63rd TMAG Meeting Hosted by Adobe

MI Meets AI: The Future of Market Intelligence

Tuesday, October 20, 2026

8:00 – 8:45 Check-in and breakfast

8:45 – 9:00 Adobe Welcoming Remarks
Ben Armstrong, VP, Marketing Strategy & Operations, Adobe

9:00 – 9:45 **Safeguarding Truth in Insights: Outsmarting AI Fraud in Market Research**

Chris Barnes, President
The Escalent Group

Introduction: Marsha Eng, AMD

AI is rewriting the rules of research participation - and not always for the better. As research teams race to harness AI for efficiency, participants are also using it to game the system, putting data integrity and incentive programs at risk. That has real implications for data quality, trust, and decision-making.

Fraud isn't just increasing, it's evolving. Traditional quality checks aren't enough anymore. The cost isn't just bad data, it's misguided strategy built on flawed insights. Combating this requires a layered approach: better technology, smarter survey design, and a more proactive stance on data integrity.

Chris Barnes, President at Escalent, will reveal first-of-their-kind findings from a 2025 study (conducted with partners from Tremendous) on AI-driven fraud. Barnes will spotlight how participants are deploying AI to slip past traditional safeguards, the hidden costs of fraudulent responses on budgets and insights, why the next era of fraud defense demands a multilayered strategy, and where researchers are leaning back into tried-and-true methodologies as a counterbalance.

The session will deliver:

- A sharper lens on how AI-powered fraud is reshaping research participation;
- Proven frameworks and tools that leading firms are adopting to stay ahead;
- Practical strategies for balancing innovation with rigor in an AI-first world.

9:45 – 10:30 **Human vs. Synthetic: Putting AI-Generated Respondents to the Test**

Jason Talwar, VP, Methods & Innovation
Stephen Kopecki, RVP, Enterprise Accounts
NewtonX

Introduction: Jeff Young, Central Moment, Inc.

Can synthetic respondents produce insights that are comparable to those obtained from real people - and what does it take to make those results trustworthy? Rather than address those questions theoretically, NewtonX will put synthetic research to the test through an experiment designed specifically for TMAG.

In advance of the meeting, NewtonX conducted primary research with verified decision-makers on a timely topic relevant to TMAG members. The results will be used to build and calibrate a synthetic persona, which will then participate in a follow-up study. NewtonX will run the same research with a sample of live respondents, allowing attendees to compare the results and see where the synthetic and human responses converge - and where they do not.

During this session, NewtonX will:

- Walk through the process of creating a synthetic persona grounded in fresh primary research;
- Examine the importance of calibration, behavioral modeling, data quality, and guardrails in producing credible synthetic results;
- Discuss where synthetic research can - and cannot - be used reliably, particularly in B2B market intelligence;
- Compare research results from synthetic personas with those from live respondents; and
- Provide a practical framework MI professionals can use to evaluate potential applications of synthetic respondents in their own research.

The session will also explore the appropriate relationship between synthetic and traditional research: where synthetic personas can provide faster, directional insights or help pressure-test ideas, and where high-stakes decisions, novel concepts, and research involving lived experiences still require primary research.

10:30 – 10:45 Break

10:45 – 11:30 **What a Synthetic Data Study Actually Entails**

Ben Cortese, SVP of Decision Sciences & Innovation
Kathleen McKnight, President Technology Practice
KS&R

Introduction: Brent Johnson, Central Moment, Inc.

We've all heard the case for synthetic data. This session walks through the work it actually takes to successfully execute by tracing the full lifecycle of a synthetic engagement. Drawing on KS&R's experience consulting with dozens

of synthetic providers and clients looking to experiment with synthetic data, we will share the process from hypothesis refinement through provider selection and iteration, to the conclusion and insights shared with our clients.

The discussion will include highlights from a study where the target metric, NPS, simply could not be reproduced by synthetic models as well as success stories where the synthetic data held up. We'll also highlight how governance through KS&R's ECHO Index, a framework for evaluating the fidelity of synthetic data against the human training data, further drives transparency and trust of synthetic data.

Coming out of the session, you will:

- Recognize the business questions where synthetic data fits, and the ones where it does not;
- Understand what each phase of a synthetic study demands in time, cost, and effort;
- Learn validation techniques for benchmarking synthetic output against human ground truth, using the ECHO Index as a working example; and
- Gain language for communicating confidence and limitations to your internal stakeholders

11:30 – 12:00 TMAG Member Introductions

12:00 – 1:00 Lunch

1:00 – 1:45 **Augmenting, Not Replacing: Integrating Simulated Audiences into Real Research Workflows**

Romani Patel, Director, Data Science
Microsoft

Introduction: Brent Johnson, Central Moment, Inc.

How can market intelligence teams take advantage of simulated audiences without sacrificing the rigor and human perspective of traditional research? In this session, Romani Patel will share how Microsoft is integrating AI-generated simulated audiences into its research workflows - not as a replacement for real customers, but as a way to extend the impact of existing customer intelligence.

Grounded in more than 100,000 real customer voices, Microsoft's simulated audiences enable researchers and business teams to pressure-test concepts, messaging, and positioning before committing to formal research. Romani will demonstrate how Microsoft's AI Messaging Assistant puts this approach into practice, allowing teams to interact with customer-informed audiences and rapidly generate and evaluate alternative messaging. She will also share examples of the resulting business impact, including faster decision-making and greater research leverage.

Just as importantly, Romani will discuss *where the line still holds* - the decisions for which Microsoft continues to rely on real human research. You will come away with a practical model for using simulated audiences to augment researchers, accelerate learning, and focus scarce research resources on the questions where human input matters most.

1:45 – 2:30 **From Job Postings to Market Signals: Building a Custom AI Research Tool**

Zihan Miao, Senior Customer Insights Manager, Adobe
Brent Johnson, President and Founder Central Moment, Inc.

Introduction: Gireesh Joshi, Adobe

Job postings provide a unique view of how occupations and industries are changing. Unlike conventional occupation data, they contain leading indicators of the job titles, skills, workflows, and digital tools that companies want.

In this case study, Adobe and Central Moment used a large corpus of job postings for creative professionals to build a custom LLM-powered research assistant. Rather than relying solely on the general knowledge of ChatGPT or Claude, this custom research assistant lets one query a specialized dataset to answer research questions. Adobe and Central Moment will demonstrate how the tool reveals changes in creative work and identifies emerging market signals. They will discuss how the application was designed, how the job-posting data was sourced and prepared, and how they evaluated the quality of the model's answers.

Zihan and Brent will also candidly share what worked well and what didn't. They'll describe the different options, common pitfalls, safety concerns, and the concrete steps for getting started. The session will include a practical roadmap for TMAG members interested in building similar tools to query their own proprietary data.

2:30 – 2:45 Break

2:45 – 3:15 **Behind the Chatbot: Building an AI-Powered Voice of Customer Platform**

Lei Liu, Sr. Staff Applied Scientist, Experience Intelligence
Adobe

Introduction: Smita Dugar, Adobe

Customer feedback lives everywhere – in app store reviews, NPS, community forums, social channels, interview transcripts, and more. Making sense of it at scale is hard.

In this session, Lei will share how Adobe's Experience Intelligence team built Tao (Total Analysis of Opinions), an internal AI tool that lets teams ask questions across internal and external customer feedback in one place. He'll go behind the scenes on the challenges the team encountered: bringing together messy data from different sources, keeping AI-generated answers trustworthy, and figuring out how to measure the success of the VoC AI program.

Through examples from teams using Tao today, Lei will share what worked, what didn't, and what the team has learned along the way.

You'll leave with:

- A practical view of how to bring fragmented customer feedback into an AI experience;
- Lessons for keeping AI-generated insights reliable and trustworthy;
- Ways to think about adoption and value when ROI is hard to quantify;
- Takeaways you can apply to your own AI-powered research tools.

3:15 – 4:00 **We Are the Drivers: Evolving Market Research Skills in the Age of AI**

Ramya Raman, Sr. Insights Manager, Adobe
Stephanie Greenberg, Sr. Insights Manager, Adobe
Smita Dugar, Group Manager, Customer Insights, Adobe

Introduction: Gireesh Joshi, Adobe

"Human in the loop" doesn't quite capture the researcher's role in the age of AI. We're not simply reviewing what AI produces - we're deciding how to use it, where to challenge it, and where human judgment matters most.

In this session, three Adobe market research practitioners will share real examples of how AI is changing their work and the skills they're developing along the way:

- Ramya will show how she now starts research design with an AI conversation instead of a blank page;
- Stephanie will show how she uses AI to analyze qualitative data - surfacing themes and pressure-testing hypotheses on the fly - while she stays the judge of what actually matters; and
- Smita will show how she's moving from static decks to interactive, query-able reports that generate answers on demand.

Together, they'll explore what AI can accelerate, what still requires human judgment, and how the researcher's role is evolving. The session will close with a discussion with TMAG members on how AI is changing the skills researchers bring to their work.

Coming out of this session, you will:

- See practical examples of how AI is changing the research workflow;
- Understand how the researcher's role and skills are evolving; and
- Be motivated to learn one new way to use AI in your work.

4:00 – 4:30 **TMAG Breakout Sessions**

Attendees will break out into smaller groups to brainstorm on best practices in the areas of internal delivery platforms, synthetic data/synthetic respondents, and TAM/SAM/Forecasting.

4:30 – 5:00 **Debrief**

Representatives from each group will share highlights of their respective breakout sessions, along with thoughts on TMAG 63 and suggestions for TMAG 64.

5:30 - **TMAG Reception and Dinner at Il Fornaio**
at the Westin San Jose, 302 South Market Street
Hosted by Central Moment, Inc.