

QUIRKS NEW YORK • 2026

Stop paying for bad data

Rethinking incentives in survey research

Anna Goldhahn

Director of Institutional Insights & Behavioral Science
Prudential



THE ARGUMENT

A different diagnosis

We treat fraud and careless answers as a detection and cleanup problem.

But **we create them by how we pay for participation.**

THE USUAL RESPONSE

Treat it as a detection problem — tighten screening, add validation, clean up after the fact.

THIS SESSION

Look upstream — the incentive model itself manufactures the fraud and disengagement we fight later.

THE SCALE OF THE PROBLEM

The data-quality tax is already enormous

15–30%

industry survey fraud rate — up
to 45% on some platforms

75% → 10%

collapse in usable responses in
recent fraud-exposed studies

≈ 50%

of global internet traffic is now
automated bots

Sources: NORC literature review (2026) · Pinzón et al. (2024) · Imperva (2024)

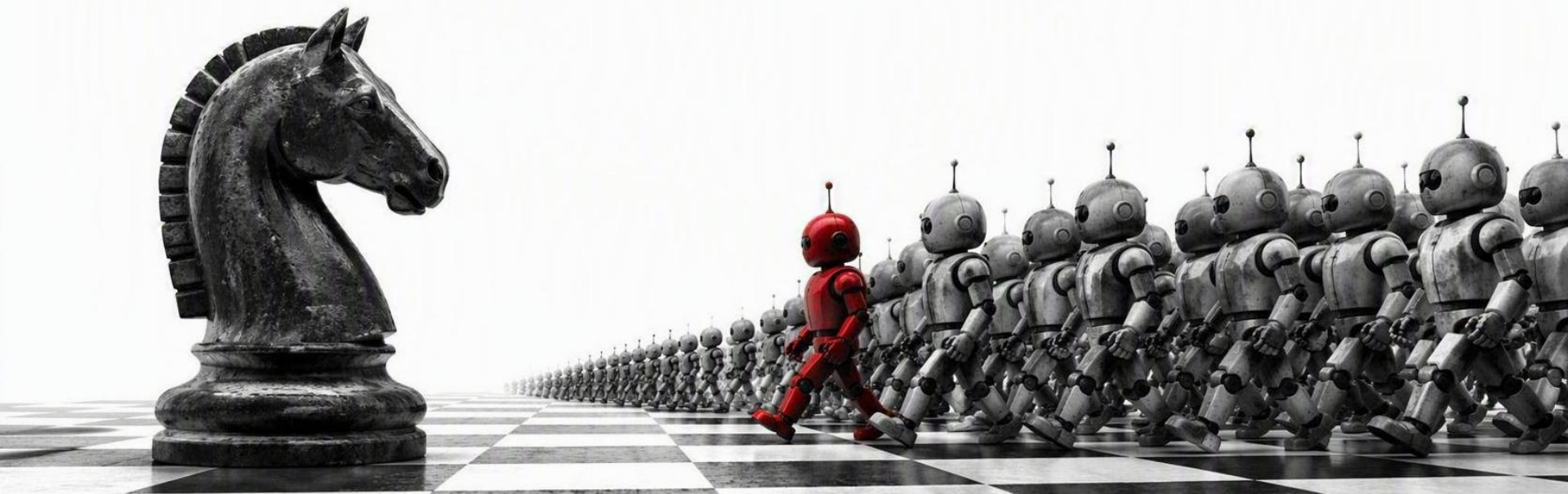
THE DYNAMIC

An arms race researchers keep losing

As long as money rewards fast, high-volume completes, people and bad actors optimize for exactly that.

We invest in detection; fraudsters adapt to beat it.

We can't win an arms race we keep funding.



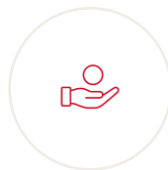
WHAT MONEY ACTUALLY BUYS

Financial incentives reward behaviors we try to remove later



Speed over thought

Rewards fast completion,
not careful engagement



Qualification over truth

Attracts people motivated by the
reward, not the topic.



Breaks with senior audiences

Cash can signal
“transactional relationship”
– not “your judgment matters”

The result: Completes, but not more usable data.

Money can crowd out the motivation we want

The overjustification effect

Self-determination research shows that paying for a task a person finds meaningful can replace internal motivation with a transaction — and quality drops.

Sources: Deci & Ryan; Frey



Autonomy

Choosing to take part — not being paid to.



Competence

Expertise worth sharing.



Relatedness

Connection to something that matters.

THE FRAMEWORK

Replace payment with participation drivers

Design around perceived value, not compensation — four drivers.



Influence

A genuine stake in shaping decisions.



Relevance

A topic that actually matters to them.



Feedback

Seeing the results — and what changed.



Contribution

Adding to something bigger than a payout.

Influence & Relevance



Influence

- Give a real stake — advisory panels, early access, a hand in the roadmap.
- Senior audiences respond to being heard more than being paid.

Being consulted signals status — token cash incentives do not.



Relevance

- Match the ask to what the respondent already cares about.
- Salient topics lift B2B response 10–20 points

Relevance, not reward, earns a thoughtful answer.

Feedback & Contribution



Feedback

- Close the loop — share findings and what changed.
- Transparency is an underused driver.

People invest when their effort visibly counts.



Contribution

- Appeal to purpose — contributing to something meaningful.
- One unpaid diabetes cohort stayed engaged 20+ years

Meaning outlasts cash.

YOU MAY BE THINKING...

Three doubts, answered honestly

YOUR DOUBT

“Cash is just faster — we can't field on goodwill.”

DOESN'T HOLD UP

Faster to a complete, not to usable data.

And we're not relying on goodwill — we are employing a different motivator.

YOUR DOUBT

“Our panel expects payment — drop it and response craters.”

DOESN'T HOLD UP

You don't strip cash overnight — layer drivers on top and let value carry the load. And cash is already slipping: completion fell **~30% in a decade**. It isn't what's holding the line.

YOUR DOUBT

“Fine — but this won't work for every study.”

WORTH HEEDING

True. There will be studies that still lean on financial incentives. Participation design wins where you have a relationship or repeat contact — so start there, not everywhere.

THE SHIFT

From paying for responses to earning participation

Paying for responses	Earning participation
Rewards speed and scale	Rewards thought and depth
Attracts payout-seekers and bots	Attracts relevant, invested people
A detection-and-defense arms race	Reduces fraud exposure by design
Counts completes	Grows usable data

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Three things to carry out of the room

1



Fraud is a predictable outcome of financial incentives

Not just a screening failure — paying for completion invites speed, scale and an endless arms race.

2



Money rewards the behaviors we later try to eliminate

Money buys completion over thoughtfulness and payout-seekers over relevance — more completes, not more signal.

3



Participation drivers lift both quality and engagement

Influence, relevance, feedback and contribution cut fraud exposure and raise usable data per response.

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Earn meaningful participation.

Stop paying for responses. Design for value — better data follows.

Anna Goldhahn

Director of Institutional Insights & Behavioral Science, Prudential

Connect on LinkedIn for the slides and reference list.

PRUDENTIAL

REFERENCES & SOURCES

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