

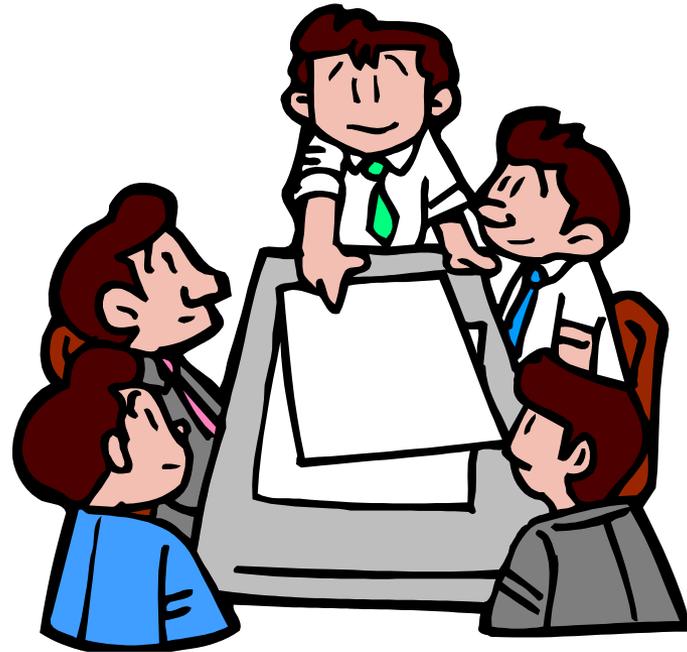
Focus Groups



A Focus Group Is . . .

What

- A carefully planned discussion
- To obtain perceptions of a defined interest area



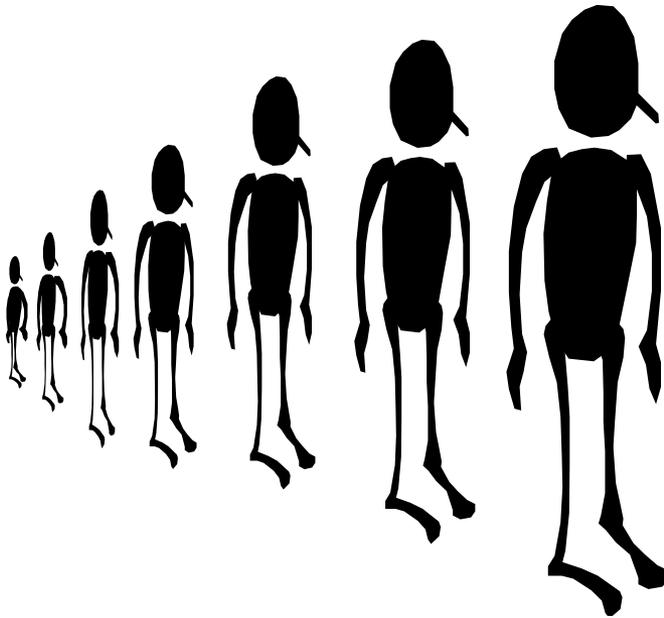
A Focus Group Is . . .

Where

- In a permissive, non-threatening environment



A Focus Group Is . . .



Who

- **Approximately seven to ten people**
- **With common characteristics relating to discussion topic**

A Focus Group Is . . .

How

- **Conducted by a trained interviewer (moderator, facilitator).**
- **Three focus groups are the minimum for a study**



Why Do Focus Groups?

- To collect qualitative data
- To determine feelings, perceptions and manner of thinking of participants regarding products, services, programs or opportunities
- Attitudes and perceptions are developed in part by interaction with other people
- To promote self-disclosure among participants
- It's dangerous to take "customers" for granted

When to Conduct **Focus Groups**

- **Before a program begins, during a program or after a program ends**
- **Focus groups are effective when**
 - **People have something to share (motivations)**
 - **The goal is to understand human behavior**
- **Focus groups are not effective when**
 - **People are divided or angry**
 - **The goal is to gather factual information**
 - **Organization is trying to improve its image**

Selecting Participants

- **Participants are similar**
- **General selection rules:**
 - **Set exact specification**
 - **Maintain control of the selection process**
 - **Use the resources of the sponsoring organization in recruiting**
 - **Beware of bias**
 - **Develop a pool of eligible participants and then randomly select**

Incentives for Participants



- **Money (\$20-\$50)**
- **Food**
- **Gifts**
- **Positive, upbeat invitation**

Systematic Notification Procedures

- 1. Set meeting times for interviews**
- 2. Contact potential participants by phone or in person (2 weeks before meeting time)**
- 3. Send a personalized invitation**
- 4. Phone (or contact) each person the day before the focus group**

Moderator Skills

- **Is mentally prepared**
- **Selects appropriate location**
- **Records the discussion**
- **Uses purposeful small talk**
- **Has a smooth & snappy introduction**
- **Uses pauses and probes**
- **Uses subtle group control**
- **Controls reactions to participants**
- **Selects the right moderator**
- **Uses an assistant moderator**
- **Uses appropriate conclusion**

Beginning the Focus Group Discussion

- **The first few moments in focus group discussion are critical.**
 - **Create a thoughtful, permissive atmosphere**
 - **Provide the ground rules**
 - **Set the tone**
- **Recommended introduction pattern:**
 - **Welcome**
 - **Overview and topic**
 - **Ground rules**
 - **First question**

Asking Questions That Yield Powerful Information

- Use open-ended questions
- Avoid dichotomous questions
- "Why?" is rarely asked
- Use "think back" questions
- Carefully prepare focus questions
- Consider standardized questions



Systematic Analysis Process

- **Start while still in the group**
- **Immediately after the focus group**
- **Soon after the focus group--within hours analyze individual focus group**
- **Later--within days analyze the series of focus groups**
- **Finally, prepare the report**

Focus Group Analysis Tips

When analyzing focus group data, consider...

- **Words**
- **Context**
- **Internal consistency**
- **Frequency or extensiveness of comments**
- **Intensity of the comments**
- **Specificity of responses**
- **Find the big ideas**

Reporting Focus Group Results

- **Use a communications strategy**
- **Use an appropriate reporting style that the client finds helpful and meets expectations**
- **Strive for enlightenment**
- **Make points memorable**
- **Use narrative or bulleted format**
- **Give thought to the oral report**