

## Chapter 1 : Focus Group Design - Old Dominion University

*Focus Group Interviewing Richard Krueger 9 Note Taking Note taking is a primary responsibility of the assistant moderator The moderator should not be expected to.*

Research Methods 5 Summary: Focus groups can be a powerful tool in system development, but they should not be the only source of information about user behavior. In interactive systems development, the proper role of focus groups is not to assess interaction styles or design usability, but to discover what users want from the system. Focus groups are a somewhat informal technique that can help you assess user needs and feelings both before interface design and long after implementation. In a focus group, you bring together 6-9 users to discuss issues and concerns about the features of a user interface. You can also ask people to discuss how they perform activities that span many days or weeks: However, they can only assess what customers say they do and not the way customers actually operate the product. Since there are often major differences between what people say and what they do, direct observation of one user at a time always needs to be done to supplement focus groups. People with an advertising or marketing background often rely solely on focus groups to expose products to users. Thus, because advertising and marketing people frequently contribute to website development, focus groups are often used to evaluate web projects. Unfortunately, focus groups are a rather poor method for evaluating interface usability. It is thus dangerous to rely on them as your only method in a web design project. Traditional market research targets products for which usability is a minor concern. When judging, for example, which proposals a politician should support, how sweet a chocolate bar should be, or whether to show a new Mercedes braking in snow or in rain, you need expose a group of consumers only to different versions of the proposal, candy, or commercial, ask them which they prefer, and listen to their reasons as to why they prefer one or the other. To assess whether users can operate an interactive system, the only proper methodology is to watch one user at a time use the system. Because focus groups are groups, individuals rarely get the chance to explore the system on their own; instead, the moderator usually provides a product demo as the basis for discussion. Watching a demo is fundamentally different from actually using the product: Consider, for example, the problem of windowing versus scrolling as methods for changing the information visible on the screen. The windowing principle says that to see the information in the beginning of a file, the user moves the window to the top of the file. Scrolling, on the contrary, says that to see the beginning of the file, you scroll down the screen until the desired content becomes visible. In other words, the command to get to the top of the file should be called UP or shown as an upward-pointing arrow if windowing is preferred, whereas the same command should be called DOWN if scrolling is preferred. When they actually carry out the task, most users perform better in the windowing model which is therefore used in most current GUI standards. But if you give a demo of moving text files to people new to computers, many of them will say that the scrolling model characterizes what they are seeing since they see the text move down to get to the beginning. If GUIs had been designed by focus groups, we would have ended up with a suboptimal command.

Benefits In interactive systems development, the proper role of focus groups is not to assess interaction styles or design usability, but to discover what users want from the system. We could have investigated the needs of system administrators in other ways - including field trips to customer locations - but it was more efficient to have a focus group discuss the problems in a single session. Getting Focused For participants, the focus-group session should feel free-flowing and relatively unstructured, but in reality, the moderator must follow a preplanned script of specific issues and set goals for the type of information to be gathered. During the group session, the moderator has the difficult job of keeping the discussion on track without inhibiting the flow of ideas and comments. After the session, data analysis can be as simple as having the moderator write a short report summing up the prevailing mood in the group, illustrated with a few colorful quotes. You can also do more detailed analyses, but the unstructured nature of the groups make this difficult and time-consuming. Focus groups require several representative users. Because you need a flowing discussion and various perspectives, the initial focus group should have at least 6 users. Typically, you should run more than one focus group, because the outcome of any single session may not be representative and discussions can get

sidetracked. Other Issues As with any method based on asking users what they want “ instead of measuring or observing how they actually use things “ focus groups can produce inaccurate data because users may think they want one thing when they need another. You can minimize this problem by exposing users to the most concrete examples of the technology being discussed as possible. For example, Irene Greif ran focus groups to assess a version management facility for Lotus The new features were presented to the focus group as a way to let multiple users compare alternative views of a spreadsheet across computer networks. Initially, group members were skeptical about these ideas and expressed distrust in networks and nervousness about what other people would do to their spreadsheets. After seeing a prototype and scenarios of version management in use, participants moved from skepticism to enthusiasm. A cheap way to approximate a focus group is to rely on email, websites, or online communities. For example, Yia Yang started a project on undo facilities by posting on the British academic network, asking users which undo facilities they used and how they liked them. Posting questions to a group with an interest in the issues can generate considerable discussion. A disadvantage is that online discussions are difficult or impossible to keep confidential unless they take place on an intranet, behind a firewall. Another disadvantage to this approach is bias. These users have needs that will sometimes surface later for the average user. Krueger and Mary Anne Casey. USA, Canada, and most countries outside Europe:

### Chapter 2 : Focus Groups | Research Design Review

*In terms of scripting; it's best to decide what the purpose of your focus group will be and then design questions to elicit responses that let you reach your objectives. In general, it is best to stay away from the use of leading questions.*

Successful qualitative research is largely the result of good preparation and planning. The better prepared you are, the greater chance of getting the insights you need. A well-designed plan leads to business intelligence, knowledge, and perhaps wisdom. It connects managers to customers, users, and the market. A plan is your outline for research action. A typical qualitative marketing research plan consists of eight steps.

**Define Research Objectives** Successful interviewing starts with clear research objectives. Clearly defining research objectives is the most important step in the entire interviewing plan. It is the foundation for the research plan. Objectives lead to actionable information and knowledge. A well-defined, clear research objective is a vital first step in the marketing research process.

**Design the Scope of Work** At this stage, you decide whom to interview, how many people to interview, where and how to interview them, and your budget. You also decide who will recruit respondents— you, your staff, or professional recruiters. Focus group facilities usually provide recruiting services.

**Write Respondent Screeners** You want to make sure you interview the right people to get the information and knowledge you need. Interviewing the wrong people is a waste of time and money. You use a screener to select the right people, usually a segment. A screener is a brief survey. It specifies the characteristics of the people you want to interview.

**Manage Logistics and Respondent Recruiting** Interviewing calls for project management. You manage respondent recruitment, schedules, and budgets.

**Write the Moderator Guide** The moderator guide is an interviewing outline that guides discussion during the interview. The guide contains research objectives, logistics, topics, questions, and activities for a focus group or depth interview. A good guide makes interviewing easy. The better prepared you are, the easier interviewing will be.

**Moderate Respondents** Moderating is a directed discussion. Your discussion guide is your primary tool for directing discussion. Moderating is easy and fun when you are prepared. Just about anybody can do it with a good discussion guide, skills, and practice.

**Analyze Data** Focus group or interview conversations are the data. Data are the answers to your interview questions. You convert raw data into information and knowledge.

**Analysis** is a crucial part of the marketing research process for qualitative marketing research.

**Write Reports** A report documents the data, information, and knowledge gained from interviewing. A report tells a story about people, and their thoughts, actions, perceptions, beliefs, and feelings about products, services, and ads. It is a collective snapshot of customers, prospects, or experts. Typically, reports come in three formats: The marketing research process is straightforward, if you follow the eight steps.

**Instant Focus Group Questions e-book** is a practical handbook about qualitative marketing research. Click on the e-book to learn more now and get it today.

**Chapter 3 : Sample Questions for Focus Groups That Spark Discussion**

*Conducting a Focus Group of XXX Educational Program Graduates By Outstanding DHA Student Medical University of South Carolina*  
**PURPOSE** The purpose of this paper is to describe the planning and design of a focus group for recent graduates of the XXX Program at YYY State University in Northridge (UN).

**Effective Focus Group Questions**  
Effective Focus Group Questions The focus of this module is on preparing effective focus group questions that will result in valuable data. Describe the types of questions commonly used in a focus group. Explain the process for developing a list of questions for a focus group. List tips and guidelines commonly considered when developing focus group questions. The value of the data collected from a focus group study may largely depend on the effectiveness of the questions that are asked of the group. Developing an effective list of questions is critical to the success of the focus group outcomes. This module will explore the different types of questions commonly used, the process for developing a list of questions, and tips that should be considered throughout the process. There are three main types of focus group questions that will be used during an interview. The following list describes each type of question and provides an example:  
Engagement questions “Introduce the participants to the topic or subject and get them comfortable with the discussion. What is your favorite type of exercise?  
Exploration questions “Designed to get to the heart of the discussion and typically are open-ended. What are the pros and cons of exercise? How do you feel about yourself when you exercise? What are the reasons that prevent you from exercising? What would encourage you to exercise more?  
Exit questions “Designed to see if any angle was missed during the discussion. Is there anything else you would like to say about why you do or do not exercise on a regular basis?  
Keeping in mind the three main types of questions used during a focus group, following is list of steps commonly followed when developing focus group questions. Consider the project goals. Decide what information is critical and needs to be addressed in the questioning. What information will most benefit the project? Review the information that is currently available. Focus group questions should be limited; therefore, it is helpful to review what is currently known about a topic so that valuable time is not spent on that aspect during the focus group. Develop a preliminary list of questions that includes all three types of questions: Do this in a brainstorming fashion and plan to edit the list and reduce the total number of questions later. Obtain feedback on the preliminary list of questions. Ask project team members or others outside the project to consider the project goals and provide feedback about the potential questions on the list. Revise the list of questions using the feedback obtained. During this step, the number should be reduced to between questions and the questions should be refined and polished. Use the guidelines below in developing the final list: Questions should be short and to the point. Wording should not be ambiguous. Use open-ended questions that begin with phrases such as: How did you feel? What did you think about? What do you like best about? What problems do you see? How did you? Questions should be non-threatening and should not embarrass participants. Avoid dichotomous questions that can be answered with a simple yes or no. Instead focus on gathering information about specific attributes or characteristics of the topics or things that influence the topic. Use questions that encourage participant involvement. For example, use questions that ask the members to reflect, give examples, provide a rating on a scale, make choices, or offer perceptions. Order the question in a sequence that goes from general to more specific. Allow time for open-ended discussion at the end so that participants can offer any additional thoughts on the topic. Researchers often find it helpful to have the moderator pilot the questions or do a pre-test of the focus group discussion with a group of people to gain insight into effectiveness of the questions that were developed prior to the focus group interview. Once the list of questions has been developed and tested, it is time to conduct the focus group. The following module in this series will discuss the appropriate way to conduct an effective focus group.  
Focus groups in social research. Social research update, 19 8 , Sage Publications, , The methodology of focus groups: Sociology of health and illness, 16 1 , A practical guide for applied research. Using focus groups in research. Focus groups as qualitative research Vol. Annual review of sociology,

*Focus group methods emerged in the 1940s with the work of Merton and Fiske who used focus groups to conduct audience studies. Characteristics of focus groups The design of focus group research will vary based on the research question being studied.*

Learn how to plan, prepare, conduct, and use focus group results to receive qualitative data for deeper understanding of community issues. What is a focus group? How are focus groups different from regular "groups"? Why are focus groups used? When should you use a focus group? How do you run a focus group? A focus group is a small-group discussion guided by a trained leader. A focus group of parents of preschoolers meets to discuss child care needs. Parents share their views on local child care programs, and on what could be done to improve them. A focus group of senior citizens meets at the new senior center. What do they think of the programs being offered? What are their own suggestions and ideas? An agency wants to open a group home for developmentally disabled adults in a quiet residential area. It convenes a group of prospective neighbors. What are their concerns? A focus group is different in three basic ways: The main difference is the group has a specific, focused discussion topic. The group has a trained leader, or facilitator. Members are actively encouraged to express their opinions. Because focus groups are structured and directed, but also expressive, they can yield a lot of information in a relatively short time. Focus groups help people learn more about group or community opinions and needs. In this respect, they are similar to needs assessment surveys. But needs assessment surveys typically have written, closed-ended, relatively narrow questions which are quantitatively scored. The person being surveyed often responds with a numerical rating, rather than with a verbal statement. Responses in a focus group, on the other hand, are typically spoken, open-ended, relatively broad, and qualitative. They have more depth, nuance, and variety. Nonverbal communications and group interactions can also be observed. Focus groups can therefore get closer to what people are really thinking and feeling, even though their responses may be harder -- or impossible -- to score on a scale. Both of these methods are useful. And both can be used together, to complement each other. Which should you use in a specific situation? That depends upon your own needs and purposes, and the resources available to you. When you are considering the introduction of a new program or service. When you want to supplement the knowledge you can gain from written surveys. When you know, or can find someone, who is an experienced and skilled group leader. When you have the time, knowledge, and resources to recruit a willing group of focus group participants. Here are several situations when you might want to know more about community opinions before taking action. How useful would a focus group be in each case? A new strain of flu is going around. Half the town seems to be catching it. What should be done about it? A wave of break-ins has hit a nearby neighborhood. How can this be stopped? A new playground is being planned. What features should go into it? Controlling the flu is not a matter of citizen opinion, but rather of medical facts, and of public health prevention and treatment. A focus group is probably not helpful here. Increased police presence may help; but a structured discussion among neighbors might hit upon other useful solutions. A focus group could be quite worthwhile. Citizen input is definitely called for here. A focus group could be an ideal way for finding it out. A focus group is not for every social situation. But it can be useful in many situations where action should be guided by public opinion. The Pros and Cons of Groups Should you collect your opinions from groups, or from individuals? The focus groups are, of course, groups. Most surveys, though, cover one person at a time. One advantage of focus groups is depth and complexity of response, as mentioned before. And group members can often stimulate new thoughts for each other, which might not have otherwise occurred. But there are some downsides, too. For example, focus groups usually take more time per respondent than individual surveys -- because the group has to be recruited, and because the group itself takes time. Some group members might feel hesitant about speaking openly. And the focus group leader may sometimes need to be paid. But this can be time-consuming, and take more resources than you have on hand. Consider your own situation. How do these factors trade off? What is the best solution for you? Before you begin A focus group is a small-group discussion guided by a trained leader. It is used to learn more about opinions on a designated

topic, and then to guide future action. Since participants are actively encouraged to not only express their own opinions, but also respond to other members and questions posed by the leader, focus groups offer a depth, nuance, and variety to the discussion that would not be available through surveys. Additionally, because focus groups are structured and directed, but also expressive, they can yield a lot of information in a relatively short time. Are you planning to use other methods for learning about opinions as well? In other words, so far: Think before you start, look before you leap. If yes, which ones, and why? If no, is this the single best method to use to find out what you want? Find a good leader. This is not a casual matter: Your leader will determine the success of your group. What kind of leader do you want? Take a careful look around. Perhaps you can find the right leader within your own organization. Depending on the situation, you might consider looking for someone outside your organization, someone that specializes in facilitating these kinds of groups. Has experience facilitating groups Knows something about the topic Will relate well to the focus group participants Will work together with you to give you the outcomes you want Find a recorder. A small but important point, often neglected. Someone should be writing down what is said, in the same way as taking minutes at a meeting. Arrange for this in advance. This will take more time -- to transcribe the tape, and interpret the transcription-- but you will have a more complete, accurate, and permanent record. Decide who should be invited. Ideally, those invited should be a representative sample of those whose opinions you are concerned about. You would then want to spread your invitations across the different public housing facilities in your community -- not just the best, or the worst, or the most vocal. Or suppose you are concerned about the opinions of Main Street shopkeepers. Get a complete list. Select a representative group, for example by size, type, or whether they have local or outside ownership. You probably want to hear from all kinds of businesses; so make sure you do. You could even pull the names out of a hat. This approaches a "random sample. That is, should you offer an incentive for people to participate? In that case, why should people come? Possibly people will come just because they want to help.

### Chapter 5 : RWJF - Qualitative Research Guidelines Project | Focus Groups | Focus Groups

*focus group has individuals with characteristics of the overall population and can contribute to helping the research gain a greater understanding of the topic. A focus group is most effective with participants.*

Increase your odds of success by having a clear vision of your research goals and the methods you will use to reach findings. Use formal protocols to ensure that your focus group results are valid. Add imaginative touches wherever possible to engage participants -- and compel them to share openly and honestly throughout the research process. State Your Research Goal Focus groups answer specific research questions. They are a useful way to quickly and reliably obtain common impressions from real or potential customers. Alternatively, your goal might be testing an assumption, such as, "residents outside of a mile radius should not be sent promotional mailers. Hypothesize any outcomes you expect. Outline Your Research Design Describe the nuts and bolts of your research design. Begin with recruitment -- and your criteria for including or excluding candidates. For market research, a good recruitment approach is combining people with diverse backgrounds into a single focus group to observe how they respond to certain products or ideas. In addition, state the total number of group sessions you will hold and their average length. An acceptable timeframe is usually 45 to 90 minutes. Indicate the minimum and maximum number of participants in each group; a manageable target for many focus groups is 6 to 10 members. Detail Focus Group Instruments Your discussion topics should be set up in an interview guide. Make all questions open-ended and brief, focusing on just one issue at a time. You may separately administer simple surveys to gather demographic information about participants. Capture such characteristics as age, gender, education level, annual income and home zip code. Discuss Your Strategy for Analysis Data from focus group interviews are words and behaviors that participants share. Your research proposal should include how you will record them for analysis -- for instance, with video equipment. Include methods for transcribing data. You may take this on yourself or outsource with a transcription service. Ultimately, focus group analysis involves grouping and labeling responses, and examining major themes against your original research questions. Address how you will derive descriptive statistics from secondary surveys. Always identify potential research limitations, such as a very small number of participants, and your strategies to address them.

## Chapter 6 : How to Conduct Focus Groups | Interaction Design Foundation

*As a small-business owner, you may develop a focus group research proposal to gather data that shapes your marketing or business strategies. Increase your odds of success by having a clear vision.*

Specific Features as named by you What, if anything, do you find frustrating or unappealing about the product? What similar products have you used during the last 6 months? Can you describe your experiences in using these similar products? Do you have any suggestions on how we could improve the product to make it more appealing? Does Everyone Know Where to Click? Many projects involve online marketing and gathering feedback on a website design or feature. Here are some sample questions to help a project manager evaluate a new website design or concept. Overall, how appealing is this webpage to you? Use a numeric or the degree of appeal scale Thinking of your previous response, what are some specific examples that helped you formed your opinion? How easy or difficult was it to navigate the content on the webpage? What prompted you to say that? When thinking about navigating this page, what, if anything, is confusing to you? How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement. Use an agreement scale The benefits of doing business with company are clearly presented in this webpage. Thinking of the answer to the previous question, what made you say that? How much do you agree or disagree with the statements below? Use an agreement scale If I wanted to purchase the product, I know where to click. If I wanted to contact the company, I know where to click. If I wanted to see more content, I know where to click. The webpage is helpful to me. The webpage is relevant to me. Is there anything that you would like to add or remove from the design that you have seen? The order of these questions can be shifted around. Do You Feel Like Splurging? Consumer sentiment and consumer confidence are the forerunners to the future success of many businesses. Sometimes a project manager needs to do a reality check to see if it is the right time to move forward on a business venture. How would you rate your outlook for the economy over the next six months? What most contributes to your optimistic outlook for the economy? What most contributes to your pessimistic outlook for the economy? Which of the following best describes your discretionary spending during the past six months? Use a more or less tendency scale Are you more or less likely to make a large purchase in the next six months? Use a likelihood scale slide 5 of 6 Hints for Developing Your Own Sample of Focus Group Questions No matter why a focus group is formed , you can help your members have a more productive session by asking questions that grab their attention and get them thinking beyond the obvious. Here are a few pointers to help you in developing your own questions to motivate participants to open up and provide more honest and complete responses.

### Chapter 7 : The Focus Group | Advertising, Branding, Social Media, PR, & Web Design

*Introduction to Conducting Focus Groups, by NOAA Coastal Services Center, is a comprehensive introduction to key elements and practices that will increase the success of a focus group effort. Topics covered in this publication include focus group basics, preparing for the focus group, developing effective questions, planning the focus group.*

The discussions of the group and structured probing or exercises are designed to shed light on the topic under consideration. An Unfocus Group is a conversation with your representative sample again of 10 or fewer participants without an agenda, a discussion guide or the main topic. It is very difficult for business people to work without structure, a set objective or purpose. As working professionals we also strive to justify our efforts, every action must have a report associated with it and every penny spent must fetch a return. In an Unfocus Group, when we work without an objective, we can sometimes stumble upon much valuable insights than when we work within the confines of a structure. This methodology can be used in various contexts, for example, if you have a semi-finished product and do not have a definite idea for how the finished product would shape up, you can conduct an Unfocus Group session to explore the possible manifestations of the half-baked idea. And consider perceptions of the target user as well as users outside your target segment. Unfocus discussions usually rule out most obvious insights that a facilitator or moderator is likely to derive from a focused discussion. In this case, the individuals in the group use the product or direct the idea in ways they deem fit leading to insights into target user behavior or ways in which the product can be used which was initially not considered by the researcher. Advantages of Unfocus Groups 01 Unanticipated discoveries Researchers and businesses usually see the customer through the lens of their planned campaigns. Flipping the context allows a rare glimpse of customer expectations without limiting these expectations to just the product or service under consideration. Therefore, Unfocus Group is relatively more customer-centric than other methods. Again, as the objectives are not clearly defined, the participants openly share their thoughts and ideas. Unfocus in groups allows important issues often not directly tied to the project come into focus that may otherwise go unheard. This can help encourage conversation amongst participants who may otherwise not participate. This reflection can further enable learning something new about themselves or a situation for the participants. Disadvantages of Unfocus Groups 01 Difficult recruitment Because the objectives are not clearly defined for the unfocused discussion, there could be a lot of confusion in defining the right candidates for participation, which would further complicate the participant recruitment process. Additionally, without knowing clear objectives for the group discussion, participant sign-ups would be difficult to achieve. Think Design recommendation Use Unfocus Groups as a method, in contrast, to focus groups when your objective is to discover order from chaos. Generally, in highly moderated and structured conversations, the outcomes are linear to objectives of the research. However, when the objective of the research is to arrive at, stumble upon or diversify ideas, Unfocus Group is your method of choice. Imagine a boardroom scenario where the agenda is not clear and the participants are not moderated. One way of looking at this is, the possibility that it will lead to a chaotic non-conclusion. The other way of looking at this is, that you have a great chance of diversity of thoughts and that could be the seed for your billion dollar innovation.

### Chapter 8 : Focus group - Wikipedia

*The following is a modified excerpt from Applied Qualitative Research Design: A Total Quality Framework Approach (Roller & Lavrakas, , pp. ). Beyond discussion guide development and the effects of the moderator, there is another critical component that threatens the quality of data gathered in the focus group discussion method: the participants themselves.*

### Chapter 9 : The Marketing Research Process – 8 Step Design for Focus Groups

*Designing and Conducting Focus Group Interviews - This resource includes a detailed discussion of how to create*

*effective focus group questions and conduct the interview.*