

THE EFFICIENCY-QUALITY MATRIX

# How to Measure and Improve the IT Service Desk Experience

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## INTRODUCTION

An IT service desk needs to provide high-quality service, resolve problems efficiently and control costs. Achieving the right balance among these factors can be a challenge. The good news is that with two pieces of information and the power of ISG's Satisfaction Benchmarking Database, you can assess the current health of your service desk and identify actions to improve end-user satisfaction.

This white paper introduces the Efficiency Quality (EQ) matrix, identifies actions that desks at different stages of maturity can take to improve their position on the EQ matrix, and discusses the methodology behind the construction of the EQ matrix.



## INTRODUCING THE EQ MATRIX

### PLACING YOUR SERVICE DESK ON THE EFFICIENCY-QUALITY MATRIX

Despite the increasing number of support options available, the IT service desk remains the most critical point of contact between IT service providers and end users on a day-to-day basis. The performance of the service desk can affect the productivity of the entire organization by the extent to which it facilitates the timely resolution of IT issues that affect employee uptime and utilization. To measure the performance of a service desk, an enterprise must look not only at how quickly it is resolving issues (efficiency) but also at the quality of the resolution.

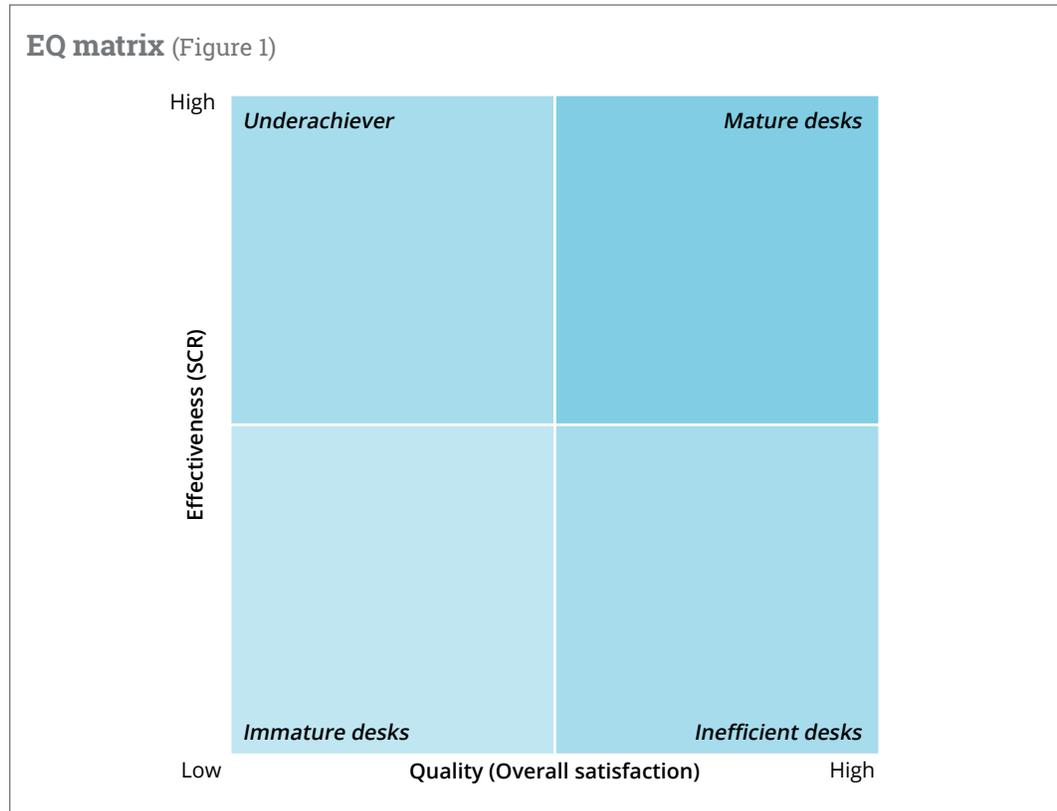
Efficiency can be gauged by measuring single-call resolution (SCR) rate. Quality can be defined by measuring end-user satisfaction. By quantifying and plotting these two key components, the performance of your service desk can be placed on the Efficiency-Quality (EQ) matrix. A unique set of actions for improved performance are required depending in which quadrant the service desk is positioned. The goal for all service desks is to follow the optimal developmental trajectory, where overall satisfaction and SCR gradually trend upward, moving from immature to mature service provision.

The top right quadrant contains the **mature desks** in our benchmarking database. These service desks are both efficient, with a high SCR rate, and provide good quality service with high end-user satisfaction. These service desks offer proactive support and engender a positive view of technology services.

The bottom right quadrant contains the **inefficient desks** in our benchmarking database. Although they may have high levels of end-user satisfaction, they are considered to be inefficient because they achieve relatively poor SCR rates.

The top left quadrant represents the **underachievers** in our benchmarking database. Despite high SCR rates, their end-user satisfaction levels are low.

Finally, the bottom left quadrant contains the **immature desks** in our benchmarking database. These service desks are inefficient, achieving a low SCR rate, and provide poor quality service with a low score for overall satisfaction. These desks typically are less well-established and provide reactive support rather than proactively identifying opportunities to improve business productivity.



### SERVICE DESK PROGRESSION

The four quadrants identified in the EQ Matrix correspond to different stages in the development of a service desk.

**Immature desks** are typically newer or less evolved service desks that primarily react to problems rather than proactively identify opportunities to improve the end-user experience. The priority for these service desks should be to provide end users with updates on the progress of their issue through the resolution process. Our research demonstrates that providing regular updates can offset the negative effects of not achieving resolution in a single call.

### THE EFFICIENCY-QUALITY MATRIX



The ideal progression for an immature desk to reach greater efficiency and maturity is to gradually increase SCR rates in conjunction with user satisfaction. Indeed, the two are strongly correlated, and increased SCR rates often drive an increase in overall satisfaction. Some service desks may be encouraged to lift their SCR rates without placing enough emphasis on the conduct of the service personnel, and inadvertently throw off the balance between user experience and service desk efficiency. This can lead to the kind of service desk that is characterized as an **underachiever**. Underachieving service desks have high SCR rates, but the end-user satisfaction is lower than expected. This can indicate that SCR rate targets are too high, leading to premature closing of tickets and low scores for measurable areas tagged as **professionalism, understanding of the problem** and **appreciation of the impact** (as listed in Figure 5).

Alternatively, service desks that focus disproportionately on the end-user experience may see strong satisfaction scores for staff conduct but lower scores for SCR. This leads to inefficient service desks for which the satisfaction of end users is higher than would be expected given the observed levels of SCR. Although the end users are satisfied, the low SCR rates may drive up costs associated with the service desk.

The final stage of service desk progression occurs when a service desk experiences both high SCR rates and high end-user satisfaction levels. These are mature desks that have typically achieved the right balance between the effectiveness of their desk and the quality of the end-user experience.

By benchmarking your service desk and placing it on the EQ matrix, you can identify the specific actions to move your desk toward its desired state (whether that is high SCR rates, high end-user satisfaction or, ideally, both).

<b>Service Desk Improvement Actions</b> (Figure 2)		
<b>Service desks</b>	<b>Characteristics</b>	<b>Actions to improve</b>
<b><i>Immature desks</i></b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Low SCR rates</li> <li>2. Poor performance on key quality driver: <i>Keeping end-users up to date</i></li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provide end users with timely updates on the progress of their issue</li> </ol>
<b><i>Underachievers</i></b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. High SCR rates paired with low overall satisfaction</li> <li>2. Poor performance on <i>professionalism, knowledge of service desk personnel</i> and <i>appreciation of impact</i></li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Prevent premature closing of tickets due to SCR rate targets being too high</li> <li>2. Improve conduct of service personnel</li> </ol>



Service desks	Characteristics	Actions to improve
<b>Inefficient desks</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Low SCR rates drive up costs</li> <li>2. Stronger performance of staff conduct including <i>professionalism, knowledge and appreciation of impact</i></li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Improve efficiency of the service desk by raising SCR rates</li> <li>2. Invest in process and further increase <i>knowledge and professionalism</i> to create more mature service</li> </ol>
<b>Mature desks</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. High SCR rates</li> <li>2. High end-user satisfaction levels</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Continue to measure service desk performance to maintain current levels of service</li> </ol>

## THE SCIENCE BEHIND THE EQ MATRIX

### The ISG Satisfaction Benchmarking Database

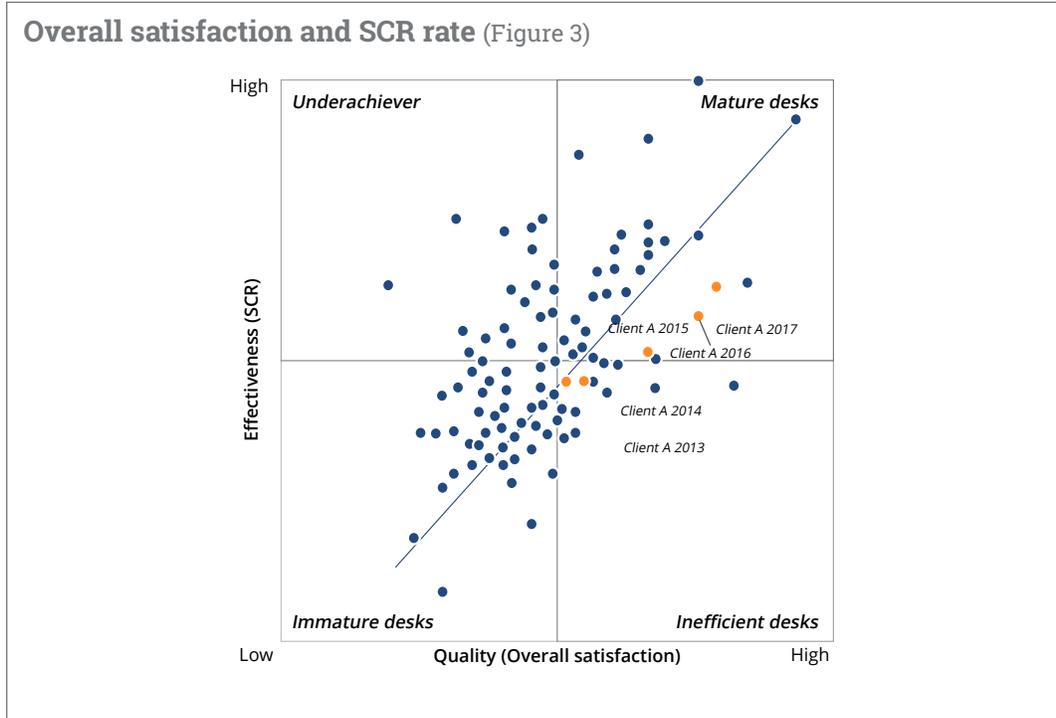
The ISG Satisfaction Benchmarking Database holds records from more than 130 surveys conducted over the past five years and represents more than 120,000 responses based on the service desk experiences of individual end users. This rich data source allows for sophisticated analysis of the drivers of service desk satisfaction.

### Methodology

To be eligible for inclusion in the EQ Matrix analysis, service desks had to have a recorded overall satisfaction rate and a SCR rate. This combination of requirements produced results from 121 surveys and more than 112,000 individual responses.

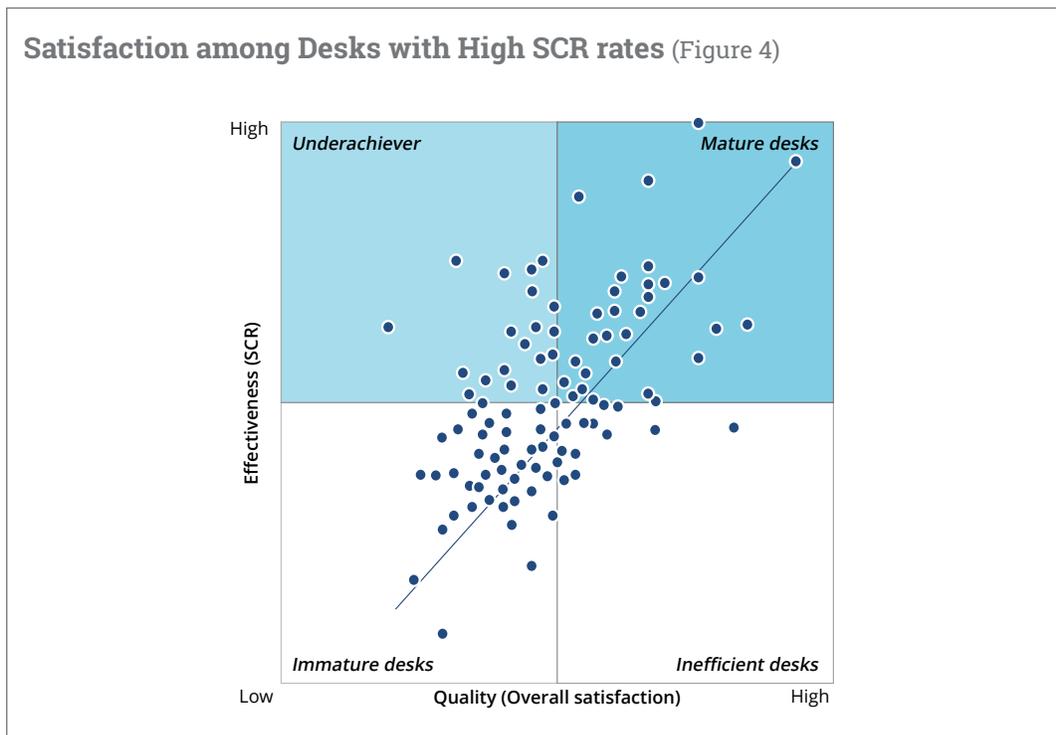
An analysis of the relationship between the SCR rate and the end-user satisfaction revealed that 31 percent of variance in overall satisfaction with a service desk can be explained by a single variable: The SCR rate.

Plotting overall satisfaction by SCR rate produces the graph below. Although most of the service desks fall on or near the line of best fit, it is interesting to note that several desks fall in the top left and bottom right quadrants of the matrix, which prompts the question: What differentiates mature service desks from those that had either a) similar satisfaction levels but substantially lower SCR rates (**inefficient desks**) or b) similar SCR rates but substantially lower satisfaction (**underachievers**)?

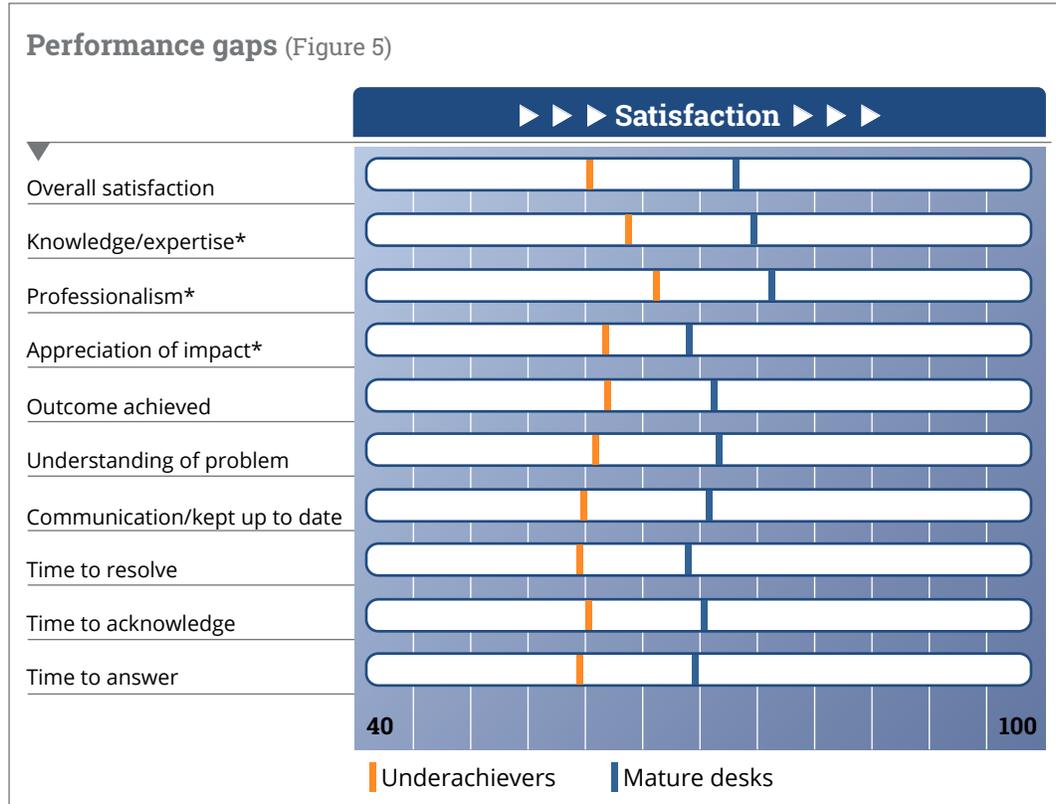


### Mature desks versus underachievers

What differentiates **mature** desks and **underachievers**? These desks have similar SCR rates, but **underachievers** have considerably lower end-user satisfaction.



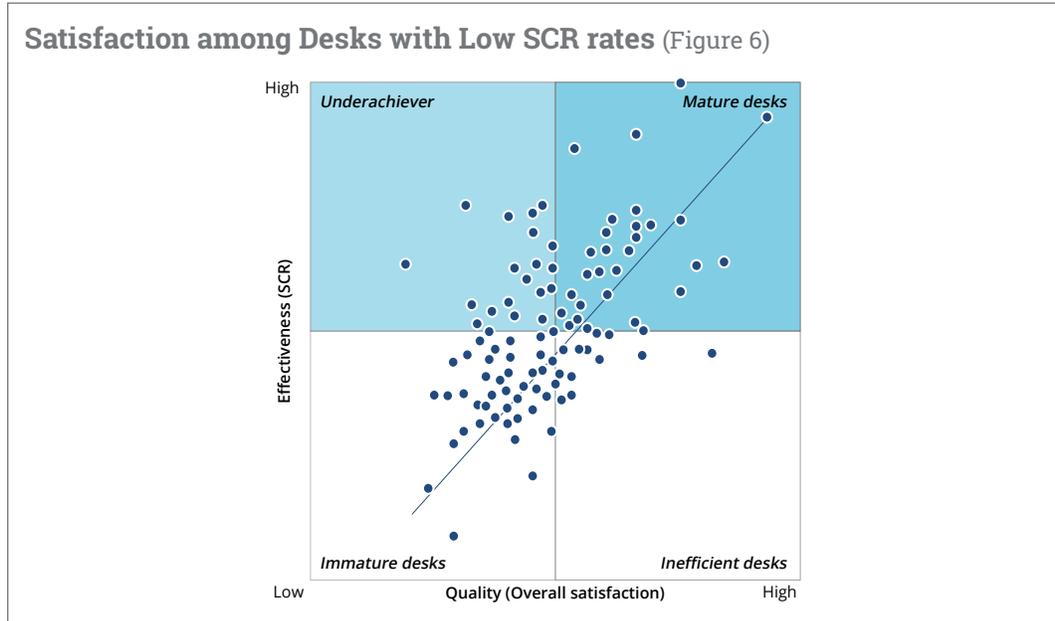
**Mature desks** significantly outperform **underachieving desks** in all aspects of service provision. However, when a stepwise regression analysis is conducted, only three aspects of service provision are shown to have a significant impact on end-user satisfaction for these desks: **Knowledge/expertise**, **professionalism** and **appreciation of impact**. The performance gaps are shown below in Figure 5 with the significant drivers starred (\*).



**Underachieving** desks tend to focus on SCR to the detriment of the conduct of their service personnel, which drives the differences in overall satisfaction between **mature desks** and **underachievers**.

### Immature versus inefficient desks

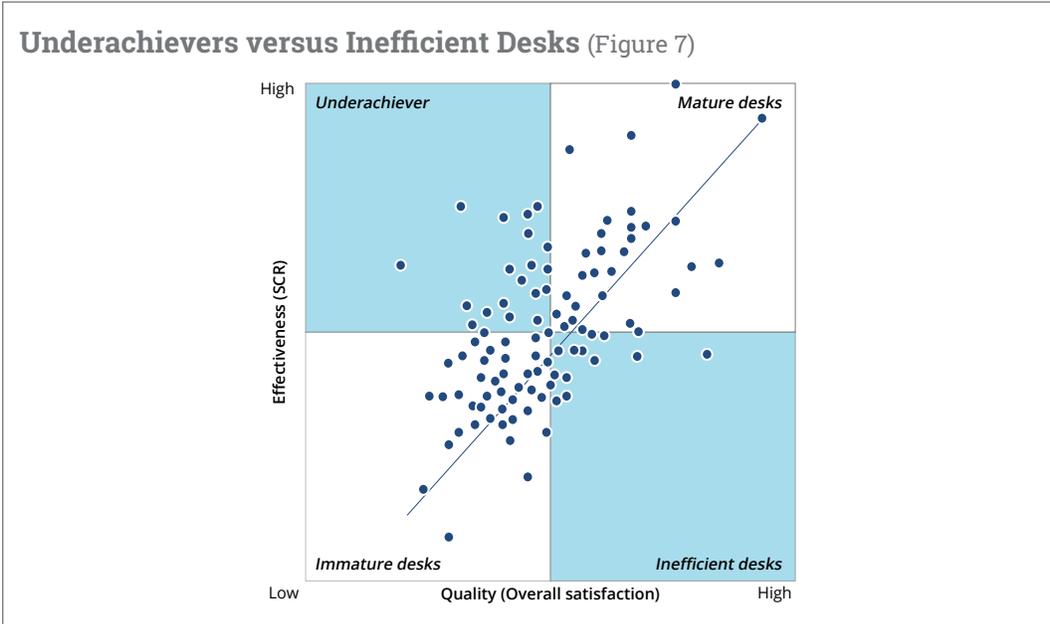
**Immature desks** and **inefficient desks** have similar SCR rates, but **immature desks** have considerably lower end-user satisfaction.



A regression analysis reveals that, for these two desk types, only one variable has a significant impact on end-user satisfaction: Communication/kept up to date. **Inefficient desks** significantly outperform **immature desks** in the area of **communication/kept up to date**. This means that if a desk cannot increase its SCR rate due to the nature of the problems or a limited training budget, it can increase end-user satisfaction by ensuring that service desk personnel update end users on the progress of their issue.

**Underachievers versus inefficient desks**

**Underachieving desks** and **inefficient desks** are providing end users with two, very different service experiences.





**Inefficient desks** significantly outperform **underachieving desks** on all aspects of service provision. However, stepwise regression shows the following three aspects of service provision have a significant impact on end-user satisfaction for these desks: **Knowledge/expertise, professionalism** and **appreciation of impact**.

### **Model of service desk progression**

Taken together, these findings suggest a model for service desk progression. Ideally, overall satisfaction and SCR develop in tandem as desks improve processes and service personnel training and conduct. However, in the absence of a budget to invest in training and process improvements, a desk can take a number of developmental steps.

**Immature service desks** can increase end-user satisfaction by ensuring that end users receive regular status updates on the progress of their issues. This leads to **inefficient desks**, which provide a strong end-user experience but have poor SCR rates and are, therefore, expensive to operate. These desks need to focus on improving processes and the competency of their support staff.

Alternatively, **immature service desks** can focus on lifting their SCR rates. This can lead to **underachieving desks**, which have high SCR rates but provide a poor end-user experience. End users often report tickets being closed prematurely and problems being improved temporarily rather than permanently. To progress toward more mature service provision, these desks need to focus on the conduct of their service personnel.

By understanding where your service desk is on the EQ matrix, you can identify the critical actions needed to drive improved performance without jeopardizing your end-user experience.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

### **THE EFFICIENCY-QUALITY MATRIX** **How to Measure and Improve the IT Service Desk Experience**

#### **LISA BORDEN**

Director



Lisa is part of an ISG team that provides business-to-business satisfaction measurement and benchmarking. She has led more than 200 research programs for companies across a range of industries, including Financial Services, Manufacturing, Retail, Logistics and Hospitality. A hallmark of Lisa's approach is that the insights she produces drive real and measurable change for her clients, rejuvenating and remediating supplier relationships in some of the world's largest organizations. Lisa developed the proprietary framework which forms the foundation of the ISG Business Relationship monitor and has successfully implemented this framework in organizations spanning Asia-Pacific, North America and Europe. Lisa has a strong analytical capacity, which enables her to distil complex reports into succinct, actionable insight, backed by statistical rigor. She believes strongly in the power of statistical tools to deliver business insight and considers the presentation of findings as a dialogue and an opportunity to highlight the responsibility of both the supplier and the client in the success of engagements.



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