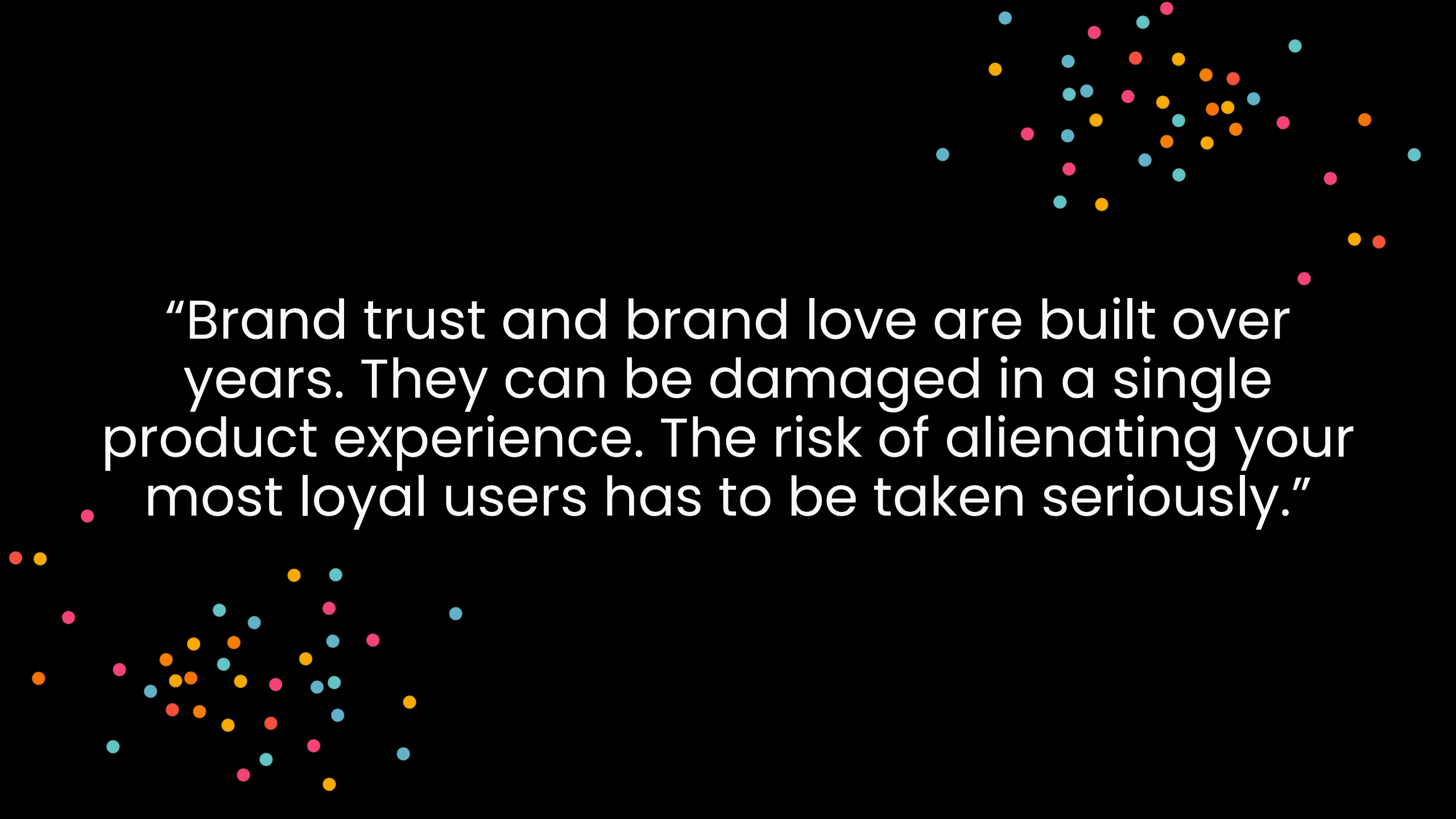
Emotional connections to a brand.

Regulatory-driven changes can often touch the things consumers love most — packaging, fragrance, texture, feel — the holistic product experience.

The real research question wasn't "will consumers like our new product?" It was: **"Have we changed something people can perceive and is it something that they love."**

The burden of proof is subtle.

The study design had to be sensitive enough to detect disruption in consumer love, not simply pass/fail product preference.



“Brand trust and brand love are built over years. They can be damaged in a single product experience. The risk of alienating your most loyal users has to be taken seriously.”

How Unilever tackled this important work with confidence, speed, and quality

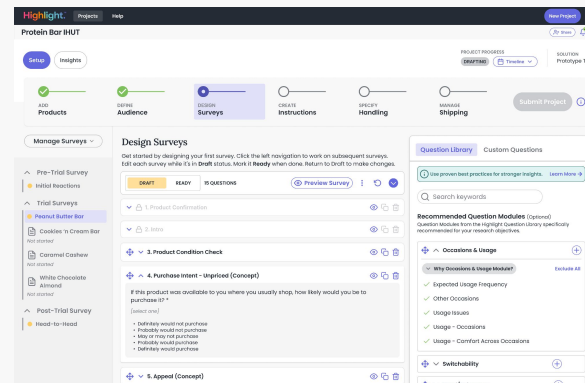
01 The Right Audience

Trusted testers & seamless fielding with built-in safeguards



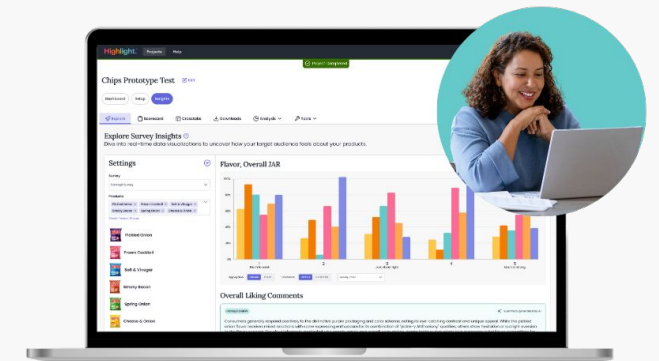
02 Integrated Execution

Easy, intuitive, comprehensive research setup



03 Decision-Ready Insights

Unlocked powerful, decision-ready insights & analytics (fast)



01

The Right Audience

Answering these most important questions means listening to your consumers. Who you reach, and how you reach them – is the critical foundation for your research.

The Right User

We needed daily, and loyal users of this specific product. The people who know intimately how it should look, feel, and perform. If anyone was going to detect a change, it was them.

The Right Scale

n=300 on a specific *variant* is typically a huge challenge.

The Right Confidence

Recruiting the right consumers wasn't just a logistics challenge — it was the foundation of the study's validity. It was critically necessary to give leadership the confidence to act on the output.

These are the consumers that know our products most intimately and often in ways that they may not be able to fully articulate.

Their experience is a culmination of the look, the feel, the smell the texture... all of these modalities ladder up to their impression of the product and the relationship they form with it.

This is why it is so crucial that if we consider making any changes to the formula, that we consider **this most discerning consumer**.



How does Highlight ensure we're reaching the right consumers?



The Highlighter Difference

Real Humans. Real Insights.

So you make the most of every prototype & every research dollar.

01

We have a **robust community**...

- While we refer to Highlighters as a community, the scale rivals that of a quantitative panel.
- Ability to reach high n-sizes for rigor in validation
- Ability to reach low IR audiences (2%+) to target precisely

02

of **real humans**...

- High quality community screened on articulation, identity, engagement + up to 43 different demographic, behavioral & attitudinal attributes
- Triple verification of identity

03

who **engage**.

- On average, 90% response rates // 20% overage required (in comparison to 50% response rates industry wide)
- Avg of 20-30 word open ends (vs 5-7 words industry average)
- Incentivized by our mission

This isn't just a panel—**it's a community of humans who are ready to engage.**

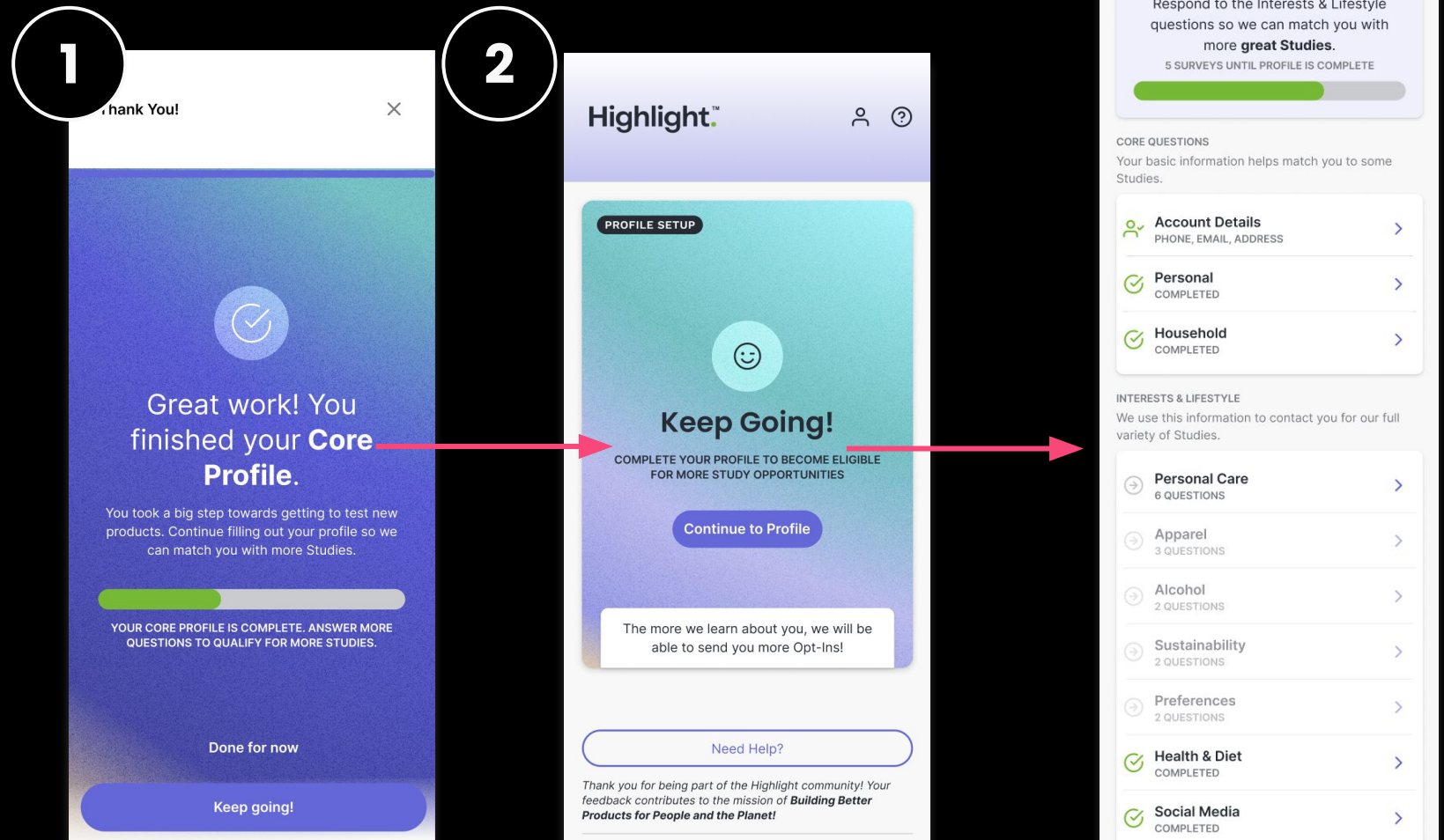
Our commitment to unmatched data quality

High quality community screened on articulation, identity, engagement + up to 43 different demographic, behavioral & attitudinal attributes

 Personal Gender Ethnicity Relationship Status Parental Status Education Employment Status Employment Industry Household Income	 Personal Care Personal Care Product Usage Personal Care Shopping Skin Type Acne-prone Skin Sensitivity Fitzpatrick Scale	 Health & Diet Allergy Better For You Plant Forwardness Workout Frequency	 Social Media Social Media Usage & Platforms	 Shopping Who You Shop For Quality vs Value Everyday Electronics Groceries Shopped Foods Avoided Big Box Stores Frequented Grocery Stores Frequented Convenience Stores Frequented Online Stores Frequented
 Household Language Number in Household Household Composition Number of Pets Types of Pets Household Shopping Responsibility	 Apparel Clothing & Shoe Gender Clothing Size (Women's) Clothing Size (Men's) Shoe Size (Women's) Shoe Size (Men's)	 Alcohol Alcohol Drinking Frequency Alcoholic Beverages Consumed	 Sustainability Sustainability General Importance Sustainability Importance by Category	 Preferences Extra Tasks Reminders Type
Core Profiling	Additional Behavioral & Attitudinal Attributes			

Powerful continuously hydrated profiles

Capture the core & continue to profile with every single response – so we continuously learn about an individual.



02

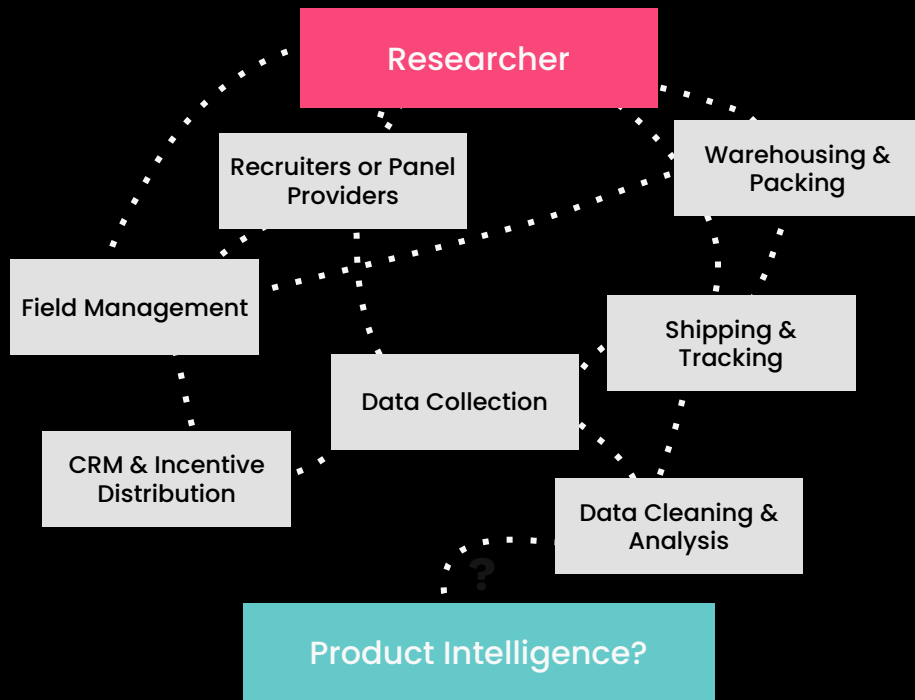
Exceptional Collaboration

From fragmented Word docs and email threads to a live dashboard with real-time data — this is how Highlight and Unilever changed the model – shared stakes, shared visibility.

Highlight was built to take a previously fragmented, painful experience, and turn it on its head.

Before Highlight

~12 weeks, countless emails & calls



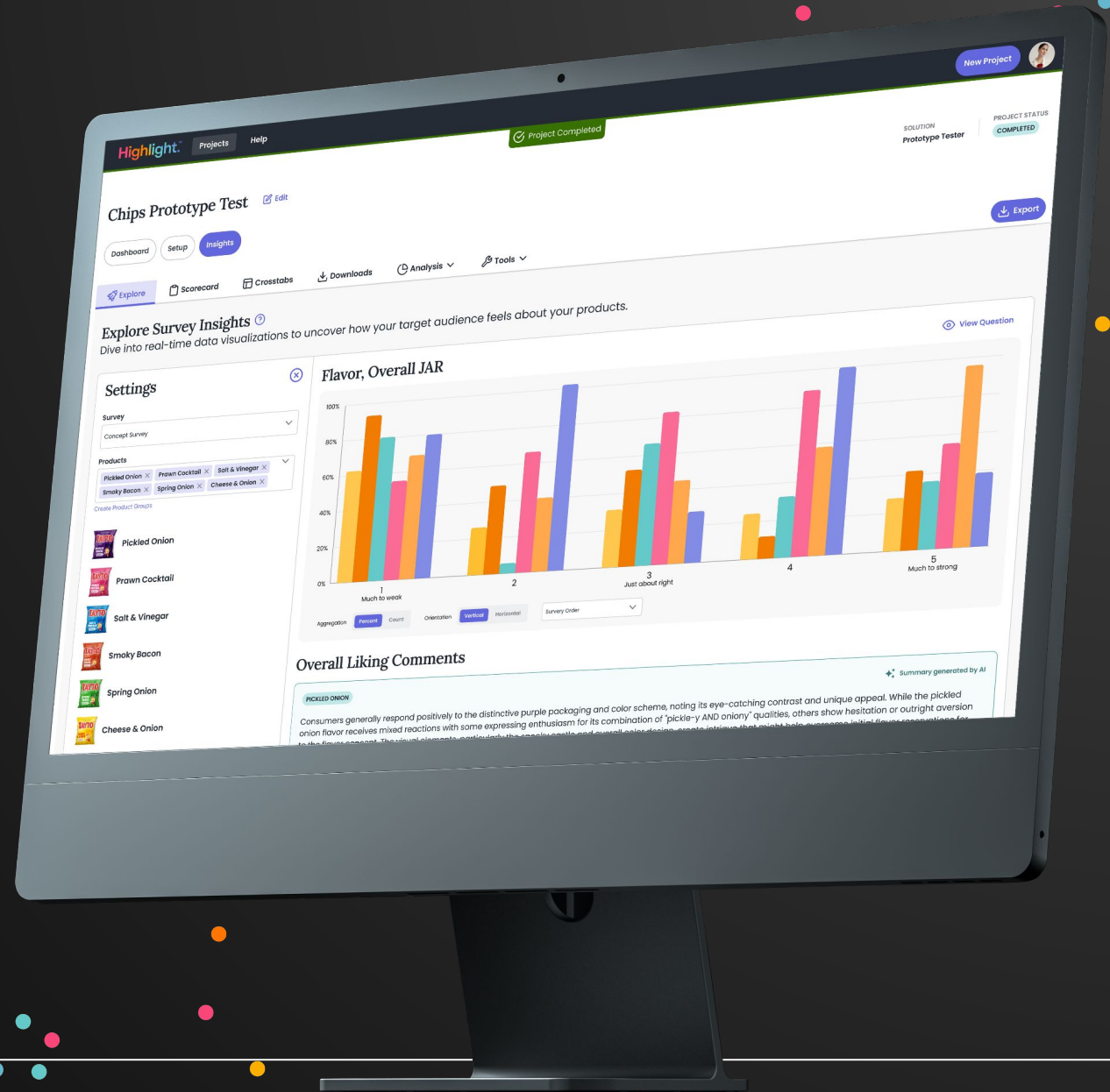
After Highlight

~3 weeks, a handful of clicks



Killing the Word Doc: How Highlight Changed the Workflow

- Emails, Word docs, endless revisions. A data scientist needed just to get started. 10–14 weeks start-to-finish — and at the end of it, you felt less like a researcher and more like a customer.
- With Highlight: one dashboard as the single point of truth. All documents, screeners, coding, and timelines in one place — always accessible, always aligned.
- As responses came in, real-time visibility meant early reads on results — not just tracking progress, but seeing the data shape in real time.



One Platform

Proposals, screeners, questionnaires, and timelines — all in one dashboard. No more clutter across email threads and file versions.

Reduce the clutter in your email and your head.

One Source of Truth

Speed to fielding improved dramatically. But more importantly, every stakeholder was always completely aligned.

No version confusion, no back-and-forth.

One Live View

Real-time data as responses came in. Not just progress tracking — actual early reads on results, giving confidence before the study even closed.

Enabling proactive stakeholder management.



In the old model, I was downstream of my own research. With Highlight, I was embedded in it.



A closely integrated solution



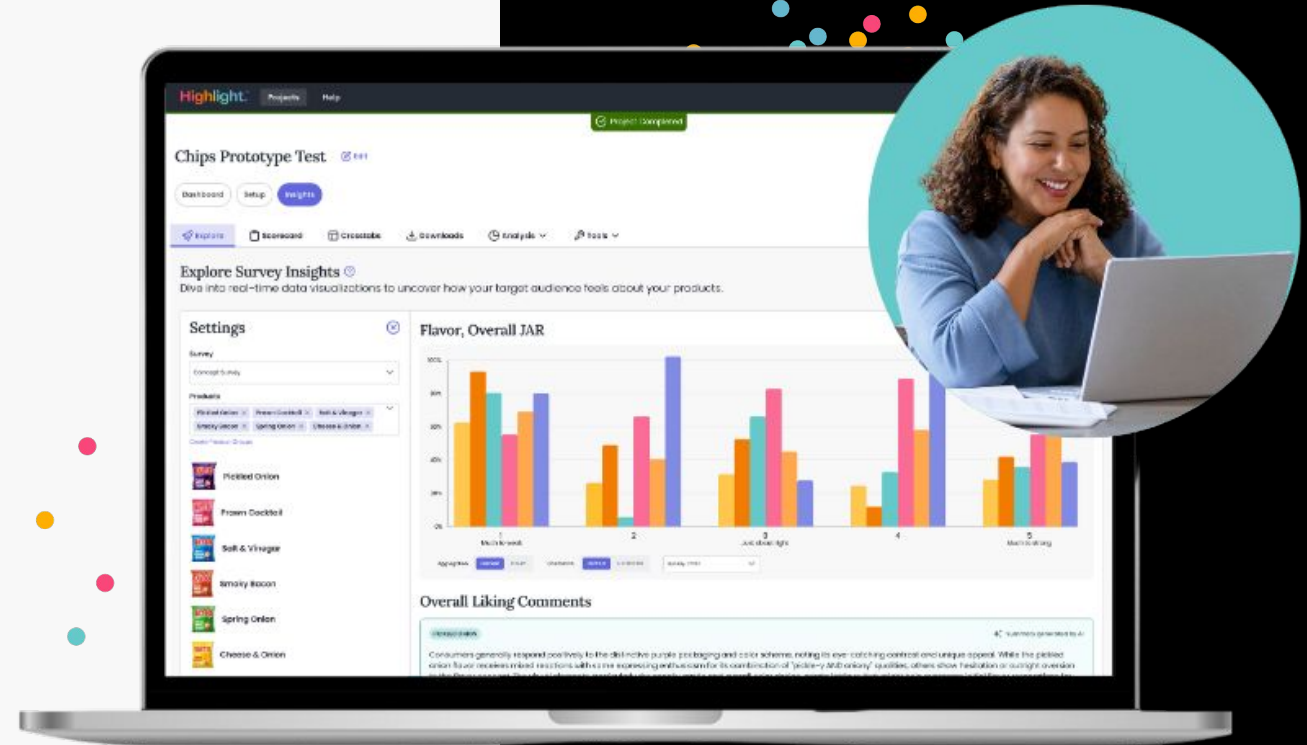
Intuitive Software

Highlight's easy to use, streamlined Project Setup flow offers **expert guidance & research grade confidence** so you never have to start from scratch, and can easily configure your test to your needs.



Tailored Support

At Highlight, we offer two service tiers that balance the support you need with the autonomy you want, ensuring a seamless operating model that suits both standard and custom use cases.



03

Decision Ready Insights

Live dashboards and dynamic AI-powered outputs gave the Unilever team the confidence to move forward at all points in the research.

The fastest path to answers.

Highlight's Insights suite automates instant, sophisticated, easy, and accurate analysis and Insights

Post-research, the new Highlight experience leverages AI power and expert guidance to automatically generate—

- **Summary** and **Scorecard** summarize your findings and compare key metrics to answer your key questions instantly
- **Penalty Analysis** to quantify, identify, and understand key areas of sensory optimization
- A downloadable crosstabs spreadsheet for full **statistical analysis**
- **Full dataset** of all results and respondent information
- **Photos or videos** collected during research for download
- **Instant Reports** automatically build reports summarizing your project and its findings as soon as fielding is complete.

Automated post-research analysis also includes the insights most relevant to your business questions, such as penalty analysis and alienation analysis.

Highlight Projects Help Project Completed New Project

Chips Prototype Test [Edit](#)

Dashboard Setup **Insights**

Explore **Scorecard** Crosstabs Downloads Analysis Tools

Key Performance Overview [?](#)
Review critical metrics to gauge product performance and consumer sentimentz

Settings [×](#)

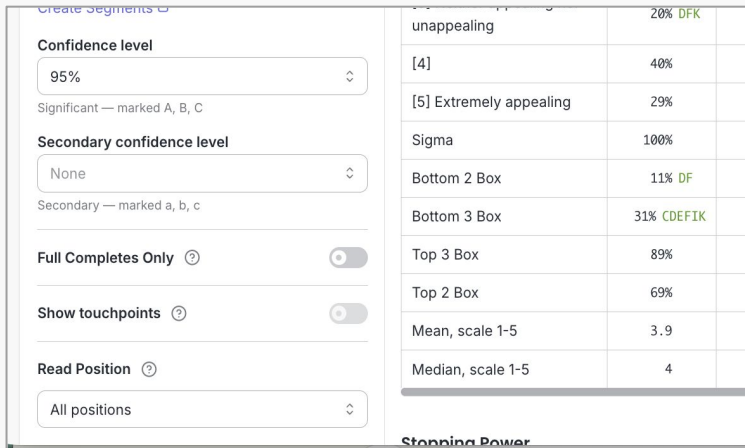
Survey
Concept Survey

Products
Pickled Onion [×](#) Prawn Cocktail [×](#) Salt & Vinegar [×](#)
Smoky Bacon [×](#) Spring Onion [×](#) Cheese & Onion [×](#)

Create Product Groups

		Pickled Onion (A) N=120	Cheese & Onion (B) N=120	Salt & Vinegar (C) N=120	Spring Onion (D) N=120
Concept Appeal	Top 2 Box	54%	58%	62%	68%
Concept Uniqueness	Top 2 Box	23%	60% AC	35%	72% AC
Concept Believability	Top 2 Box	58%	61%	65%	70%
For You	Top 2 Box	43%	47%	52%	75% ABC
Purchase Interest	Top 2 Box	45%	53%	58%	61%
Need / Desire	Top 2 Box	47%	55%	58%	62%
Solves Frustration	Top 2 Box	35%	38%	34%	41%
Clarity / Understanding	Top 2 Box	41%	47%	42%	53%
Likelihood to Replace	Top 2 Box	30%	63% AC	38%	72% AC

Ongoing Insights & Polished Deliverables



Create Segments

Confidence level: 95%
Significant — marked A, B, C

Secondary confidence level: None
Secondary — marked a, b, c

Full Completes Only: ☐

Show touchpoints: ☐

Read Position: All positions

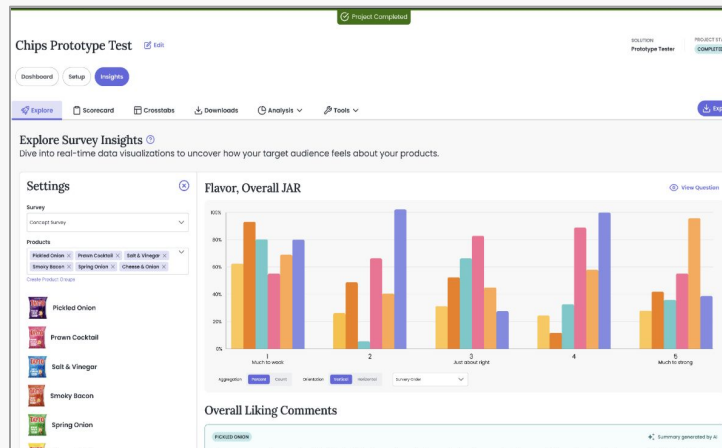
Segment	Percentage	Significance
unappealing	20%	DFK
[4]	40%	
[5] Extremely appealing	29%	
Sigma	100%	
Bottom 2 Box	11%	DF
Bottom 3 Box	31%	CDEFIK
Top 3 Box	89%	
Top 2 Box	69%	
Mean, scale 1-5	3.9	
Median, scale 1-5	4	

Stopping Power

01

Total Control

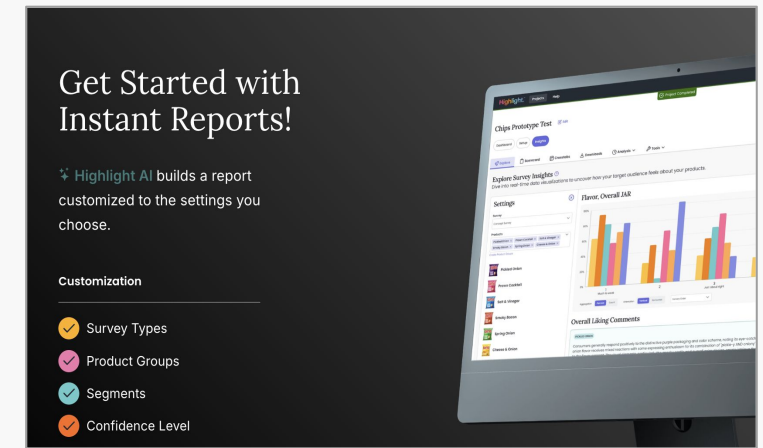
Drill into the data, summarize open-ended responses, extract raw data — all within the platform. Senior stakeholders had the same live view.



02

Live Confidence

Live Dashboards give you early reads, trends, interesting insights formulating early.



03

Robust Analytics

Clear go/no-go output answered the research question precisely — giving the team and leadership the confidence needed to proceed with reformulation.

Key Takeaways

01

Know your consumer before your study

The right respondent isn't a category user — it's the person who knows your specific product better than anyone. Design recruiting around them.

02

Level up Collaboration

The ROI of modern research platforms isn't just better data — it's researcher time saved, fewer errors, faster decisions, and stakeholder alignment built in.

03

Embed yourself in the data

Don't wait for the report. Real-time visibility changes how you think about a study — and how confidently you can present findings to leadership.

Questions? Thank you & let's stay connected!



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Highlight.TM



CONNECT WITH DANA

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CONNECT WITH MATT