Formative Research Guide

Writing Good Questions

• Match to research objectives
• Use open ended questions
• Consider order of questions
• Review question types/techniques to find creative approaches

Good Questions

• Explore Feelings and Aspirations
• Focus on Reasons or Motives
• Avoid ‘Why’ Questions
• Are Specific
• Do Not Lead or Introduce

Avoid

• Subtly Leading
  - What do you like vs. How do you feel about?
• Double Barreled
  - What do you like and dislike?
• Unnecessary, Nice to Know Information
• Laden Terms
• Questions That Make Respondents Feel Bad
Focus Group Interviews

Sample

- Always Keep Overall Research Goals in Mind
- Representative Sample
- Determine the Range of Variation within the Target Population
- Get Balance of Views

Number of Groups

- Begin With a Minimum of Three Interviews
  - Per Sub-group or Variable (E.G., Region, Age, Behavior)
  - If numerous subgroups, may start with 2
  - Watch for opportunities to collapse cells
- Watch for Saturation
- Sample Size Management Strategies

Composition of Each Group

- Are they representative of study population?
- Will They Feel Comfortable Talking With Each Other?
  - Class, Ethnicity, age, Gender
- Do They Share Similar Experiences or Perceptions?
  - Want Some Variation but Not So Much Will Generate Conflicts
- Do Participants Have Same Level of Expertise?

Source of Participants

- Sampling Frames
  - Existing Lists
  - Intercept Locations
  - Referrals
  - Open Solicitation
Recruit and Invite Participants

- Need Clear Explanation- Enable Them to Visualize Session
- Provide Gift or Other Compensation
- Screen Respondents: Verify Accuracy of Selection Data
- Over Recruit - Expect Absenteeism Between 30% & 50% When Working With Low Income Populations Unless Can Lower Barriers to Participation
  - Sampling Biases

Working with Recruiters

- Clear Instructions
- Check up on Them Regularly
- Prepare for Mistakes

Recruitment Guidelines

- Convey Sense Research Is Worthwhile
- Make Contacts Personal and Meaningful
- Build on Existing Relationships or Ties to Organizations
- Use Appropriate Screening Criteria
- Offer Incentives
- Make Participation As Convenient As Possible
- Be Sure to Remind People to Come
- See Sample Script

Developing a Focus Group Interview Guide

- Assemble Project Team and Moderator (Already Briefed)
- Agree Upon Decision to Be Taken From Findings
- Agree Upon Specific Objectives and Information Needs for Each Group
- Determine Background Information Needed to Evaluate Comments
Developing a Focus Group Guide

• Prepare a List of Topic Areas
• Decide Degree of Structure Needed
  – If Less Structured, Add Some Follow-up Questions
    • Who Else Has Some Thoughts About This - Maybe Something a Little Different?
    • What Else Have People Experienced in This Area?
    • You’ve Been Discussing Several Different Ideas: What Haven’t We Heard Yet?
    • Remember, We Want to Hear All Opinions; Who Has Something Else?
• Select Types of Questions for Each Area (Man in the Moon)
• Write Questions
• Prepare Probes for Each Major Topic Area
• (Think Through Contingencies)
• Order From General to Specific and Non-threatening to More Threatening
• Prepare Transitions As Move From One Topic to Another
• Examine Stimulus Materials
• (Projective Techniques, Posters)
• Review Guide and Eliminate Non-essential
• Sleep on It and Review Again

Common Problems to Avoid

• Covering Too Much
• Closed-ended Questions
• Eliciting Long Stories
• Asking Everyone the Same Thing Each Time
• Using Same Guide for All Types of Groups (Users Vs. Non-users)
Types Of Questions

• Most Are Straight Forward, Open-ended Questions
  - Keep Simple
  - Ask Participants to Think Back
  - Avoid Asking Why

• Hidden-issue Questioning
  - Construct a Best or Worst Case Scenario
  - Happiest Time in Life
  - If You Won the Lotto

• Study of Opposites
  - What Happens to People Who Don't
  - Describe the Life of the Person Who Doesn't...
  - What Is Someone Like Who Doesn't... Who Does…

• Choosing Between Alternatives
  - 2 to 5 Options Compared
  - Advantages and Disadvantages of Each

• Arranging Categories
  - Describe Product in Relation to Similar and Differing Categories

• Projective Techniques
  - Photo Sorts
  - Sentence or Cartoon Completion
  - Word Associations
  - Role Plays
    - I Am New to Your Community and Ask for Advice About…..What Would You Tell Me?
    - How Would You Persuade Me To…..

• Constructing Images - What Are People Like Who

• Querying the Meaning of the Obvious - What Does Soft Mean to You?

• Metaphors - If This ( ) Were a Flower, Which One Would It Be?

• Image Matching - Here Are Pictures of People, Which Go With Which Wine?

• Man From the Moon - Imagine I'm From the Moon, Describe It to Me

• Conditions That Give Permission and Create Barriers - Tell Me Two or Three Situations in Which You Would Decide to Do X Instead of Y

• Chain of Questions - Why Do You Buy X? Why Does That Matter? Would It Ever Not Be Important….

• Benefit Chain - What Makes You Like It? What Is the Benefit of (That)?
• Laddering (Chains of Association) - What Do You Think When You Think of the (Product)? And When You Think of That What Comes to Mind? And When You Think of That How Do You Feel?
• Pointing Out Contradictions - You Just Said X. Now You Are Saying Y. How Do You Explain It?
• Sentence Completions and Extensions - The Best Thing About This Product Is...... Using the Product Makes Me Feel____ Because ____.
• Script Writing - If You Were to Tell a Story or Write a Movie About This Company/product, What Would It Be About? Who Are the Heroines and Heroes?

Sample Guide

• Introduction
• Warm-up or Opening Question
  - Easy and Quick to Answer; Puts Participants at Ease
• Introductory Question
  - Focus on General Topic
  - Top of the Mind, First Impressions, General Comments
• Transitional Statements and Questions
  - Announce Shift and Move Toward Key Questions
  - Focus on Participants
• Key Questions
  - Reaction to Behavioral Objectives
  - Factors That Influence Behavior
    • Perceived Benefits and Barriers
  - Placement and Promotional Issues
• Pretesting (If Applicable)
• Closing Questions
  - Opportunity to Reflect on Everything Discussed
  - Select Most Important Issues
  - Solidify Opinion or View
• Wrap and Summary
  - Participants Have Opportunity to Comment on Summary
Logistical Concerns

Location

- Will Respondents Have Privacy?
- Can Respondents See and Hear Each Other Well?
- Will Tape Be Clear? Background Noise
- Is the Location Easy to Find? Safe?
- Will Respondents Feel Comfortable in That Setting?

Select Facilitator/Moderator

- Physical and Social Attributes
- Abilities
  - Put Participants at Ease
  - Listen Attentively
  - Convey Warmth and Empathy
  - Control Nonverbal Reactions
  - Conceptualize and Think Through Contingencies
  - Withhold Own Comments and Views

Moderator Responsibilities

- Set the Tone
- Make Sure Every Participant Is Heard
- Get Full Answers
- Monitor Time Closely
- Keep Discussion on Track
- Head of Damaging Exchanges and Conflicts

Role of The Co-Moderator

- Help Handle Distractions
- Take Notes
- Set up and Monitor the Tape Recorder
- Greet Guests or Help With Refreshments
- Interview "Extras"
- Do Not Participate Unless Invited
- Closing
- Pay Respondents