Recruiting and Facility Management

Qualitative HANDBOOK

MRA[SM]

Marketing Research Association

QUALITATIVE HANDBOOK

Recruiting and Facility Management

Published by:

MRA[SM]

Marketing Research Association

ISBN 0-9675583-4-4

Marketing Research Association
1344 Silas Deane Highway, Suite 306
Rocky Hill, Connecticut 06067
860-257-4008 phone
860-257-3990 fax
www.mra-net.org

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface

Qualitative research continues to evolve because of strong industry awareness of its value, and the technologies that are being used to enhance the research process. To address this industry evolution, Marketing Research Association (MRA) and Qualitative Research Consultants Association (QRCA) joined forces in an effort to identify the needs of both organizations' memberships.

The MRA/QRCA Joint Committee identified that there was an overwhelming need for qualitative research documentation. In recent years, several members from both organizations have been working hard to develop guidelines for different phases of the qualitative research process.

This publication is divided into two parts: 1) a step-by-step recruiting handbook, and, 2) a "how to" guide for setting up a facility and managing research using quality procedures.

Recommendations within this handbook come from a compilation of MRA committees (Professional Standards, Research Abuse, Publications, and the Board of Directors), the QRCA Board of Directors and Field committee, and the MRA/QRCA Joint committee.

The handbook provides valuable information for buyers and users of qualitative research, as well as recruiters and facility managers. The document was developed as a reference resource and as a training tool for those with less qualitative research experience.

While the introduction provides an overview of qualitative research, for the most part this handbook was developed with the assumption that the reader has a basic knowledge of qualitative research: how it is used, and by whom.

This handbook is not intended to be a standard, or to dictate how individual businesses should operate. The materials contain suggestions and examples of various techniques and tools and should be as used as a reference.

Acknowledgements

MRA and QRCA would like to acknowledge a number of individuals (alphabetical) who have contributed to the development of the *"Qualitative Handbook: Recruiting and Facility Management."*

Betsy Bernstein, Bernstein Research Group, Inc.
Rebecca Day, Kinzey & Day Qualitative Market Research
Harriett Huntley, Taylor Research
Suzanne LeFebvre, Research House
Hy Mariampolski, Ph.D., Qualitdata Research, Inc.
Anndel Martin, Opinions Unlimited, Inc.
Val Maxwell, National Data Research, Inc.
Judy Opstad, Focus Market Research
Jane Rosen, Nichols Research, Inc.
Debra Rosenthal, Fox-KRC
Merrill Shugoll, Shugoll Research , Inc.

A presentation entitled *"You Get What You Ask For"* was used extensively in the screener and rescreening portions of this handbook. The individuals who participated in developing this presentation include:

Rebecca Day, Kinzey & Day Qualitative Market Research
Nancy Kolkebeck, J. Reckner Associates, Inc.
Angela Lorinchak, Metro Research Services, Inc.
Anndel Martin, Opinions Unlimited, Inc.
Merrill Shugoll, Shugoll Research, Inc.
Kevin Smith, Smith Research, Inc.
Cynthia Tompkins, Insights, Inc.

Introduction

Purpose

This handbook is intended to meet the qualitative research needs of a diverse group of members:

- *qualitative consultants* will discover what should be expected from a quality-oriented focus group facility
- b*uyers and users* can learn about the types of qualitative services available, and ways to effectively use them
- *researchers* will learn procedures for recruiting fully qualified participants, and reducing the incidence of respondent cheating and repeating, and
- *focus group facility managers/operators and recruiters* can gain additional insight, and tips to enhance their skills and services

In addition, everyone will gain a better understanding of qualitative research, its origin and uses.

A Brief History of Qualitative Research

The "roots" of qualitative research comes from social sciences and psychology, specifically psychological testing.

We believe the first "focused" groups were pioneered in the early 1940s by Ernest Dichter, Al Goldman, Herta Herzod, Robert K. Merton and others. Focus groups have evolved from a small group of neighbors asked to gather at someone's dining room table, to facilities in modern business offices equipped with the latest in audio and video technology.

Today, qualitative research encompasses more than focus group discussions. This methodology also includes one-on-one/in-depth interviews, simulated or mock jury trials, idea generation sessions and more.

As research among various targeted markets has expanded, many more occupational and demographic groups participate in qualitative research. While at one time housewives were the only shoppers of interest to marketers, nowadays a full range of consumers may become targeted respondents including children, doctors, business people, and various ethnic groups.

A few examples of the many uses of qualitative research include:

- generating ideas
- getting preliminary feedback on a subject or interest, and
- following up to better understand a topic or issue

Findings from qualitative research are used on a daily basis by researchers and marketers, for such things as:

- input for writing a President's State of the Union Address
- improving products and services
- developing an advertising campaign's message
- generating ideas for a political candidate's election platform
- selection of jurors, and developing arguments for a court case, and
- developing new products/services and introducing them in the marketplace

Qualitative research results have helped businesses to successfully market thousands of products and services. The Arm and Hammer Baking Soda case is an example of how qualitative research was used to rejuvenate baking soda.

Baking soda was suffering a decline in sales because of a decrease in home baking. Through consumer focus groups, Arm and Hammer discovered that baking soda was sometimes being used for purposes other than baking. This information led them to successfully extend the product line to include toothpaste and deodorizers.

Today, millions and millions of dollars are spent on qualitative research. The profession is healthy, and will continue to grow in both size and importance as it adapts to changes in technology.

Types of Qualitative Research

Most of the information contained in this handbook pertains to focus groups, the primary method of qualitative research, however, much of it also applies to in-depth interviews.

Focus Groups

A small group of respondents, usually six to 12, are selected, on the basis of some shared characteristics, to meet with a trained moderator to discuss and explore a specific marketing issue. Using various interviewing techniques, the moderator guides the group through an in-depth discussion of their experiences, attitudes, and opinions of concepts, products, ideas, and suggestions. Group discussions usually last about two hours (but may be longer or shorter) and are recorded on audio, and sometimes videotaped, to help in analyzing the group findings.

Depth/In-Depth/One-on-One Interviews

In these interviews, an issue or subject is explored in great detail through extensive questioning by an interviewer. The interview is set up to encourage a free flow of conversation with the respondent, while the interviewer guides the discussion to relevant subjects. In-depth interviews usually last from one to one-and-one-half hours, but may be longer or shorter, and are recorded on audio and/or video to help in summarizing the findings.

Methods of Conducting and Observing Qualitative Research

Focus groups and in-depth interviews have traditionally used a face-to-face or in-person approach. The telephone sometimes plays a role in facilitating the focus group and in-depth interview process, particularly when respondents are located in diverse geographic locations.

The process for collecting respondent information is changing because of the ability to:

- e-mail potential participants to alert them of an upcoming focus group, and
- update database information through e-mail, as well as online surveys

However, further advancements in technology (video and the Internet) have introduced additional ways to gather qualitative information and for clients to observe the research process. These result in significant client savings in terms of travel expenses and time.

Online Recruiting/Focus Group Sessions

The Internet is used to recruit and/or hold a focus group session. When using the Internet for recruiting, respondents can be telephoned and screened for Internet access or they can be e-mailed. E-mailing only makes the initial contact. A determination still needs to be made as to whether the respondent meets the project's specifications.

An online focus group is similar to a traditional group. It is a moderated chat session over the Internet with communication accomplished by typing questions and responses.

Online groups are beneficial when working in markets that are difficult to recruit, have a low incidence, are online-based or are geographically dispersed.

Ten to 12 respondents are typically recruited for six to eight to participate in a one-hour online session. This size increases group manageability and minimizes excessive wait time for question response. Incentives are only slightly less than in-person. Some particularly appropriate online focus group topics include:

- e-commerce inquiries regarding purchase behavior and interest
- Web site evaluation, development and offers
- sensitive topics allowing for anonymity, and
- high-tech products and services

Advantages of Online Recruiting

- Does not rely on subjective visual and vocal judgments and interpretations
- More difficult for one respondent to dominate the group
- Ideal for reaching the online user community and/or the business community
- Immediate availability of electronic transcripts speeds up analysis and report turnaround
- Cost savings—client travel time and staff time
- Moderator can make notations on script and refer to as group progresses
- Clients can participate from anywhere with Internet access
- Clients can communicate with one another, as well as with the moderator through a separate chat room

Disadvantages of Online Recruiting

- Online access must be secured with several redundant forms of security
- All participants must have passwords and IDs
- Must have ability to remove unwanted individuals from access
- No control over "true identity" of respondent (respondents can be rescreened online to verify identity)
- Moderator easily distracted if clients are overly communicative
- Lack of personal, visual and conversational interaction
- Moderator cannot rely on verbal body language
- Moderator must be skilled at technical multi-tasking — typing, real time transcript analysis and group responsiveness
- Respondents must be good at typing and expressing themselves in writing
- Chance of respondent technical incompatibility

This technology transmits live focus groups, conducted at facilities installed with video conferencing systems, in "real-time" to client offices. The transmission is usually received on the client's own video conferencing equipment.

Video Conferencing

The latest in video conferencing is a simultaneous viewing feature with advanced picture-in-picture technology. For example, clients can view extreme close-ups of respondents, as well as full views of the entire group, all in the same picture frame.

Advantages of Video Conferencing

- More clients and higher-level executives tend to show up at video conferencing groups
- Clients save in travel expense and staff time
- Frequent client users can save significant cost (although it is more expensive than traditional groups)
- Video conferencing fees provide facilities with an additional revenue stream
- Moderator gets extended exposure
- Moderator focuses on the research process; the role of playing client host is minimized

Disadvantages of Video Conferencing

- Need for video conferencing equipment
- Potential for technical interruption, i.e., transmission problems
- Video and audio systems can be taxed (more respondents in video conferencing focus groups)
- Need for multiple and moveable cameras with live operator

Video Streaming

Video streaming (focus groups viewed over the Internet) is a recent technology that takes video conferencing to the next level: enhancing the quality and convenience of focus group observations.

The group is transmitted over a video conferencing system that provides high quality camera motion and audio. In its final stages, it is streamed over the Internet to a client's PC at the office, home, or any traveling location. Video streaming can be an extension of routine video conferencing or it can be a stand-alone service with PC viewing only.

Advantages of Video Streaming

- Group can be viewed live or saved for viewing later (within 30 days)
- Unlimited number of observers (only viewing equipment needed is a IBM-compatible PC, and Internet connection)
- Observers can chat with one another via their computer while the group is in process

Disadvantages of Video Streaming

- Must use facility with video conferencing system
- Some security issues — must have secure password
- Some limitations due to bandwidth and speed
- Facility must invest in IBM-compatible personal computers

Other Advancements

Research companies offer the ability to hold focus groups in a traditional focus group facility but adds the benefits of online research, by providing each respondent and the moderator with their own PC and Internet connection. This environment is frequently used to measure what Internet users like and dislike about clients' Web sites.

Other companies are using equipment that gives the moderator the ability to mark and clip specific focus group highlights, as they happen, with the push of a button. At the end of the group, the moderator gets a CD with the complete session and the important sections saved in a separate file that can be viewed on their PC, enabling reports to be prepared quickly.

Part One: Recruiting

SECTION 1

The Recruiter

Focus group recruiting is one of the most challenging jobs in our profession. The recruiter's role is critical to the overall success of the project because they determine whether potential respondents qualify for participation. The recruiter's qualifying role is two–fold: making sure that the potential respondent meets the project specifications and has the desire and ability to interact and share opinions with a group of strangers.

While individuals can train and practice to be recruiters, they must also possess a special talent in the ability to communicate and listen.

Within the time frame of a relatively brief telephone call, the recruiter uses their special communication skills to convey to the respondent:

- the value of their opinion
- the required qualifications for participation, and
- what to expect from a focus group

The recruiter must also possess the ability to obtain a firm commitment to participate and be able to handle rejection, so that it does not affect the ability to communicate with other potential respondents.

Recruiter/ Supervisor Responsibilities

Major Responsibilities

Under the direction of a supervisor, the recruiter's job is to locate qualified people and then invite them to participate in the qualitative research project.

The recruiter has two major responsibilities:

- solicit and record accurate, truthful information and
- provide qualified and articulate respondents for the group

Primary Activities

A recruiter performs three to four primary job activities depending upon the role they play in the recruiting process.

- Recruit qualified participants
  - — screen potential participants
  - — extend an invitation to qualified respondents
  - — seek definite respondent agreement to attend
- Maintain accurate records
  - — document recruiting/solicitation results using tally sheets/call record forms
- Confirm respondents – supervisor or recruiter responsibility
  - — re-establish respondent affirmation to attend

— send confirmation letter, directions and map to facility
— follow-up with reminder call
— replace with suitable substitute if respondent drops out

- Update data/database

— obtain and record accurate information
— obtain new and updated information for data/database

Characteristics of Successful Recruiters

Successful recruiters share many common characteristics. Some characteristics are part of the recruiter's personality, others may be acquired through training.

- Maturity
- Relates to all types of people because of varied life experiences
- Exhibits a professional manner
- Able to communicate the responsible nature and importance of the project
- At ease whether following a script or answering objections
- Able to reassure apprehensive respondents
- Able to persuade without antagonizing
- Listens carefully
- Can determine if respondent has a positive participation attitude, has answered questions truthfully, and is committed to attend
- Recognizes the difference between a firm or soft commitment
- Patient — answers questions, and offers information while adhering to client restrictions
- Has a good command of the English language
- Has an interesting and pleasing voice
- Able to determine if the respondent will meaningfully contribute to the discussion
- Respects research and its contribution; understands that good recruiting validates qualitative research
- Honesty — does not coach the respondent with "appropriate" answers
- Able to adapt to detailed requirements of the varied studies
- Senses when screening questions are not working properly
- Can handle stress of deadlines and pressure

Finding or Hiring Recruiters

Some facilities and clients use freelance or independent recruiters, although many focus group facilities hire, train and maintain their own staff of recruiters.

Freelance/ Independent Recruiters

Freelance recruiters work for a variety of facilities and clients, and maintain their own data files. Recruiters can be located by asking moderators and facilities for contacts, networking with others in the profession, and classified ads.

Advantages of Freelance/Independent Recruiters

- Can provide references
- Does not require training
- Has data files
- Contracted by the project
- Not responsible for continued employment
- No payroll overhead to facility or client
- May be available for last minute recruiting

Disadvantages of Freelance/Independent Recruiters

- Data files can be overworked
- Usually requires advance scheduling
- Difficult to monitor recruiting quality
- Requires validation of respondents before participation
- Typically more expensive per project than in-house recruiters

---

In-House Recruiting Staff

Many facilities choose to maintain their own staff of recruiters. Some facilities have some or all of their recruiters work from home. Sometimes facilities find recruiters through the research process, for example, they may have referral systems set-up within their facility, or they may train a current interviewer to be a recruiter. Sometimes, a respondent may express interest after participating in a research project. There are a variety of other ways to find recruiters:

- classified ads
- direct mail
- sign in research or mall office
- organizations
- teachers
- college employment centers
- temporary employment agencies

Advantages of In-House Recruiting Staff

- Focus group facility controls quality, timing, and quotas
- Problems can be identified and addressed immediately
- More quality control/supervision if recruiting done from central location
- Recruiters trained to meet focus group facility requirements

- Supervisor and senior recruiters can provide on-going training to other recruiters
- Supervisor and senior recruiters set standards and can report recruiters who do not meet those standards
- On-going commitment by focus group facility management to hire, train and maintain recruiters creates pool of recruiters and allows for more scheduling flexibility

Disadvantages of In-House Recruiting Staff

- Field agency must provide a minimum amount of work to retain recruiters
- Locating and training can be costly and time consuming
- Telephone facility overhead

Recruiter Training

Training Topics

Along with building personal skills, recruiters should receive training on a variety of topics in order to communicate with respondents knowledgeably.

- Explanation and background of marketing research
- Nature of qualitative research and its value
- Focus group description
- Facilities operations and tour
- Respondent's role in a focus group
- Identifying qualified respondents
- Sampling procedures and sampling rationale
- Knowledge of the card file or database system
- Knowledge of forms (quota sheets, dialing records, etc.)
- Interviewing skills
- How to obtain information from respondents without asking biased, leading or coaching questions

Resources for Training

It is best to begin training recruiters with structured materials either in a group setting or on their own, and then progress to on-the-job observation and application. A variety of methods and materials/resources can be used for training, either developed by your facility management or from other knowledgeable sources.

- Reading materials
- Either attending a focus group or viewing a tape of one
- Attending in-house seminars on various aspects of recruiting
- Sending recruiters to independent seminars

- One-on-one training by a senior recruiter
- Utilizing *The Professional Interviewer* training program
- Using materials developed for salesmanship adapted to recruiting

Retaining Recruiters

Recruiting is a challenging and demanding job. This can lead recruiters to look for better or less-stressful opportunities. It is important that facilities find ways to retain good recruiters because of the cost that goes into locating and training them. Some retention suggestions are listed below; however, it is a good idea to routinely brainstorm this topic when interacting with other facility professionals.

- Adequate compensation which recognizes performance, i.e., bonuses based on number of qualified respondents who show, as long as careful quality control is used to eliminate respondents participating for the sole purpose of earning money
- Variety in assignments
- Separate work areas designated for recruiting and data file management
- Opportunities to train newer recruits or supervise
- Other assignments when recruiting projects slow down
  — replenish and/or update data files
  — interviewing
  — speaking to groups/organizations about focus group participation

Focus groups are held with a variety of different respondents who share attitudes, opinions, and behaviors on numerous topics, products and services. The research project's purpose determines the specifications for the type of respondent to be recruited. Clients give these specifications and instructions to the facility at the initiation of the project.

Typical Types of Respondents

There are two broad categories of respondent types: consumer and business. Each category can be broken into a seemingly infinite number of finer classifications based on the specifications of the project. For example, consumers can be recruited based on their age, sex, product/service usage or non-usage, etc. On the other hand, business specifications almost always include industry type, job level or responsibility, as well as product/service usage or non-usage.

Household Consumers

Household consumers are usually the easiest participants to recruit. The recruiter should emphasize that the consumer will:

- have important input in developing something new,
- find the experience interesting,
- be compensated financially, and
- will have an opportunity to meet people with common interests in a unique setting.

Business Owners/Executives

The ease or difficulty of recruiting business owners and executives varies depending on the industry specialty. It can be difficult to recruit business people to participate during the workday unless the topic of discussion relates to their job. As a general rule, confident and professional recruiters are more likely to succeed with business-to business recruitment, than those who are "learning the ropes." Recruiters should:

- assume a professional tone and manner
- be friendly, open and honest about why you are calling with the secretary/receptionist (don't alienate)
- offer an incentive that will help to compensate them for their time
- conduct groups during breakfast or the lunch hour to increase the show-rate
- be confident and positive that the respondent will find the experience valuable

Children

Recruitment for younger children should be done through a parent. The informed consent of the parent or responsible adult must be obtained for interviews with children 12 years old or younger. *(See Code of Data Collections at www.mra-net.org.)* Teenagers can usually be screened directly; however, transportation may need to be arranged through the parents. Anytime parents are responsible for transportation, it is a good idea to split the incentive between the parent and the child.

Ethnic Groups

A more detailed explanation of the research process or purpose may be needed when recruiting varied ethnic groups because individuals in lower socio-economic categories and immigrants of any ethnicity are sometimes unfamiliar with marketing research. This inexperience can translate into a higher no-show rate. Therefore, more over-recruiting is required than for a typical group. Additional tips include:

- being especially patient and friendly, but professional
- offering transportation to and from the focus group facility

Physicians

Unless you are looking for those who are infrequent participants, physicians are a relatively easy group to recruit. They are very familiar with the marketing research process and very interested in participating. Getting past the nurse/receptionist is the toughest obstacle. Unfortunately, you need the help of nurses to reach the doctors, so don't alienate them. Befriend the nurses and ask them to talk to the doctors for you, as they often know if the doctors are agreeable and available to participate in focus groups.

- **Tips for Recruiting Physicians**
  - — be cautious about accepting a study with a strict past participation question because of the high volume of research that occurs in large medical communities
  - — be sure to over-recruit for surgeons and OB/GYNs because they can run into emergency situations
  - — know the day that physician offices are closed in your area
  - — use a physician's directory for your metro area — physicians are listed by specialty, medical school attended and year graduated; from this information the recruiter can determine the physician's approximate age and whether an American Medical College was attended, allowing for recruitment of those who meet the screening criteria (but remember, no directory is foolproof)

Determining Desirable Respondent Types

Recruiters must make every attempt to recruit respondents that meet client specifications and also truly represent the "real-world" experiences of the client's desired category. For example: consumers who are very outgoing with busy schedules, as well as those who are more introverted with more time on their hands.

However, certain respondent types do not make good focus group participants and should be avoided.

- People with speech impediments
  - — may be prevented from participating fully
  - — are difficult to understand on audio/videotapes
- People with heavy accents
  - — are difficult to understand in-person and on audio/videotapes
- Friends, relatives, and co-workers
  - — create peer pressure
  - — have views that are too similar
- People who attend focus groups regularly
  - — lack spontaneity in responses
  - — tend to lead the group
- People who are not "articulate" or do not seem to have an opinion
  - — may sit back and not contribute
- People who automatically answer "yes" or give the same rating for all items on a list
  - — may indicate boredom from lack of differentiation in answers
  - — may be "trying to qualify"

Methods of Recruiting

There are several methods of locating and recruiting qualified focus group participants. The facility management should ask the client which methods are allowable and make recommendations when appropriate, as variables associated with these methods affect the:

- client's use of the results
- cost of recruiting
- number of additional respondents (over-recruits) required
- type of respondent recruited

Data Files

Many companies have developed data files as a primary source of focus group respondents. Data files are frequently updated with additional respondents and current demographic/background information.

When recruiting from data files, approximately 20 to 50% more than are needed to show are typically recruited to ensure the appropriate number of respondents.

This is an average. Young males (18-25), for example, typically have a lower show rate. Children have a higher show rate. Senior citizens almost always show.

(See Appendix B, MRA/QRCA Joint Committee Recommended Best Practices for Qualitative Database Development and Usage).

- **Advantages of Data Files**
  - — Respondents are pre-recruited and educated about the qualitative research process
  - — Respondents are pre-qualified (i.e., bank customers, automobile purchasers, upper income population, etc.) shortening the recruitment time/process
  - — There is a higher show-rate allowing for fewer respondents to be recruited
  - — Last minute recruiting is easier to accomplish
  - — Dependable source for referrals for low incidence studies
  - — Past participation can be tracked
  - — Problem participants can be identified and tracked

- **Disadvantages of Data Files**
  - — Respondents can be over-used
  - — Respondents may not be as spontaneous due to past participation
  - — "Professional respondents" seek out ways to be listed on data files
  - — Expense related to maintaining database
  - — Expense associated with recruiting new participants for database

Pre-Qualified Lists

Clients often provide pre-qualified lists or purchase lists identifying users, customers, target groups, etc., from which facility management can recruit. It is important to understand the client's intention for providing lists. Is it meant to be an aid to find and recruit respondents along with other available sources, or is it meant to be restrictive and limit potential participation to a certain group of people?

When using a pre-qualified list, recruit approximately 40 to 50% more respondents than are needed to show.

- **Advantages of Pre-Qualified Lists** (When list is up-to date)
  - — Reduces the number of screenings for low incidence or business studies
  - — Customer lists generally result in high acceptance if name of sponsoring company can be revealed

- **Disadvantages of Pre-Qualified Lists**
  - — Often not as good as client believes (accuracy and age of lists)
  - — Show rate is usually not as good as a database
  - — Number of potential contacts limited by size of list
  - — Not particularly useful in higher incidence studies
  - — Telephone number look-up takes time and is an added expense
  - — Respondent incentives may need to be higher due to lack of experience or suspicions of focus groups
  - — Generally requires time to explain the research and focus group process

Random Dialing

Recruiting can be done randomly when data files or lists are not provided. Random dialing uses a sample of randomly generated telephone numbers, the telephone directory, or a reverse directory. The number of respondents to be recruited is similar to a client list. Recruit approximately 40 to 50% more than are needed to show.

- **Advantages of Random Dialing**
  - — Can recruit a higher percentage of respondents who are inexperienced in qualitative research
  - — Randomness ensures representation from a larger pool of qualified segments
  - — No expense for data file set-up or maintenance

- **Disadvantages of Random Dialing**
  - — Requires many more dialings/attempts in order to locate qualified respondents
  - — Initial receptiveness low (fear of sales, scams, the unknown)
  - — Requires time to explain research and focus group process
  - — Harder to secure agreement for participation due to respondent apprehension and skepticism
  - — Higher drop-out rate from time of recruitment to study participation

Central Location Recruiting

Central location recruiting involves locating qualified respondents by intercepting individual's in-person at a mall or retail store. Central location recruiting success rates are slightly higher than data files but not as good as a client list or random dialing; 35 to 40% more than are needed to show should be recruited.

- **Advantages of Central Location Recruiting**
  - — Sight screening can be done for sex, age, and even purchase behavior
  - — Easier to locate low incidence respondents if category is observable
  - — Good supplement with other methods of recruiting
  - — Good resource to fill cancellations
  - — In-person recruiting generally gets higher participation rates

- **Disadvantages of Central Location Recruiting**
  - — Concealing category or brand is difficult with in-store purchaser
  - — Consumers in retail stores may share information and send friends to participate
  - — Additional recruiting time may be required if mall or retail store traffic is low

It is important to plan in advance for all of the resources needed for recruiting, and to set deadlines for the recruitment and confirmation phases. The screener and the invitation to participate should be reviewed well in advance to allow time to ask questions of the client or to make last minute corrections/changes.

Planning the Recruiting Phase

Timing Requirements

To ensure projects are completed on time, it is important to quantify the amount of effort it will take to complete the project and to set completion deadlines. Some examples of needed information are:

- the number of recruiting hours required
- the number of days available for recruiting
- the number of recruiters required to meet the recruitment quota
- the date to mail confirmation letters
- telephone confirmation dates

Facilities rarely have the time that is truly needed to complete each phase of qualitative research. The following timeline is an example of an "ideal" timeframe; however, realistically there is often not as much time between functions.

Four–six weeks prior to study
Client/moderator requests availability for focus facility and asks for a project bid based upon recruiting specifications. Facility management sends a written project bid to the client/moderator and schedules the tentative dates on their facility calendar.

Three–four weeks prior to study
Client/moderator confirms dates and sends the screener. Facility management sends out a written contract reiterating job specifications and project cost.

Two–three weeks prior to study
Facility management sets-up project: assigns project manager, supervisor and recruiters; formats profiles, reports, confirmation letters and recruiter tally sheets, and pulls sample from database or divides lists provided by client/moderator for each recruiter's use.

One–three weeks prior to study
Recruiting begins. Daily communication among facility project manager/ supervisor and client/moderator via faxed or e-mailed profiles and reports. Problems and questions are resolved at the start of this timeframe.

One week prior to study
Respondent confirmation letters are sent. Client/moderator requests for food, videotaping and equipment are provided to facility management. Advance check for incentives is sent by client/moderator to facility.

One–two days prior to study
Facility employees complete reminder calls and respondent rescreening. Respondents who cancel are replaced.

Day of study
Final profiles and other materials are given to the qualitative assistant for respondent check-in. Cash or checks are prepared for distribution.

Project Control

Progress reports should be utilized to monitor and track the status of each project. These tally sheets/call record forms and profiles should be generated on a daily basis to summarize the major recruiting points for each respondent. Information captured on reporting forms can be minimal or extensive depending on the project and the client need. *(See Appendix A, pg. 60—Tally Sheet)*. Sample information needed for reporting forms are:

- date/time period represented
- number of recruited respondents per group
- quotas completed
- incidence rate(s)
- terminated question
- other information useful to/requested by client

Factors Affecting Participation

In addition to the quality of the screener, invitation, and confirmation, there are other variables that affect a respondent's agreement to attend, and to follow through with that commitment.

The Market

The market is the geographic area in which a research project takes place. These populations vary from city to city causing some circumstances to fluctuate:

- attitudes
- influence of current events, news coverage, level of telephone solicitations, etc.
- influence of sporting/special events

Conflicts with Schedule

Focus groups are frequently planned around the availability of the moderators/researchers and project schedules with little thought to the respondents, and their availability. Facility management should recommend to their clients the best times and days for successful recruiting of needed respondents.

- Schedule times convenient for respondents, i.e., schedule white collar, employed respondents after 5:00 p.m.
- Be careful about scheduling during:
  — local or industry events that coincide with project dates
  — bad weather season
  — busy holiday season

Amount of Cooperation Fee

The fee for participation or cooperation varies from market to market by type of respondent and recruiting method.

- Facilities should be aware of their market's going dollar rates
- Less co-op usually results in lower acceptance and increased recruiting hours
- Slightly more co-op (+$5) is usually not beneficial

Topic Interest and Appeal

The topics of focus groups should be presented in an interesting yet truthful manner. If topics do not pique interest, respondents may decide the session is not worth the trouble to attend.

The Screener/ Script

General Rules of Thumb for Screener Design

- Ask questions that meet the study objectives
- Use simple, lay language, no jargon to describe segments or quotas (i.e., users vs. non-users not "gecko" vs. "turtle")
- Write questions that use language that matches the knowledge of the respondents
- Be specific, clear and direct
- Substitute open-ended questions for close-ended questions whenever possible and appropriate (e.g., age)
- Ensure that all possible answer categories are provided if the question is close-ended, include "Other-Specify," "Don't Know," and "Refused" categories
- Tell respondents that they do not have to do anything to prepare for

the session. ("trier rejectors" and "aware non-triers" often go out and purchase the products prior to the groups.)

- Limit each question to 20 words
- Avoid embarrassing or offensive questions
- Avoid combining two questions into one (e.g., How much do you spend each month and how frequently do you buy?)
- Avoid leading or biased questions (e.g., "You do watch *60 Minutes,* don't you?")
- Ask only what is pertinent to the respondent, unless you are interviewing parents about their young children
- Avoid questions that are personal/confidential unless they are essential for analytical purposes or recruiting
- Avoid terminating on a key question by skipping to an innocuous, but topic-related question (e.g., "How many hours of TV do you watch per week?"). Once answered, THANK AND TERMINATE.

  — Eliminates any perceived discrimination (i.e., race, age, income)
  — Eliminates any indication of the "right" answers
  — Avoid telling respondents the actual reason they were terminated (i.e., don't meet age requirements)

(See Appendix A, pgs. 61–70—Toothpaste Screener.)

Screener Introduction

The introduction is a critical part of the screening process because it determines how the respondent will initially perceive the recruiter and the focus group project. A positive initial perception is more likely to lead to an affirmation to attend the focus group.

Respondents are typically screened by telephone, however, an introductory e-mail or fax can be used for business-to-business recruiting, or when using a database. The e-mail or fax gives an explanation of marketing research and focus groups in general. It also presents the general topic and dates of the sessions. The e-mail/fax asks the respondent to indicate their level of interest and availability.

The introduction should be brief, and worded in a professional, yet friendly manner.

- Identify recruiter name and research company name
- Indicate that this is an opinion research project
- State general topic of discussion without providing too much information (this avoids bias and prevents a respondent from doing homework on the topic)
- Give explanation of study purpose and how it will benefit respondent
- Indicate there will be no sales involved
- Include client name to increase cooperation, only if permitted
- Do not reveal client without the expressed approval of the moderator

- If client wants to mention a co-op fee up front, a sentence must state that only qualified respondents will receive money
- Give enough detail to make group sound interesting and enjoyable
- Do not give all the specifics (i.e., date, time, location, gratuity, etc.)
- Wait until you determine that the respondent qualifies before telling them about the co-op/incentive
- Avoid saying that you are calling about focus groups without the expressed approval of the moderator

Screening Interview

The screening interview should be as short as possible; limit to seven minutes or less in length.

- All qualifying questions must be on the screener (for example, facility personnel will not automatically screen for demographics that are not asked on the screener)
- Check that skip patterns ask the appropriate questions
- Check for correct places on the screening questionnaire to end/discontinue the interview
- Check instructions for quota assignments

Question Content

The design of the screener should be according to client specifications. The following are suggestions to consider when developing the screener.

- Question sequence should flow from general to specific information (funnel approach)
- Place lowest incidence or most difficult to find requirement questions early in screener
- Make the invitation appealing
  — The invitation should be written to appeal to the respondent and to secure their commitment to attend. Ask client what can and cannot be said about the topic and the focus group discussion.
- Reiterate points in the introduction

Types of Questions

Some questions are directed toward establishing facts, for example, age, product usage, number of children in household, etc. Some are for learning the respondent's opinions (agree/disagree with various statements about a product). Other questions are for establishing how articulate or creative the respondent is. All of these, under various circumstances, could be used to qualify or disqualify a respondent.

There are three basic types of screening questions: open-ended, close-ended, and matrix questions.

- Open-ended questions are general and flexible in nature. The respondent is free to answer any way they like. Open-ended questions are good because they:
  - — Show what respondents think in their own words
  - — Do not restrict respondents to a predetermined number of options
  - — Provide additional opportunities to assess articulation
  - — Make screening "more interesting"
  - — Identify borderline respondents that can be selected for rescreening or re-contacted if qualifications change
  - — Are difficult to "fake" because there is no indication of the "right" answers
- Close-ended questions are more structured. They usually move quickly and do not require industry knowledge since there is a list of possible answers to check off.
  - — Yes/no
  - — Pre-listed answers
  - — Ranking vs. rating
  - — Most people familiar with rating scales
- Matrix or grid questions are also structured but allow:
  - — Answers to a variety of topics to be captured in a limited amount of space
  - — Quick comparisons of answers across respondents (Format also useful for call reporting forms.)

(Appendix A contains additional information and example questions for topics on: Product/Service Category/Brand Usage, pgs. 71–72; Demographics, pgs. 73–78; Occupation/Security, pgs. 79–81; Past Participation, pgs. 82–84; and Articulation, Responsiveness, Sensitive Topics, and Creativity, pgs. 85–90.)

Invitation

The invitation portion of the screener should explain (again): the importance of "opinion research" and focus groups, as well as the general topics to be discussed. *(See Appendix A, pg. 90—Invitation.)*

- Tell how interesting the experience will be and how they can benefit from participation
- Tell that they will meet other interesting people and share ideas and opinions

- Stress importance of their opinion
- Stress importance of their attendance, that there are a limited number of people invited
- Inform them of date, time and place
- Tell them they will be compensated financially (in cash)
- Let them know that refreshments will be served
- Ensure respondent commitment
- Explain that they will receive a confirmation letter, directions and a reminder either by phone or mail, or by e-mail or fax (they should call facility if letter or confirmation call not received)
- Discuss any special instructions (i.e., bring ID for check-in, self-administered homework, etc.
- Tell respondents not to bring children (unless facility is set-up to accommodate their supervision)
- Tell respondents they must keep cell phones/beepers off in the focus group room
- Stress that they should call immediately if they can't attend
- Give a phone number for questions/cancellations
- Tell respondents not to send someone in their place if they can't attend
- Tell respondents to arrive 15 minutes early
- Tell them no preparation is required (unless otherwise instructed)
- Tell respondents they may have to read materials/write responses, and ask if they are comfortable participating in these activities; remind them to bring reading glasses if needed
- Explain that no one will sell them anything or call them as a result of their participation (particularly for cold call jobs)
- Tell them how long it will last — DO NOT UNDERESTIMATE
- Do not give any details other than topic of the discussion in order to avoid biased opinions

---

Confirmation Calls and Letters

Any follow-up correspondence or phone call should be timely and done in a professional manner. Written correspondence should contain the company name of the facility. Be brief, yet as detailed as possible, and use bullet points to highlight important information. *(See Appendix A, pg. 92—Confirmation Letter.)*

- Letter and/or post card and/or e-mail
  - — Reiterate invitation messages
  - — Include travel instructions and map to facility
  - — Include instructions and a phone number for respondent to contact recruiter/facility for questions or if a conflict arises
  - — Include all accurate information, i.e., time, date, length, co-op/incentive (ensure information is double checked)
  - — Explain that late arrivals are not guaranteed payment

— Tell respondent to bring a photo ID (not required for child/teen projects)
— Give topic and tell respondent to give their name and topic when they enter the facility
— Ask respondents to arrive 15 minutes early
— Tell respondent to bring reading glasses, or any other items requested by the moderator
— Tell them what type of refreshments will be served
— Remind them that no guests, children (as appropriate to facility) or pets are allowed

Reminder Telephone Call

- Speak directly to the respondent, not another member of the household
- Re-screen respondents to affirm if qualified (should be done by someone other than recruiter)
- Remind them of their commitment
- Answer respondent questions
- Soothe apprehensiveness about participating
- Clarify that respondents know where and when
- Ask what name respondent wants to be called by/how name tag should read
- Avoid research jargon when terminating or canceling a respondent (e.g., “We are over quota.”)
- Do not reveal client unless advised to do so
- Read list of other respondents for consumer confirmation calls. (Casual acquaintances should not be terminated, however, one respondent should be eliminated if any relatives or close friends will be attending the same group, unless the client gives approval.)

Rescreening

Rescreening can be done during the confirmation call or at the facility, prior to the focus group. Either way, the same person who recruited the respondent should never do rescreening. Rescreening assures that respondents qualify for the project, and it can also be used to determine which respondents who show are the best qualified. *(See Appendix A, pg. 93—Toothpaste Rescreener.)*

The Re-Screener Script

- Include a section for date/time/city, or color code using one color per group
- Maintain respondents’ confidentiality by asking only for first names
- Keep length to one page
- Ask only key qualifying questions

- Thank respondents for being patient and responding to some of the same questions one more time
- Make sure questions on rescreeners are worded exactly the same as they were worded on the screener
- Make rescreener response section open-ended
- Notify facility management about rescreening, in advance, so they can over-recruit if concerned about fall-out
- Look for gross discrepancies that would disqualify a respondent (respondent's answers will not always exactly match those on the screener)
- Consider adding one attitudinal "tie-breaker" question if more respondents qualify than can be seated
- Include pictures of products to help respondents identify brands they use

Administering Re-Screener At the Facility

- Make sure facility has clipboards and pencils available for rescreening (include request in field instructions)
- Request that respondents complete rescreeners on their own
- Ask for rescreeners to be attached to the original screeners (minus last names) as they are completed, and returned to you
- Ask that rescreener answers be checked against provided code sheet
- Tell facility management that rescreener should be completed before any facility forms. (Facility forms to be completed upon departure.)
- Avoid establishing yourself as an authority figure when in the waiting room with respondents

(See Appendix A, pg. 94—Confidential Code for Toothpaste ReScreener.)

Over Quota Pay and Send Instructions

First, call the name of the chosen participants and have them enter the focus group room in order to have the group start on time. Then explain to the remaining respondents that fewer people were seated to keep the session to its allotted time. Hold remaining respondents quietly, in a lounge for 20 to 30 minutes, in case moderator wants to switch any respondents. Thank the respondent for coming, pay them, and let them know they will be called again in the future for another project. Also explain that this does not count toward past participation since they did not actually participate.

- Explain that they did nothing wrong, they were randomly selected to be "Paid and Sent"
- Avoid telling the respondent they are not needed
- Avoid telling the respondent the reason they are not being used (i.e., behavior, very loud, too shy, the way they answered a question, etc.)

Confidentiality/ Agreement Statements

Marketing and opinion research standards emphasize confidentiality in three specific areas of the qualitative research process: respondent confidentiality; client, product and project material confidentiality; and database and list confidentiality.

Respondent Confidentiality

Marketing and opinion research standards protect the identity of respondents who are participating in qualitative research projects. Facility management should establish procedures to ensure that respondents' identity, including demographic information, is held confidential and not used for any other purpose without the respondent's consent.

- Remove respondent identification information from screener before giving to client
- Reveal audio and videotaping and their purposes, assuring tapes will not be used for sales efforts, journalism, or public broadcast
- Tell respondents their names will be kept confidential
- Inform respondents they will receive a one-time monetary gift
- Supply any agreement or release form that you want signed. (Don't assume facility will use one.)
  - — Keep the agreement brief
  - — Avoid legal terms or vocabulary that is not easily understood
  - — Ask respondent/parent or guardian (for children under 12) to sign video/audio/observation agreement form when appropriate
  - — Seat only respondents who sign appropriate agreement form

Project/Client Confidentiality

Caution should be taken to ensure that all product and project materials are secure, and cannot be accessed by an unauthorized person.

- Off-limit areas should be secured and identified verbally, and with signs
- Provide clients with a map of non-restricted areas noting bathrooms, hostess/qualitative assistants locations, etc.
- Policies should be established for identifying clients and respondents in multiple room facilities
- Clients should provide a list of individuals authorized to observe and/or have access to information and materials
- Proper identification should be requested before allowing access to information (in person or via telephone)
- Consider having clients sign a letter of agreement that specifies the facility management's role in maintaining confidentiality of project information
- Ask respondents to keep confidential any information they learn in the session
- Employees and subcontractors (video operators, typists, etc.) with

access to materials/information should sign confidentiality or non-disclosure agreements

- Care should be taken to avoid scheduling projects for competitive products at the same time
- Discuss the disposition of proprietary products and other study materials with client
- Provide private telephone areas/booths to avoid being overheard
- Deliver faxes in an envelope with receiver's name on it
- Have a shredder available for appropriate use

Database and List Confidentiality

Ensure that lists and respondent information remain confidential.

- Information about respondents recruited from a facility database remains the property of the facility
- Lists supplied by the client are the client's property (not facility's)
- Permission must be obtained from client to use list for other purposes
- Honor client requests to return or dispose of lists
- Have client sign agreement to keep respondent information confidential

(See Appendix A, pg. 95—Participant Confidentiality Statement; pg. 97—Video Operator Policy of Non-Disclosure; pg. 98—Employee Confidentiality Agreement; and pg. 99—Client "Respondent Confidentiality" Statement.)

Documentation

Accurate documentation is required in several areas of the focus group recruiting process.

Adequate Respondent Identification

It is important to plan ahead and ask for enough information so respondents can be located for relaying changes, confirming and rescreening, etc.

- Is essential for confirmation letter and reminder telephone call
- Provides current information for data files
  - — Correct spelling of full name
  - — First name or nickname (for name card during the focus group)
  - — Address, including apartment numbers, city and zip code
  - — Telephone number where can be reached
  - — All other phone numbers - cell, home, work, pager, etc.
  - — Fax number (business respondents)
  - — Name of nurse/receptionist/secretary when leaving messages
  - — E-mail address
  - — Title and Department for business-to-business recruiting

Call Record Results/Tally Sheets

A systematic procedure for recording recruiting results is essential to track and predict the recruiting cost.

- Consistent result codes should be developed for each project and used by all of the recruiters working on it; for example, "TQ #3," means that the respondent was determined unqualified at question number 3
- Allows calculation and comparison of incidence figures and acceptance rates
  - — Tracks where respondents are "falling out"/being disqualified
  - — Can be basis for price changes
  - — Can alert facility management to problems in recruiting or with individual recruiters

(See Appendix A, pg. 60—Tally Sheet.)

Participation Rate

The focus group facility should track and compare the participation rate — the number who attended and the number invited — from study to study, so that adjustments can be made to the number of respondents to recruit for future studies.

- Should be tracked overall and by recruiter
- Indicates changes in respondent attitudes
- Reasons for last minute drop-outs should also be tracked

Reasons for Declining Invitation

Reasons for decline should be tallied so that problems can be identified early.

- Focus group discussion dates, time of day, screener, topic, etc.
- Respondent attitudes
- Co-op/incentive amount inappropriate

Respondent Summary Sheet

Clients should receive the screeners of confirmed participants, as well as a summary or profile of the respondents recruited for each focus group. To ensure a sufficient number of copies, ask the facility management to match the number of copies against the client food order.

Summary sheets/profiles are helpful because they:

- organize all pertinent identifying and qualifying information from screeners onto one form
- make it easier to select respondents to participate when more than the needed number show

- help observers understand respondent's comments and identify respondents categorically

Summary sheets/profiles should be organized so that respondent information can be easily retrieved.

- Exclude any client identifying information
- Include the city, date and time of the group
- Ask facility management to put all key qualifying information (specify your preferences) on one page
- Have shaded answer categories that disqualify respondents for a particular group
- Use an easy to read grid-type format
- Note last minute cancellations
- Update with late recruits who replace cancellations
- Group respondents by one key variable (e.g., if gender is a key issue, list all female respondents sequentially, then all male respondents). (This assists in the pay and send process if too many respondents show.)
- Note any questionable or problem respondents to simplify pay and send process (e.g., changed an answer on rescreen, heavy accent or negative attitude upon greeting, etc.)

(See Appendix A, pg. 99—Respondent Summary Sheet.)

SECTION 4

Other Recruiting Issues

There are many factors that determine the quality and accuracy of a research project. Recruiting respondents matching the client's screening criteria is just one factor that facility owners face. Other challenges can be met head-on when standard quality control procedures are implemented.

Quality Control Procedures

Professional respondents and respondents who do not meet the client's screening criteria should be monitored closely as they affect the overall research quality and reliability.

To minimize cheating and repeating, a three-phase process is recommended:

- use a screening questionnaire for the initial recruitment
- have a monitor or supervisor (not the original recruiter) rescreen during telephone confirmation a day before the project
- perform an on-site rescreening when the respondent arrives at the facility

In addition, using a combination of quality control measures can minimize professional and unqualified respondent occurrences.

- Replenish and rotate respondents in permanent data files
- Cross check respondents' addresses and phone numbers for duplication
- Develop recruiter training programs on facility standards
- Monitor recruiters during the recruiting and confirmation processes
- Secure proper identification from respondents at the time of participation *(See Appendix A, pg. 96—Photo ID Placard)*
- Use more than one person for recruiting, and data file maintenance
- Educate hostesses/qualitative assistants and support staff on issues affecting the quality of the research, and how to handle them when they occur
- Interact with client, facility manager and recruiter regarding screener results
- Solicit feedback from client after groups regarding satisfaction with respondents/recruiting

---

Over-Recruiting

Rationale

Getting the requisite number of respondents to attend groups requires over-recruiting by a certain percentage. Over-recruiting is done to counteract the normal participation dropout rate that occurs in every project. The focus group facility's staff is a valuable source for determining how difficult the project will be to recruit, and how many over-recruits are needed because they track participation levels.

Participation levels vary from market to market and by respondent segment types. For example, children have a high attendance rate, while young adult males have a high drop out rate.

It is important to remember that:

- over-recruit guidelines are "averages"
- over-recruits who show should be compensated
- over-recruiting means additional recruiting hours

Facility management must discuss the percentage of over-recruits with the client, during the bidding stage, as it affects project cost. It is best to first determine the minimum show rate that the client will accept and to use this in recommending the necessary number of respondents to recruit. Alert clients that they will have to pay an extra co-op/incentive to over-recruits that show but are not asked to participate.

Keep in mind that pre-qualified lists are most effective when the target population is extremely low in incidence, otherwise the list can make a job more difficult because of: outdated, inaccurate, or insufficient information (such as phone numbers).

Overage Rates

- **From data files:**

  — To get 12 to show - recruit 15
  — To get 10 to show - recruit 12
  — To get 8 to show - recruit 10

- **From client's list** (Respondent has no prior knowledge and client is not identified):

  — To get 12 to show - recruit 17
  — To get 10 to show - recruit 15
  — To get 8 to show - recruit 13

- **From client's list when client identified:**

  — To get 12 to show - recruit 15
  — To get 10 to show - recruit 12
  — To get 8 to show - recruit 10

- **From random dialing:**
  - — To get 12 to show - recruit 17
  - — To get 10 to show - recruit 15
  - — To get 8 to show - recruit 13

Managing Problems

While planning for the recruiting phase, tracking results are essential to minimizing problems, but they may still occur over the course of a project. Problems can be more easily overcome when facilities have good communication and problem resolution systems in place.

Start the communication process by sending the client a detailed cost estimate, along with a written confirmation letter outlining the study specifications that were received from the client. Ask the client for written recruitment instructions and to complete a research checklist that lists all the services the project requires.

(See Appendix A, pg. 92—Confirmation Letter; pg. 101—Qualitative Research Cost Sheet; pgs. 102–104—Recruitment Instructions; and pg. 105—Research Client Checklist.)

Communicate progress often; daily if problems are occurring.

- Prepare daily reports as specified by the client
- Alert client to current problems and anticipated problems
- Volunteer suggestions for solving the problems
- Secure client approval before making any changes
- Maintain a "hold" list of terminated respondents to review with client if difficulties arise

To ensure that the client is fully knowledgeable of the facility's standard operating procedures and policies, ask them to sign:

- a statement describing the facility's policy on holding space
- a service agreement

(The MRA/QRCA Joint Committee Task Forces are currently working on guidelines for contracts and agreements, as well as holds and cancellations. Examples of these documents will be available in the future.)

Suggestions for Solving Specific Types of Problems

- **Lower incidence than expected**
  - — Double check accuracy of numbers on reports
  - — Have numbers ready for client to calculate precise incidence rate
  - — Change study specifications or qualification requirements to achieve estimated incidence

— Re-estimate project based on increased incidence/recruiting costs
— Recruit fewer respondents

Additional suggestions are available by contacting MRA at 860-257-4008. Request a copy of *"Incidence Guidelines."*

- **Low acceptance/cooperation level**

  — Monitor recruiters and replace when appropriate
  — Review invitation wording and revise as necessary (with client approval)
  — Review reasons for rejections

    - On rare occasions it may be wise to reschedule for date conflicts with local community events, such as local trade shows, school graduations, etc.

  — Increase co-op/incentive amount
  — Seek permission to reveal client name

- **Heavy drop-out rate**

  — Replace with over-recruited "standbys"*
    - Consider adjusting recruiting fee when group is used

  — Waive recruiting and facility charges, or make up group at a later date if group is not used
  — Evaluate drop out rate by recruiter and determine if there is a correlation
  — Track reasons for dropping out
  — Contact no show to determine reason

*If incidence of qualified respondents is extremely low, and you are able to recruit more than the number of needed participants, it is often wise to ask two or three people to "stand by" in case you need them.

Hostess/ Qualitative Assistant Responsibilities

Facilities use various names to refer to staff who helps to ensure the smooth running of a focus group. These may include: hostess, qualitative assistant, QAs, facility guide, etc. These individuals make the moderator's job easier by being available to answer questions, and perform specific tasks. Providing a warm welcome to respondents and making sure they are comfortable goes a long way in respondents' receptivity to future groups.

For Respondents and Clients

- Greet clients and respondents by saying "Welcome to (Company Name)"

- Give brief tour – show amenities, focus room set-up, bathroom, supplies (as appropriate)
- Make sure respondents leave with a positive experience toward the research process by thanking them upon departure, saying "Thank you for sharing your opinions," "Have a nice day," "We appreciate your help today," etc.
- Conclude telephone calls by saying "Thank you for calling (Company Name)"

For Moderators

- Re-confirm videotape needs
- Ask if focus group room set-up is satisfactory
  - — Confirm number to be seated
  - — Check chair count
- For multiple groups, use assigned colored name card as a visual, and a loud voice to announce when group is ready
- Use proactive phrases like "Thank you for bringing that to my attention" or "I'll get right back to you with an answer," etc. (avoid "uh's")
- When necessary, reconfirm standard procedures for co-op/incentive, checking tapes, ordering food, etc. "It is standard procedure that we…"
- Ask moderator how you can help them
  - — Need for copying
  - — Inform them of respondent arrival count
  - — Take care of food needs – time, menu (follow up)
  - — Tell moderator where you will be located for additional needs

---

Pre-Research Support

It is the facility management's responsibility to support moderators once the facility has been booked for a research project.

Moderators and clients should be provided with information to assist in travel planning. This information can be mailed, faxed, downloaded from the facility's Web site, or made available in a guide.

- Provide travel instructions, including maps and facility parking instructions
- List ground transportation including price and availability options, i.e., taxi and rental cars
- Mention any major peak hour traffic or construction delays and suggest alternate routes
- Provide list of recommended restaurants, and hotels with room rates and proximity to facility and airport

- Suggest apparel appropriate for the city's climate, traffic tips and special traffic regulations, etc.

Requirements for test products or special equipment should also be discussed well in advance of the date of the focus groups.

- Obtain and safely secure test products or other materials needed for groups
- Materials should be identified with a code or project number, rather than the client's name
- Discuss special storage requirements such as refrigeration, product or display storage, etc
- Arrange for any specialized equipment

Part Two: Facility Set-Up and Management

SECTION 5

Location, Lighting and Layout

The physical layout of a facility sets the stage for the research project. A well-designed layout with appropriate amenities plays an important part in the qualitative research process. The facility should have certain services to meet the needs of the respondents and clients.

Selecting a Location

Location is a critical element when choosing a site for a focus group facility.

Accessibility

The site should:

- be convenient to major sources of transportation – airport, mass transit, cab service, interstate and major highways
- have adequate parking
- be within close proximity to restaurants and hotels

Safety

- Choose a safe and well-traveled area – day and night
- Make sure parking lots are well lit, attended, and in close proximity to the facility
- Make free parking part of lease negotiation for buildings with paid parking
- Evaluate building security
- Consider paying for your own after-hours security/client/respondent escort
- Signage should facilitate passage from parking lot to lobby of facility
- Lock outside facility doors to prevent disruption during groups
- Make sure rest rooms are clean and secure
- Post instructions for exiting the building in case of power failure, fire or other emergency

Design and Layout

General Considerations

Qualitative research typically calls for four parties to share space and work together in the facility: facility personnel, clients, consultants or moderators, and respondents. Clear delineation of facility space allows for smooth, successful interaction among these groups. On the other hand, many problems can result if the facility is poorly planned or contains inadequate working space. When evaluating designs, take time to consider:

- functionality
- comfort
- project confidentiality

When selecting a facility, a thorough examination of the focus and client rooms can alleviate costly mistakes. A smooth, non-congested flow and a quiet atmosphere are essential. Remember that any new or remodeled facility will have to conform to Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requirements. Some considerations are:

- provide separate entrances for each client group
- plan sufficient reception space to seat and rescreen waiting respondents, while paying and releasing another respondent group
- plan secure areas, away from clients and respondents, for handling or storing project materials
- use minimal decorating, light paint and color tones for walls and draperies
- name or number suites at entrances for easy identity
- provide separate phones and computer booths for clients at several locations throughout the facility
- provide area for refreshment for respondents
- many facilities, in densely populated areas, as well as in lower socio-economic areas, provide a separate space for supervisory services for children, the elderly and the disabled

---

Construction and Materials

Room design is critical to the quality of a facility.

Sound Absorption

Choose materials that will absorb sound:

- solid core doors over hollow-core
- use insulating materials around door edges and sweeps underneath the door
- use acoustic and soft materials for walls, ceilings, floor and furnishings; items can be easily tacked to soft materials
- avoid hard surfaces like plastics, metals and tile

Mirrors

To avoid respondent distraction, the one-way mirror used for viewing respondents during focus sessions should easily blend with the decor of the focus group room.

- Allow maximum visibility to all observers with no blind spots
- Glass separators should not interfere with viewing
- Double pane glass should be factory sealed and installed as one piece to avoid dirt and moisture getting between the mirror and glass
- An added layer of plate glass on the client viewing side will help to minimize noise
- To minimize viewing room reflection, tilt the top of the mirror toward the conference room
- To view the maximum number of respondents, locate the mirror on one of the short walls of a rectangular room
- Mirror location should take its height and width, and maximum viewing placement into consideration
- Follow manufacturer cleaning/care instructions to avoid scratches and permanent smears that can distort vision and impair videotaping

Sound Features

A clear, quality sound system requires that the sound feed is independent of the audio taping system.

- Locate volume controls so they are readily visible within the viewing room
- High noise activities should be located as far away as possible from group/viewing rooms
- Avoid using rooms adjacent to high traffic areas or noisy public facilities, such as a stadium or train station, for group/viewing areas
- Block sound by using double plated glass on windows and viewing mirrors
- Locate microphones and speaker systems away from air conditioning and ventilation ducts, as well as areas where they can pick up table scratching, taps and other extraneous sounds
- Install proper soundproofing to eliminate noise throughout the facility, i.e., group, viewing, and reception areas

Temperature Control

Comfortable temperatures make the focus group discussion a pleasant experience for all participants.

- Individual temperature controls are ideal for group and viewing rooms, as well as reception areas
- Give moderator ability to control temperature

- Air conditioning system must have sufficient capacity to cool a crowded room
- Quiet air conditioning systems are imperative
- Fans should be as quiet as possible
- Provide additional, independent A/C units (or stipulate in lease negotiations) if air conditioning is not available after normal business hours
- Provide proper ventilation for smoking (if permitted)
- Post instruction cards next to temperature controls

Lighting

Proper lighting provides a relaxing environment for the respondent and clients.

- **Focus Group Room**

  — Provide adequate lighting with a minimum of glare
  — Locate control switch near moderator
  — Use a combination of incandescent (floor and table lamps) and overhead fluorescent light
  — Install color-corrected fluorescent tubes to enhance light for videotaping

- **Observation Room**

  — Strategically place lighting outside entrance doors so it is not visible from focus group room
  — When using platforms, install cove lighting or white striping on steps for safety
  — Use subdued lighting so observers can take notes

The Focus Group/Discussion Room

A focus group session's success demands a room that is comfortable and conveys a non-threatening atmosphere.

- **Size**

  A rectangle shaped room is most common, as it is the easiest from which to videotape. The room should be large enough to comfortably accommodate 12 seated respondents and a moderator, and allow for ease of mobility.

- **Layout**

  Wall surfaces should tolerate pushpins and masking tape for exhibiting materials. A wall ledge is ideal for propping advertising posters and other items.

The arrangement of the table and chairs should allow for:

- adequate elbow room for respondents
- good eye contact between moderator and respondents
- easy viewing of the TV monitor, easel or displays
- good video camera views of faces and visuals
- ample tabletop space for moderator

- **Décor/Furniture**

The most productive focus group environments have minimal decorating and are neither too sterile nor too cluttered. The furniture, and its placement, should communicate a feeling of comfortable intimacy.

- Modular tables and storage units offer room layout flexibility
- Table should be proportionate to the size of the room
- Place table in area of room that allows for all respondents to be seen from observation room
- Use a rectangular or trapezoid shaped table that seats 12 respondents plus the moderator
- Table should be lightweight, moveable and adjustable to allow for small group "break-outs"
- Use comfortable, upright chairs (swivel chairs on casters)
- Provide special chair for moderators
- Use cabinets or closets for concealing office supplies, project materials and test products (can use tabletop with cloth to temporarily cover exhibits)
- Use a white board unit or wall-mounted cabinet

Client Observation Room and Lounge

The observation room should be a comfortable, confidential workplace for viewers while groups or interviews are in process.

- **Layout**

The observation room should be located adjacent to the focus group room to allow easy back and forth access. The room should comfortably seat 12–20 observers. A minimum of two levels of auditorium style seating provides for unobstructed viewing through the two-way mirror. The observation room should also contain:

- counters or small tables for note taking and room for food
- a separate moderator door
- Separate air conditioning and heating controls
- a clear, audible sound feed from the focus group room
- visible audio volume and lighting controls
- telephones and multiple modem lines for Internet access and laptop usage

In addition, a lounge or separate area can be designated for client private discussions and relaxation. This area should have a connecting door to the observation room. The area can contain reading materials, a small conference table, a stocked refrigerator, and a monitor for viewing the groups.

- **Décor/Furniture**
  - — Comfortable seating with taller stools or an elevated platform at rear of room
  - — Comfortable chairs (swivel with padded arms, often preferred)
  - — Tables for serving food and beverages
  - — Blacked-out windows
  - — Couches, exercise equipment and other amenities are options for either the focus group room or lounge area

Respondent Waiting Area

This room serves many purposes: reception/check-in, rescreening, and a place where respondents can wait until all participants have arrived or until the group begins. The waiting room should be:

- large enough to serve food and beverages, and make respondents comfortable
- out of view of the observation room or any entrance to that room
- out of sight and sound of other respondents

(See Appendix A, pgs. 106—107 for sample floor plans.)

SECTION 6

Systems, Equipment, and Maintenance

Technological advances in qualitative research have made many strides. Changes and improvements are made continuously; facilities need to be aware of these developments to maintain the competitive edge. Offering the best equipment and technology can assist in reaching a high standard in research.

Audio & Video Systems

Clients expect superior acoustics. Therefore, it is important to use an expert when selecting audio/video components and systems. Consult with an audio engineer when installing and/or renovating a sound system or maintaining the equipment. Non-professional installation can result in problems such as: interference from air conditioning, inadequate balance, low recording levels, fuzziness, and jamming.

Recommendations for audio and video systems:

- use equipment that minimizes operator error
- invest in high quality tape recorders, microphones and cameras, etc
- use two separate one-quarter inch audio tape/playback recording decks
- use separate microphones
- use a 21 inch, or larger, monitor on rolling stand
- locate all equipment away from participants, observers, and waiting respondents
- mount and position a stationary video camera with a wide-angle lens near ceiling so that all respondents around table can be captured
- have a battery-operated power unit available in case of power failure
- Provide permanently installed equipment for simultaneous foreign language transcriptions, as appropriate
- consult a professional on best lighting and background colors for maximum quality video output (Incandescent lighting is generally better, but increases room temperature.)
- locate a telephone near audio/video equipment to assist in problem-solving

---

Audio & Video Recording

If audio/videotapes are the only documentation of the research, high-quality audio and videotapes should be used, and safeguarded, as several individuals are dependent on these tapes for report preparation and reference.

While audio/video client needs should be determined during the focus group planning phase, always assume that, at a minimum, an audio recording will be required. Since this is the case, consider the following:

- stationary video set-up vs. need for technician for panning and close-ups
- special video time codes or a hook-up for client videotaping
- need for additional copies

Ongoing Maintenance

Audio and video equipment and tapes are especially susceptible to wear and tear.

- Periodically monitor audio and stationary video recordings for quality
- Clean and maintain all equipment on a regular basis
- Retain back-up tapes for a period of six months (industry standard), and erase them when this time period expires, unless other client arrangements have been made
- Clearly label all audio and videotapes with:
    - — facility name and full address
    - — client project code
    - — date
    - — city
    - — topic

Pre-Session Procedures

A pre-session equipment check should take place prior to each focus group session.

- Use test tape to check equipment allowing time for repairs
- Provide operator with written and verbal instructions for all components
- Provide operator with trouble-shooting checklist for rapid problem-solving
- Make sure operator is thoroughly trained in operating equipment
- Do not allow clients to monitor or adjust equipment
- Have repair service telephone numbers readily available in case of emergencies e.g., evenings, weekends
- Line up a trained video camera operator, in advance, for last minute requests (Do not allow inexperienced employees to operate camera.)

Wiring

Plan your electrical needs ahead of time to avoid complications with equipment.

- Provide several high-speed Internet access lines
- Use a pass-through between focus group and observation rooms for equipment wiring

---

PCs and Internet Access

Facilities need PCs, preferably with Internet access, for a variety of uses including:

- word processing
- database development and management
- e-mail
- Web access
- monitoring video streaming events in real time (if appropriate)

Internet access should be reasonably fast. Staff should be trained to get online themselves or to help a client get online using the facility's or the client's computer. Instructions should be posted near the PC for getting online.

Video Conferencing

Video conferencing is fast becoming an integral part of focus group viewing.

- Purchase a video conferencing system, i.e., Polycom, Tanberg, Sony, Vtel, Picture Tel, etc.
- Provide ISDN data lines – 64k or higher (384k – three ISDN lines – is the acceptable minimum)
- Technical expertise/back up necessary for technical interruptions
- Provide a camera with a live camera operator
- Conduct advance testing and be prepared for immediate troubleshooting at the facility and on client end
- Consider participating in a video conferencing network (shared cost/revenue formula) to get technical support, equipment standardization, sales and marketing

---

Video Streaming

The ability to view focus groups over the Internet is invaluable to clients.

- Must have a video and audio signal and computer to process signals on site
- Partner with a video streaming provider to set up Web pages and security, etc., so focus group can be viewed by client on the Internet
- A broadband connection (123k or higher) between facility's computer and provider

SECTION 7

Provisions and Other Services

Setting your services apart from others takes a determined effort. A facility's uniqueness sets it apart from other operations. Ensuring that your facility offers an array of amenities to meet client requests will take advance planning.

Food and Beverage Provisions

Most facilities include standard provisions for food and beverage service in their facility charge. Be sure to provide the client with a list of food service options prior to the group, so that the cost for any special considerations and requests can be negotiated.

A satisfactory meal should be served with minimal disruption. Serve respondent meals prior to the discussion unless client prefers otherwise.

- Make a variety of drinks and snacks available in both the focus group and observation rooms
- Serve observers, and executive, medical, and professional-level respondents with more variety and higher quality provisions than other respondents
  - — Use ceramic coffee mugs and non-plastic tableware
  - — Fresh milk or half-and-half instead of powdered non-dairy creamer
  - — Have hostess/qualitative assistant check-in frequently to fulfill any additional needs
- Avoid serving alcoholic beverages unless approved by client
- Avoid loud snacks like potato chips or food in cellophane wrappers in the focus group room
- Keep respondent and observer food separate
- Provide trash bins for food disposal in both the focus group and observation rooms

Provide clients with a list of restaurants, hotels and bars for late, after-group, meals and de-briefings. If a concierge service is available within the facility’s building, use it to accommodate hotel, restaurant, entertainment, workout and sightseeing needs.

Additional Supplies/ Equipment, and Service Requirements

Facility management is expected to meet a broad range of client requests. These requests can usually be accommodated by anticipating diverse research needs and advance planning.

Some of the items a facility personnel should be prepared to provide include supplies, equipment and services.

Supplies

- Sharp pencils and lined writing pad
- Large, sturdy pad and easels (27" x 32" or larger) with a solid back
- White boards, tack boards
- Marking pens in dark, high-visible colors
- Air bills and envelopes from major courier services
- Scissors, tape, pushpins, binder clips, paper clips, staplers, extra markers, sewing kits, safety pins
- Flashlights, candles and matches
- First aid kit
- Tableware, disposable and non-disposable, in neutral colors, for serving test products
- Envelopes for audio/video tapes and screeners

Equipment

- Microwave, refrigerator or freezer space
- Copier, fax, and computer
- Telephones for incoming calls
- Speaker phones
- Headsets (for note takers)
- Projector and screen
- Monitors in various sizes
- VCRs — 1/2" and 3/4"

Services

- Office personnel – note taker, typist, translator and other clerical help
- Special messenger and delivery services

Appendix A

TALLY SHEET

STUDY NAME: ____________________		STUDY # ____________
CITY: ____________	INTERVIEWER: ____________	HOURS WORKED: ______ TO: ______
You are to record the result of each respondent contact by making hash marks in the appropriate box. (~~////~~ //)		

	TOTALS
No Answer/Answering Machine	
Disconnect/Wrong #/Busy	
Language Barrier (hard-of-hearing, no English, etc.)	
Terminate Q. 1	
Terminate Q. 2	
Terminate Q. 3	
Terminate Q. 4	
Qualified respondent refuses to participate in this survey	
Respondent terminates during interview	
Respondent agrees to participate	

TOOTHPASTE SCREENER

RESPONDENT NAME: ______________________________

ADDRESS: ______________________________

CITY: ____________________ STATE: ________ ZIP: ____________

TELEPHONE: (WORK) ____________________(HOME) ____________________

DATE RECRUITED: ____________________ RECRUITED BY: ____________________

CONFIRMED BY: ____________________ DATE CONFIRMED: ____________________

Hello, my name is ____________________ calling from (INSERT RESEARCH COMPANY NAME), a local marketing research company. We are doing a short survey about toothpaste and would like to include your opinions, which could make a difference in the products being offered to you as a consumer. My questions will only take a few minutes.

1. How would you describe your role in purchasing toothpaste for your household? Would you say you: (READ LIST)

		CIRCLE ONE	
	Are the primary purchaser of toothpaste in your household	1	⇒ (CONTINUE)
	Share toothpaste purchasing equally with another family member	2	
OR	**Does another household member do most of the toothpaste purchasing**	3	⇒ (ASK TO SPEAK TO PRIMARY PURCHASER. SCHEDULE CALLBACK IF NEEDED)
(DO NOT READ)	**Don't know/can't say**	4	⇒ (THANK AND TERMINATE)

TOOTHPASTE SCREENER

2. When was the last time that you personally purchased toothpaste? (DO NOT READ)

	CIRCLE ONE	
Within past week/1 to 6 days ago	1	⇒ (CONTINUE)
1 week up to 2 weeks ago/7 to 13 days ago	2	
2 weeks up to 3 weeks ago/14 to 20 days ago	3	
3 weeks up to 4 weeks ago/21 to 27 days ago	4	
4 weeks or 1 month ago/28 to 30 days ago	5	
Over 1 month up to 3 months ago/31 to 90 days ago	6	⇒ (THANK AND TERMINATE)
More than 3 months ago/more than 90 days ago	7	
Don't know/can't remember	8	

3. Thinking about the last 4 times that you have purchased toothpaste, which brand of toothpaste did you buy most often? (DO NOT READ)

		CIRCLE ONE	
	Arm & Hammer	1	NOTE: USER GROUP SHOULD BE PRIMARILY CODE 4. NON-USER GROUP CANNOT HAVE CODE 4 AND SHOULD INCLUDE A MIX OF OTHER BRANDS
	Close Up	2	
	Colgate	3	
	Crest	4	
	Pepsodent	5	
	Tom's of Maine	6	
	Ultra-Brite	7	
	Other (SPECIFY) ______________________		
	Don't know	8	⇒ (SKIP TO Q.5)
	Varies	9	

TOOTHPASTE SCREENER

4. Of the last 4 times you have purchased toothpaste, how many times have you purchased ________________________________ (INSERT RESPONSE FROM Q.3)?

		CIRCLE ONE	
	One	1	⇒ (IF CODE 4 IN Q.3, THANK AND TERMINATE)
	Two	2	⇒ (QUALIFIES FOR USER GROUP IF CODE 4 IN Q.3)
	Three	3	
	Four	4	⇒ (QUALIFIES FOR USER GROUP IF CODE 4 IN Q.3. SKIP TO Q.7)
	Don't know/remember	5	⇒ (THANK AND TERMINATE)

5. What other brands of toothpaste have you purchased in your last four purchases? (DO NOT READ)

		CIRCLE ALL MENTIONS	
	Arm & Hammer	1	
	Close Up	2	
	Colgate	3	
	Crest	4	⇒ (CONTINUE)
	Pepsodent	5	
	Tom's of Maine	6	
	Ultra-Brite	7	
	Other (SPECIFY) ________________________________		
	Don't know/can't remember	8	⇒ (THANK AND TERMINATE)
	Varies	9	

TOOTHPASTE SCREENER

6. And how many times have you purchased ___________________________________? (ASK FOR EACH BRAND NAMED IN Q.5. ANSWERS FROM Q.4 AND Q.6 MUST SUM TO 4. PROBE AS NEEDED TO OBTAIN PROPER SUM.)

		RECORD NUMBER OF TIMES FOR EACH	
	Arm & Hammer	_______	⇒ (IF 1, THANK AND TERMINATE. IF 2-4 RECRUIT FOR USER GROUP)
	Close Up	_______	
	Colgate	_______	
	Crest	_______	
	Pepsodent	_______	
	Tom's of Maine	_______	
	Ultra-Brite	_______	
	Other (SPECIFY) ______________________	_______	
	— ______________________________	_______	

NOTE: *TO QUALIFY FOR USER GROUP, MUST HAVE 2 OR MORE FOR CREST IN Q.4 OR Q.6. NON-USERS MUST NOT NAME CREST IN Q.3 OR Q.5.*

7. In the last year, have you ever purchased: (READ LIST FOR EACH BRAND NOT NAMED IN Q. 3 OR Q.5)

	CIRCLE ONE NUMBER PER ROW		
	Yes	**No**	**DK**
Colgate	1	2	3
Pepsodent	1	2	3
Crest	1	2	3
	⇓ (MUST BE CIRCLED TO QUALIFY FOR NON-USER GROUP)		

TOOTHPASTE SCREENER

8a. Do you have any negative feelings toward any of the following brands or companies? (READ LIST)

	CIRCLE ONE NUMBER PER ROW Yes	 No
Colgate	1	2
Pepsodent	1	2
Crest	1	2
	⇓ (CONTINUE BUT DO NOT RECRUIT WITHOUT DISCUSSING WITH SUPERVISOR)	⇓ (SKIP TO Q.9)

8b. Please explain your negative feelings about Crest. (PROBE AND CLARIFY FULLY)

____

____

____

9. To ensure that we have a broad cross-section of respondents, please tell me which of the following categories includes your age. (READ LIST)

		CIRCLE ONE	
	Less than 25 years	1	⇒ (THANK AND TERMINATE)
	25 to 34	2	⇒ (RECRUIT A MIX)
	35 to 44	3	
	45 to 54	4	
	55 to 64	5	
	65 or older	6	⇒ (THANK AND TERMINATE)
(Do Not Read)	**Refused**	7	

TOOTHPASTE SCREENER

10a. To ensure we have a broad cross section, please tell me which of the following categories you identify with most strongly. Are you: (READ LIST)

		<u>**CIRCLE**</u>
	White or Caucasian	1
	Black or African-American	2
	American Indian or Alaskan Native	3
	Asian	4
	Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander	5
OR	**Part of some other ethnic group (PLEASE SPECIFY)** ___________________	6
(Do Not Read)	**Refused**	7

10b. And, are you of Hispanic origin? (DO NOT READ)

	<u>**CIRCLE**</u>	
Yes	1	⇒ (CONTINUE)
No	2	⇒ (GO TO Q.11)
Refused	3	⇒ (GO TO Q.11)

10c. Please tell me which of the following categories you identify with most strongly. Are you: (READ LIST)

		<u>**CIRCLE**</u>
	Mexican	1
	Puerto Rican	2
	Cuban	3
	Part of some other Hispanic origin (PLEASE SPECIFY) ___________________	4
(Do Not Read)	**Refused**	5

TOOTHPASTE SCREENER

11. Do you have any children under the age of 18 living in your household?

		CIRCLE	
	Yes	1	⇒ (RECRUIT 6)
	No	2	⇒ (RECRUIT 6)

12. Interviewer: RECORD GENDER; DO NOT ASK

		CIRCLE	
	Male	1	⇒ (RECRUIT 3-4)
	Female	2	⇒ (RECRUIT 8-9)

13a. Are you currently employed or have you ever been employed in: (READ LIST)

	CIRCLE ONE Yes	 No
An advertising agency, public relations firm or marketing research company	1	2
A company that produces, distributes or sells toothpaste	1	2
Dental health such as in a dentist's office	1	2
	⇓ (IF ANY CIRCLE IN BOX, THANK AND TERMINATE)	

TOOTHPASTE SCREENER

13b. Is a member of your immediate family currently employed or been employed in the past 2 years in: (READ LIST)

	CIRCLE ONE Yes	No
An advertising agency, public relations firm or marketing research company	1	2
A company that produces, distributes or sells toothpaste	1	2
Dental health such as in a dentist's office	1	2
	⇓ (IF ANY CIRCLE IN BOX, THANK AND TERMINATE)	

14a. It is sometimes important to talk to people who have participated in past opinion studies because they have experience talking about certain topics. At other times, it is important to talk with people who have never participated in an opinion study. Often we are looking for a mix of different experiences. What type of marketing research experiences, if any, have you participated in during the past year? (DO NOT READ)

		CIRCLE ALL MENTIONS	
	In-person interview	1	⇒ (SKIP TO Q.15 UNLESS CODE 8 IS CIRCLED)
	Mall intercept	2	
	Product placement with follow-up interview	3	
	Theater test for advertising	4	
	Taste test	5	
	Phone survey	6	
	Internet survey	7	
	Group interview or discussion group	8	⇒ (CONTINUE)
	Other (SPECIFY) ______________________		
	None		⇒ (SKIP TO Q.15)

TOOTHPASTE SCREENER

14b. When was the last time you participated in a group interview with two or more participants? (RECORD)

____________________ **Months**	⇒ (IF 6 MONTHS OR LESS, THANK AND TERMINATE)

14c. What are the topics of all the group interviews that you have participated in during the past year? (PROBE FULLY)

____

____

____

IF RELATED TO TOOTHPASTE OR DENTAL CARE,
THANK AND TERMINATE

15. Next I'm going to read you a few statements. Please tell me how well each describes you by saying whether it describes you very well, pretty well, not too well or not at all. The first statement is: (READ LIST)

	CIRCLE ONE NUMBER PER ROW				
	Very Well	**Pretty Well**	**Not Too Well**	**Not At All Well**	
I enjoy discussing new ideas	4	3	2	*1*	
I am open about expressing my thoughts around strangers	4	3	2	*1*	⇒ (THANK AND TERMINATE)
I consider myself to be creative	4	3	2	*1*	
I am a good listener	4	3	2	*1*	
I'm usually the first among my friends to try something new	4	3	2	*1*	
	⇓ (MUST HAVE AT LEAST 2 CIRCLES IN BOX TO CONTINUE)				

TOOTHPASTE SCREENER

16. Please tell me what it is about your favorite brand of toothpaste that makes you prefer it over other brands. (RECORD ANSWER VERBATIM. PROBE AND CLARIFY FULLY.)

____

____

____

____

____

- **ANY SCREENER WITHOUT AN ANSWER DOES NOT QUALIFY**
- **IF RESPONDENT IS UNABLE OR UNWILLING TO GIVE AN ANSWER, THANK AND TERMINATE**
- **IF RESPONDENT HAS HEAVY ACCENT OR CANNOT MAKE THEMSELVES CLEARLY UNDERSTOOD, THANK AND TERMINATE**
- **IF RESPONDENT ONLY GIVES ONE OR TWO WORD ANSWERS AND IS UNWILLING OR UNABLE TO ELABORATE ON MEANING, THANK AND TERMINATE**

Product/Service Category/Brand Usage Questions

- DO use open-ended questions when seeking "most often" or "top of mind" behaviors.
  - Example:
    - What are your three favorite brands of________________________?
    - What type of ____________________ do you use most often?
    - When did you last purchase ____________________?
    - What do you like least about ____________________?

The answers to open-ended questions represent partial lists of all potential responses.

- DO NOT ask open-ended questions to identify behaviors or products that occur infrequently. When looking for "non-users" it is critical to use an aided question (e.g., Do you ever use any of the following brands of _________________________?) (READ LIST)
- DO NOT ask self-rating questions or if you do, use them in conjunction with an open-ended question that enables a supervisor to assess how an individual's view of themselves compares to others in the group that have rated themselves similarly.
  - Example:
    - If you are looking for "fitness fanatics" who must rate an eight, nine, or 10 on a 10-point scale follow-up with a question like "How often do you workout?" or "What do you do?" It will quickly become apparent that some of the sixes are doing more than some nines.
- DO ask consumers to bring proof/evidence to the phone if possible/applicable (e.g., product, bill, directory, etc.); if not possible ask product/brand usage questions again at the end of the screener to confirm.
- DO ask the facility to buy all brands in the category if possible so recruiters can tell by respondents' description if it is the correct brand.
- DO be specific rather than vague about usage frequency.
  - Example:

    How often do you use ________________? (READ LIST)

	CIRCLE ONE
Once a week or more often	1
Two or three times a month	2
Once a month	3
Less often than once a month	4

VERSUS

	CIRCLE ONE
Frequently	1
Sometimes	2
Rarely	3
Never	4

Product/Service Category/Brand Usage Questions

- DO ask a question to ensure that respondents are not extremely negative toward the study product/service or involved in litigation against the company (unless the purpose of the study is to understand reasons for extreme negative opinions).
  - **Example:**

1. Do you have negative feelings toward any of the following brands/companies? (READ LIST)

	CIRCLE ONE Yes	No
Brand/company XXX	1	2
Brand/company XXX	1	2
Brand/company XXX	1	2
	⇓ (IF YES, CONTINUE)	⇓ (IF NO, SKIP TO Q.___)

2. Please explain your negative feelings toward (INSERT BRAND/COMPANY). (PROBE AND CLARIFY FULLY)

____

____

3. Do you currently or have you ever had legal proceedings pending against the following brands/companies?

	CIRCLE ONE Yes	No
Brand/company XXX	1	2
Brand/company XXX	1	2
Brand/company XXX	1	2
	⇓ (IF YES, PROCEED TO Q.____)	⇓ (CONTINUE)

Demographic Questions

Purpose: The target market for a product/service or communications program is often defined, in part, by demographics. Therefore, as qualitative researchers, we must screen prospective respondents by such variables as gender, age, income, geography, marital status, family status, etc., to ensure that study participants are most representative of the target markets identified by our clients.

- DO use a transition sentence to introduce demographic questions to put respondents at ease and help them understand why certain questions are being asked, i.e.,
  - **Now, I'd like to ask you some questions for statistical purposes only...**

OR

  - **To ensure that we have a broad cross section can you tell me...?**

- DO use multiple answer categories rather than yes, no or other bi-polar responses because it makes it more difficult for the respondent to guess what answer is being sought.

- DO use exclusive (no overlapping) answer categories so that recruiters will not have trouble determining where to put respondents' answers.

  - **Example:**

    To ensure that we have a broad cross section, please tell me which of the following categories includes your age? (READ LIST)

	CIRCLE ONE
Less than 25 years of age	1
25 to 34	2
35 to 44	3
45 to 54	4
55 to 64	5
65 years of age or older	6

VERSUS

	CIRCLE ONE
Less than 25 years of age	1
25 to 34	2
34 to 44	3
44 to 54	4
54 to 64	5
65 years of age or older	6

Demographic Questions

- DO use exclusive (no overlapping) answer categories so that recruiters will not have trouble determining where to put respondents' answers.

1. Do you have negative feelings toward any of the following brands/companies? (READ LIST)

	CIRCLE ONE PER ROW	
	Yes	No
Brand/company XXX	1	1
Brand/company XXX	2	2
Brand/company XXX	3	3
	⇓ (IF YES, CONTINUE)	⇓ (IF NO, SKIP TO Q.___)

- DO provide THANK AND TERMINATE instructions.
- DO ask for specific demographic quotas if they are needed, since the term "Recruit A Mix" may not necessarily ensure that every answer category will be represented (see below).
- DO ask race/ethnicity in multiple parts using the 2000 census question series as a guide

1a. To ensure we have a broad cross section, please tell me which of the following categories you identify with most strongly.
Are you: (READ LIST)

		CIRCLE
	White or Caucasian	1
	Black or African-American	2
	American Indian or Alaskan Native	3
	Asian	4
	Native Hawaiian and other **Pacific Islander**	5 6
OR	**Part of some other racial group (PLEASE SPECIFY)** ___________________	7
(Do Not Read)	**Refused**	

Demographic Questions

1b. And, are you of Hispanic origin? (DO NOT READ)

	CIRCLE	
Yes	1	⇒ (CONTINUE)
No	2	⇒ (SKIP TO Q.__)
Refused	3	

1c. Please tell me which of the following categories you identify with most strongly. Are you: (READ LIST)

		CIRCLE
	Mexican	1
	Puerto Rican	2
	Cuban	3
OR	**Part of some other Hispanic origin**	4

- DO ask demographics using a single question whenever possible as opposed to multiple questions. Be brief and use language that is simple and easy to understand.
  - **Example:**

    To ensure that we have a broad cross section, which of the following categories includes your age? (READ LIST)

		CIRCLE ONE	
	Less than 25 years	1	⇒ (PROCEED TO Q.____)
	25 to 34	2	⇒ (RECRUIT 6 TO 7)
	35 to 44		
	45 to 54	3	⇒ (RECRUIT 6 TO 7)
	55 to 64	4	
	65 or older	5	⇒ (PROCEED TO Q.____)
(Do Not Read)	**Refused**	6	

OR

To ensure that we have a broad cross section, can you please tell me your age? ________________ (RECRUITER, RECORD EXACT AGE ON LINE)

OR

To ensure that we have a broad cross section, can you please tell me in what year you were born? ______________ (RECRUITER, RECORD YEAR ON LINE)

VERSUS

To ensure we have a broad cross section, are you under 45 years of age or 45 years of age or older? (RESPONDENT SAYS UNDER 45 YEARS OF AGE)

Recruiter then has to ask: **Is that 35 to 44 years of age or under 35 years of age? (RESPONDENT SAYS UNDER 35 YEARS OF AGE)**

Recruiter then asks: **Is that 25 to 34 years of age or under 25 years of age?**

- DO ask the facility to double check the respondent's age against database information if the recruit is a database recruit.
- DO ensure that your lower and upper income answer categories reflect the incomes in the selected geographic area.
- DO specify geographic area mixes desired either by county, zip codes or whatever other geographic designation is pertinent/preferred.
- DO ask education if it is believed that income alone is not enough to identify the type of respondent that matches the target market of interest to the client.
- DO include one or two unnecessary answer categories, particularly for income and education, even if they represent a THANK & TERMINATE answer category so that respondents do not lie/cheat to avoid the embarrassment of falling into what they perceive to be the least desirable answer category.

Demographic Questions

- **Example:**

  What level of education have you completed? (READ LIST)

		CIRCLE ONE	
	Grade school graduate	1	⇒ (PROCEED TO Q.____)
	Some high school	2	
	A high school or equivalency degree	3	
	Vocational school	4	
	Some college	5	
	College degree	6	
	Some graduate work	7	
	Graduate degree	8	
(Do Not Read)	**Refused**	9	⇒ (PROCEED TO Q.____)

- DO consider asking a few psychographic questions or attitudinal questions using semantic differential scales or open-ended questions if demographics alone will not identify the target market for the product and only if absolutely necessary.

  - **Example:**

    When it comes to adopting new technologies, using any number on a scale from 1 to 7 where 1 is very open and 7 is very cautious, what number describes you best?

VERY OPEN						VERY CAUTIOUS
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

OR

Please describe your philosophy on adopting new technologies. (PROBE AND CLARIFY FULLY)

_ _

_ _

_ _

Demographic Questions

- DO clarify family status questions based on project needs/specifications.
  - If you are looking for households with children, be sure to differentiate between children under 18 living at home, children 18 or older living at home, children 18 or older living away from home.
  - Specify the number of days per week the children live in the home to determine extent of parental responsibility (this may impact buying behavior).
- DO ask specific job title/occupation to classify respondents by white collar, blue collar, gray collar, pink collar jobs, rather than having respondents classify themselves. Provide agency with a list or examples, to assist in definitions, especially between gray and pink.
- DO ask employment status if it is important to have working and non-working individuals. Answer categories might include:
  - Working full time outside the home
  - Working part-time outside the home
  - Working full time in a home-based business
  - Working part time in a home-based business
  - Student
  - Full time homemaker
  - Not currently employed
- DO ask respondents to describe their occupation. If the study is a database recruit, have facility management check responses against database information to check for accuracy before updates are forwarded to you.
- DO ask the facility management to inform you of any discrepancies between a respondent's answers and the database information.
- DO NOT apply rigid market statistics on demographic characteristics for focus group recruitment specifications in order to replicate the market (e.g., 20% of the market is 25 to 34 years of age, so two to three respondents must be 25 to 34 years of age).
- DO NOT assume facility personnel will automatically screen for demographics that are not asked on the screener (e.g., if it is important to have a mix of respondents by race/ethnicity, be sure a question on racial/ethnic identity is included on the screener).
- DO NOT ask sensitive demographic questions like age, income, race at the beginning of a screener, if at all possible. This is especially important if the recruit is from a list or non-database source. Rather, place these questions at the end of the screener because they are typically least interesting to respondents and most sensitive or personal.
- DO NOT ask gender unless absolutely necessary. Typically, the gender of the respondent can be determined either by looking at database information or by voice quality.

Occupation/Security Questions

Purpose: The purpose of this type of questioning is to determine if the respondent has an unrepresentative level of experience in the topic area that would place them in the position of being considered, by himself/herself or the other respondents, to be an "authority" on the subject. Additionally, these questions are used to determine if any of the participants might pose a threat to client confidentiality if information discussed in the research is shared with others. Finally, compare responses to database information, if available, to check for honest, accurate representation.

- DO ask questions about occupation close-ended and early in the screener and, as a double-check (if desired), open-ended questions near the end of the screener.
- DO ask about employment of other members in the household, not just the spouse, if security is a significant concern.
- DO NOT combine thoughts into a single question (e.g., "Are you or a member of your household…").
- DO add other industries to the security screen if it is desirable to keep the topic of the research study confidential until the discussions are underway. (TIP: Bold type may make it easier for a recruiter to spot the disqualifying industries.)
- DO consider asking for a "Yes" or "No" format to require respondents to more carefully consider their responses to each question.

  - **Example of close-ended series (can be placed early in the screener):**

    1a. Are you currently employed in any of the following types of businesses or occupations? (READ LIST)

	CIRCLE ONE PER ROW		
	Yes		**No**
Advertising agency, marketing and/or marketing research company	1	⇒ (PROCEED TO Q.___)	2
Bank or other financial institution	1		2
Telecommunications company	1		2
Public utility, like the electric, gas or water company	1	⇒ (PROCEED TO Q.___)	2

Occupation/Security Questions

1b. Have you ever been employed or been trained in any of the following types of businesses or occupations? (READ LIST)

	CIRCLE ONE PER ROW		
	Yes		No
Advertising agency, marketing and/or marketing research company	1	⇒ (PROCEED TO Q.___)	2
Bank or other financial institution	1		2
Telecommunications company	1		2
Public utility, like the electric, gas or water company	1	⇒ (PROCEED TO Q.___)	2

1c. Is a close friend or any member of your immediate family currently employed in any of the following types of businesses or occupations? (READ LIST)

	CIRCLE	
Advertising agency, marketing and/or marketing research company	1	⇒ (PROCEED TO Q.___)
Bank or other financial institution	2	
Telecommunications company	3	
Public utility, like the electric, gas or water company	4	⇒ (PROCEED TO Q.___)

Occupation/Security Questions

- DO ask both about the individual's job responsibilities and the industry in which the company participates in order to have a better understanding of their suitability as a respondent.
- DO consider using the individual's answer to the occupation questions as an articulation question.
  - **Example:**

    1a. I'd like to understand what type of work you do for a living?

    1b. What are your job responsibilities?

    1c. What type of business is that?

    2a. I'd like to understand the type of work your spouse (or other household members) does for a living?

    2b. What are their job responsibilities?

    2c. What type of business is that?

Past Participation Questions

Purpose: Questions about past participation help us identify individuals who have become what are commonly classified as "professional respondents." These individuals have done so many groups that they may be too familiar with the research process and may no longer represent the type of consumers we strive to include in our research.

- DO ask the respondents the qualifying questions in a way that will not provide a clue to the answer that you are looking for.
- DO be sure that the respondent understands that these questions relate to focus group studies that they have participated in anywhere – not just those conducted at this facility. (Note: Some might also want to exclude those who have participated in many other types of research such as in-depths, taste tests, mall intercepts, and phone surveys.)
- DO ask the question using language that is familiar to the potential respondent who has not participated in this type of study.
- DO use a combination of open-ended and close-ended questions to better understand the extent of their experience as a respondent.
- DO base disqualification on number of times participated in interviews, timing of most recent participation and/or topic of discussion.
- DO ask if they are currently scheduled to do any interviews so that those can be added to the quota and/or time frame.
- DO place the qualification question near the end of the screener and allow the interviewer a space to enter the amount of time since their last participation so that "near-miss" respondents who have qualified on the remaining parts of the screener can be recalled if necessary.

Past Participation Questions

- **Example of past participation questions:**

1a. It is sometimes important to talk with people who have participated in previous research because they have experience talking about certain topics. At other times, it is important to talk with people who have never participated in an opinion study. Often we are looking for a mix of different experiences. What type of opinion studies, if any, have you ever participated in? (DO NOT READ LIST)

	CIRCLE ALL MENTIONS	
One-on-one in-person depth interview	1	⇒ (SKIP TO Q.1d)
Group interview with two or more participants	2 3	⇒ (CONTINUE WITH Q.1b)
Mock-jury or trial	4	
Product placement test with a follow-up interview	5	
Mall interview	6	⇒ (SKIP TO Q.1d)
Taste test	7	
Phone survey **Other (SPECIFY)** ________________	8	
None	9	⇒ (SKIP TO Q.1d)

1b. When was the last time you participated in a:

Group interview with two or more participants...	**(INSERT # OF MONTHS)** ________________

INSERT ANOTHER TYPE OF RESEARCH YOU MIGHT CONSIDER APPROPRIATE...	**(INSERT # OF MONTHS)** ________________

Past Participation Questions

1c. What were the topics of all of the group interviews in which you have participated?

____

____

1d. Are you currently scheduled to participate in any type of marketing research study?

	CIRCLE	
Yes	1	⇒ (PROCEED TO Q.___)
No	2	⇒ (CONTINUE)

Articulation, Responsiveness, Sensitive Topics and Creativity

ARTICULATION

Purpose: The intent is not to screen out consumers whose opinions we value, but to help increase the chance that those respondents who participate in our studies can clearly communicate their thoughts to others, although this does not necessarily predict a person's ability to communicate in a group environment.

- DO ask the articulation question as a part of the normal screening process, using open-ended questions that pertain to the screener or topic at hand:
  - Employment: What are your job responsibilities?
  - Product Usage: Tell me about the last time you used this type of product.
- DO NOT confuse articulation with creativity: they are often two separate issues.
- DO be specific in describing to recruiters what an "articulate" person means to you.
  - **Example:**

    1. **You indicated that you are employed by ______________________________. What do you like best about your job? (PROBE AND CLARIFY FULLY)**

       ____

       ____

Articulation, Responsiveness, Sensitive Topics and Creativity

RESPONSIVENESS

Purpose: Respondents who are comfortable sharing ideas in a group setting are more likely to be active participants in our research.

- DO assess potential respondent's comfort in discussing ideas with others.
- DO NOT assume that just because we, as moderators, love to share opinions, that others will feel as comfortable doing so.

  - **Example:**

  1. I'm going to read you a few statements. After I read each one, I'd like you to tell me whether or not it describes you "very well," "pretty well," "not too well" or "not at all?"

	CIRCLE ONE NUMBER PER ROW			
	Very Well	**Pretty Well**	**Not Too Well**	**Not At All Well**
I enjoy discussing new ideas	4	3	2	1
I am open about expressing my thoughts around strangers	4	3	2	1
I am open about expressing my thoughts around people I know	4	3	2	1
I'm a good listener	4	3	2	1
	⇓ (MUST RESPOND VERY/PRETTY WELL TO THE SECOND STATEMENT AND TO AT LEAST 1 OF THE OTHER STATEMENTS)		⇓ (IF THEY RESPOND "NOT TOO WELL" OR "NOT AT ALL" TO MORE THAN 2 STATEMENTS, PROCEED TO Q.___)	

Articulation, Responsiveness, Sensitive Topics and Creativity

SENSITIVE TOPICS

Purpose: We are often asked to interview respondents about topics that may be considered extremely "personal," such as medical conditions and/or lifestyle topics. At the same time, it is often important to make respondents aware that they will be participating in a discussion with others who have similar experiences and/or that they will be asked to share their opinions on a specific topic.

- **Example:**

  Not every respondent, in spite of your best efforts to create a comfortable environment, will want to discuss their attitudes about religion, politics and/or sex in a group setting.

  A gay respondent quickly discovers during the warm-up that everyone else in the group is gay — a lifestyle that he had yet to reveal even to his employer.

  A mother, having recently lost her child to cancer, is not yet ready to share her experiences with other mothers of young children.

- DO order the qualifying questions so that respondents who may find the line of questioning offensive can be terminated before more sensitive questions are asked.

  - **Example:**

    1. Which of the following best describes your lifestyle:

	CIRCLE	
Heterosexual	1	⇒ (PROCEED TO Q.__)
Gay	2	
Lesbian	3	

- DO inform respondents, if appropriate, that they will be participating in a group discussion with other respondents who may share similar lifestyle, religious or political beliefs.

  - **Example:**

    Invitation: I would like to invite you to join in a discussion about (INSERT SENSITIVE TOPIC). Would you be willing to participate in a group discussion with other people who have had similar life experiences?

Articulation, Responsiveness, Sensitive Topics and Creativity

CREATIVITY

Purpose: These questions are used most often when it is important that those participating in the research study possess the aptitude for coming up with new ideas and/or reacting to ideas that are on the cutting edge. While many moderators like to use these types of questions, others believe that all consumers, when placed in a comfortable environment, have the necessary skills. Nevertheless, this handbook is provided to aid those who are interested in identifying "creative" consumers via the screening process.

- DO ask open-ended and close-ended questions that allow for self-expression.
- DO ask close-ended questions that allow for self-evaluation and to assess the respondent's level of taking risks in a group setting.
- DO provide the interviewer with specific instructions about what you are looking for in a respondent since he/she is often asked to use judgement in deciding if the respondent qualifies.
- DO review open-ends and make decisions jointly with facility management about whether or not a respondent qualifies based on creativity.
- DO consider using a "homework" assignment as a creativity tool
- DO understand that lengthy, open-ended questions add to the time required to conduct an interview and may add to the cost per recruit.
- DO include instructions that tell recruiters the purpose of a creativity question. Specify how you define qualified respondents.
- DO include recruiting instructions if a respondent answers "don't know," "this is stupid," "I can't think of anything," to a creative question.
- DO NOT ask questions that are out of sync with other topics addressed in the screener and/or everyday life (e.g., "Tell me 10 things you could do with a paper clip.")

  - **Examples of open-ended questions:**

    1. **If you could invite a famous person to dinner, living or dead, real or fictitious, who would you invite? What would you serve? What would you talk about?**
    2. **If you could be any animal, which one would you be? Why? What would you do?**
    3. **Tell me about the best trick that you've ever played on someone.**
    4. **Tell me about a book or movie that made you laugh out loud.**

Articulation, Responsiveness, Sensitive Topics and Creativity

- **Examples of close-ended questions:**

1. **I'm going to read you a few statements. After I read each one, I'd like you to tell me whether or not it describes you "very well," "pretty well," "not too well" or "not at all?"**

	CIRCLE ONE NUMBER PER ROW			
	Very Well	**Pretty Well**	**Not Too Well**	**Not At All Well**
I enjoy discussing new ideas*	4	3	2	1
I am open about expressing my thoughts around strangers*	4	3	2	1
I am open about expressing my thoughts around people I know*	4	3	2	1
I'm a good listener*	4	3	2	1
I enjoy/enjoyed participating in brainstorming sessions at work or when I was in school	4	3	2	1
I enjoy coming up with new ideas	4	3	2	1
I consider myself creative and imaginative	4	3	2	1
I tend to be willing to change old habits	4	3	2	1
I have good ideas	4	3	2	1
I'm usually the first among my friends to try something new (movies, clothes, restaurants, foods)	4	3	2	1
* These questions are often used for articulation, as well.	⇓ (MUST RESPOND "VERY WELL" OR "PRETTY WELL" TO THE SECOND STATEMENT AND AT LEAST 6 OF THE OTHER STATEMENTS)		⇓ (IF THEY RESPOND "NOT VERY" OR "NOT AT ALL" TO MORE THAN 2 STATEMENTS, PROCEED TO Q.___)	

Articulation, Responsiveness, Sensitive Topics and Creativity

- **Other Techniques That Have Proven To Be Effective:**

  — Over-recruit and personally interview each respondent upon arrival.

  — Ask respondents to complete a creative assignment (e.g., collage related to topic, an insightful diary, some written personal insights, etc.) and select respondents for participation based on the work they have produced.

Invitation

Thank you for taking the time to answer our questions. As I mentioned earlier, we are conducting marketing research regarding toothpaste and would like to include your opinions. In order to hear them first-hand, we are conducting an informal, round-table discussion. As part of the group discussion, participants will be given a number of written materials to read and asked to write down their reactions. Do you feel comfortable with this?

	CIRCLE	
Yes	1	⇒ (CONTINUE)
No	2	⇒ THANK AND TERMINATE)

The discussion will be held on _________________ (INSERT DATE) at (6:00/8:00) p.m. and will last about 2 hours. No one will attempt to sell you anything, and no one will call you as a result of your participation. As a token of our appreciation for your help in our research effort, you will receive a cash gift of $___ (INSERT AMOUNT) at the time of the meeting. I am confident that you will enjoy the exchange of information and find it valuable as well. This is an important research effort, and we hope that you will be part of it. Because of limited space, we are only inviting about a dozen people. Can we schedule your participation?

	CIRCLE	
Yes	1	⇒ (GIVE DIRECTIONS)
No	2	⇒ (THANK AND TERMINATE)

Confirmation Letter

Dear ______________________:

Thank you for agreeing to participate in our research project. We appreciate your time and know that you will find it interesting and rewarding.

Your attendance is critical to the success of this project. You were specifically chosen to be part of this study to share your opinions and to represent the opinions of others with similar backgrounds and views, therefore this invitation is non-transferable.

Please arrive 5–10 minutes early, if possible. Your appointment is scheduled as follows:

Time:

Day:

Length:

Honorarium:

Location:

Please allow extra time to get here; if the project has already started when you arrive it may be too late to participate. After participation in the project, you will receive an honorarium as listed above to thank you for your time.

NOTE: Please bring this letter and picture ID with you, as you may be requested to show it upon arrival. If you wear glasses for reading, please bring them with you, also.

If you have any questions, please call Fictitious Name (Code) or visit our Web site at (WEB SITE). To speed response, refer to the project ID number when calling.

Thank you, we look forward to seeing you soon!

Private Protection Policy:
It is the practice of (FACILITY) and the Marketing Research profession to protect the identity of research participants. Your identity, along with personal demographic information, will be held confidential and not used for reasons outside the scope of the research unless with your consent. Our projects are conducted strictly for research purposes, not for solicitation or sales. If you are contacted by anyone other than (FACILITY) as a result of your participation, please let us know.

Toothpaste Rescreener

ORLANDO – OCTOBER 11, 1999, 6:00 to 8:00 PM

Welcome to our group discussion. We are looking forward to hearing your opinions about toothpaste. Please fill in the following information and return it to the host or hostess. *Thank you.*

FIRST NAME: ______________________________

1. Who purchases toothpaste for your household?

2. When was the last time that you personally purchased toothpaste?

3. Thinking about the last four times that you purchased toothpaste, which brand did you buy most often?

4. Suppose the price was the same for all brands of toothpaste. How would you decide which brand to purchase?

5. When was the last time that you participated in a group interview with two or more people?

6. What are the topics of all of the group interviews in which you have participated during the last year?

7. If you are employed – Please describe what you do and for what type of company you work.

Confidential Code for Toothpaste Rescreener
USERS GROUP – 6 PM

HOST/HOSTESS – Thanks for working with me on this project. I would very much appreciate your help in determining who might best qualify for participating. Please ask each respondent to fill out a form on his/her own. Compare the respondent's answers to this code sheet. Notify me (in private) if there are any answers that do not qualify.

1. Who purchases toothpaste for your household? — **RESPONDENT MUST PERSONALLY PURCHASE OR SHARE EQUALLY WITH ANOTHER FAMILY MEMBER**

2. When was the last time that you personally purchased toothpaste? — **MUST BE WITHIN THE PAST 4 WEEKS/1 MONTH OR 30 DAYS AGO**

3. Thinking about the last four times that you purchased toothpaste, which brand did you buy most often? — **MUST BE CREST**

4. Suppose the price was the same for all brands of toothpaste. How would you decide which brand to purchase? — **MUST HAVE AN ANSWER**

5. When was the last time that you participated in a group interview with two or more people? — **MUST BE NEVER, OR MORE THAN 6 MONTHS AGO**

6. What are the topics of all of the group interviews in which you have participated during the last year? — **MUST NOT BE ANYTHING RELATED TO TOOTHPASTE OR DENTAL CARE**

7. If you are employed — Please describe what you do and for what type of company you work. — **MUST NOT BE EMPLOYED IN AD AGENCY, PUBLIC RELATIONS, MARKETING RESEARCH, ANY COMPANY THAT PRODUCES, DISTRIBUTES OR SELLS TOOTHPASTE, OR IN DENTAL HEALTH**

Participant Agreement/Confidentiality Statement

CITY: ________________________________	DATE: _________________	TIME: ____________

I understand that this marketing research session will be audio taped and videotaped and that (FACILITY) or their clients will use the tapes for reviews, discussions, and reports. I agree that any statements that I make may be used for these purposes as long as my name or company name will remain confidential. The tapes will not be used for journalism or public broadcast, and they will not be seen by anyone other than those involved in this research project.

I acknowledge that I will receive a gift of $__________ as a one-time payment for participating in this research session. No further compensation shall be necessary. Any and all ideas, comments, suggestions, or concepts discussed in this research session becomes the property of (FACILITY).

I understand that the subjects that will be discussed during this research session are confidential. I agree that I will not discuss or disclose any of the subject matter of the research session once I leave the session.

I am at least 18 years of age and have the full capability and right to contract in my name with respect to all matters stated above.

PLEASE SIGN YOUR NAME	PLEASE PRINT YOUR NAME

In Accordance with the
Marketing Research Association (MRA)
and
Qualitative Research Consultants Association (QRCA)
Recommended Best Business Practices

Please Be Prepared to Show a Photo ID

Thank you,

____

Company name

____

Owner's signature

Q▪R▪C▪A
Qualitative Research Consultants Association

MRA SM
Marketing Research Association

VIDEO OPERATOR
Policy of Non-Disclosure of Confidential Information

While audio or videotaping focus groups for (FACILITY) or its subcontractors, operators may have access to highly confidential information. Operators understand that they shall not disclose any of this information either directly or indirectly, nor use it in any way, either during or after the time they have performed such services.

Audio/Video Operator Protocol

The camera operator is NOT to discuss any research issues with clients, moderators, or others before, during or after focus groups.

Your signature below indicates that you have read and understand the foregoing policy and agree to comply with it.

Video Operator's Signature: ______________________	**Date:** ______________
Please Print Name: ______________________	
Video Operator's Signature: ______________________	**Date:** ______________
Please Print Name: ______________________	
Company Name: ______________________	
City and State: ______________________	

Employee Confidentiality Agreement

I, ______________________________________, as an employee of (FACILITY) recognize that I will, in the normal course of business, be exposed to, or learn of certain confidential materials.

This confidential material will consist of, but is not limited to, identity of our client(s), proposed marketing strategies, descriptions or prototypes of products, services, and/or advertising, research proposals, questionnaires, exhibits, audio and videotapes, or any other information which is generally not known to the public.

I agree not to discuss the confidential material within the company, nor with individuals or firms beyond those individuals who "need to know" in order to perform their jobs. Any questions regarding the study design and/or methodology must be referred to the supervisor of the job.

I further agree that I will not disclose, nor use for my own purposes, such confidential material to any person or corporation except when necessary to perform my job.

All documents, materials, product samples, etc. given to me during the course of my work at (FACILITY) shall remain the property of (FACILITY) and/or its clients. I agree to deliver the same to (FACILITY) upon request or upon termination of the project.

This obligation shall continue after I work on this project, or my employment with (FACILITY) is terminated, as long as the information remains unknown to the public.

By signature, I agree to the above stated terms and conditions.

NAME:____

ADDRESS:____

CITY/STATE/ZIP:____

SIGNED: ____

DATE: ____

Client "Respondent Confidentiality" Statement

I hereby agree that the focus group audio/videotapes that I have received will only be used for research purposes by me and by anyone else who views these tapes. They will not be used on television or seen by anyone other than those involved in this project.

I further understand that I must abide by research Code of Ethics, which means that no one who views these tapes will quote anyone by name unless their permission has been secured in writing and that the person is made fully aware of the ramifications of giving their permission.

It also means that no one will be contacted for any reason without first getting permission from (FACILITY), which will in turn secure permission from the recruiting organization.

I also acknowledge that every effort will be made, by all those who view these tapes, to respect the rights of respondents.

Your signature below indicates that you have read and understand the foregoing policy and agree to comply with it.

Signature: ______________________	**Date:** ______________________
Please Print Name: ______________________	
Organization: ______________________	
City and State: ______________________	

Respondent Summary Sheet

QRCA – Toothpaste – 2 hours – Non-Users – City 1- Date 1 – 8:00 p.m. (Gratuity Amount)

Name	Q.1 Role in purchasing toothpaste		Q.2 Last time personally purchased toothpaste					Q.3 Brand of toothpaste purchased most often								Q.4 # of times purchased brand used most often	Q.5 # of times purchased other brands				Q.9 Age				Q.10 Ethnicity					Q.11 Kids under 18 in house		Q.12 Gender	
RECRUIT								MUST HAVE CREST MENTIONED IN EITHER Q.3/Q.5													Recruit a mix				8-10	2-4				6	6	3-4	8-9
	Primary	Shared	1 to 6 days ago	7 to 13 days ago	14 to 20 days ago	21 – 27 days ago	28 – 30 days ago	Arm & Hammer	Close Up	Colgate	Crest	Pepsident	Tom's of Maine	Ultra-Brite	Other		Arm & Hammer	Close Up	Colgate	Crest	25 to 34	35 to 44	45 to 54	55 to 64	Caucasian	African American	Hispanic/Latino	Asian or Pacific Islander	Some other racial group	Yes	No	Male	Female
1. Tim L.		x			x						x					4						x			x					x		x	
2. Carol K.	x			x							x					3			1					x	x						x		x
3. Susan W.	x			x							x					4						x			x					x			x
4. Robert G.	x					x					x					4							x		x					x		x	
5. Pat M.		x		x							x					4							x		x					x		x	
6. John R.		x	x								x					3			1		x				x						x	x	
7. Karen B.	x		x								x					2		2					x			x					x		x
8. Steph K.	x				x						x					3			1					x	x					x			x
9. Rose L.		x					x				x					4					x				x						x		x
10. Jane B.	x		x							x						2				2			x			x					x		x
11. Barb F.	x				x					x						2				2		x						x			x		x
12. Mary S.	x				x							x				2				2		x				x				x			x

Qualitative Research Cost Sheet

Job #/S:	CLIENT NAME:	
REF#/PO#	ADDRESS:	
PO#		
PROJ. DATE:	ATTENTION:	
PROJ. TYPE:	PHONE #:	
LOCATION:	FAX#:	
PROJECT MANAGER:		
		BID
RECRUITING		
FACILITY		
FOOD SERVICES (RESPONDENTS)		
FOOD SERVICES (CLIENTS)		
FOOD SERVICES (CLIENTS)		
VIDEOTAPING ( )w/op ( )w/o op ( )1/2" ( )3/4"		
EQUIPMENT CHARGES (SPECIFY)		
EQUIPMENT RENTAL (SPECIFY)		
OTHER (SPECIFY)		
OTHER (SPECIFY)		
ADDITIONAL CHARGES:	PRODUCT	
	FAXES	
	COPIES	
	TELEPHONE	
	SHIPPING	
TOTAL		
ADVANCE/RESPONDENT INCENTIVES		
	Amt. Adv. Rec'd:	
Date Advance Received:	_______ *up front*	
Co-op Only	TOTAL AMT PAID OUT	
QA STARTED WITH:	@	
CO-OP PAID:	@	
	@	
	@	

Recruitment Instructions

TO: Field Facility
FROM: Research Associate
RE: Recruiting Focus Groups
DATE: Insert Date

This memo confirms the schedule and recruiting specifications for job number QRCA/MRA. The job will consist of 2 focus groups with Crest toothpaste users and 2 groups with Crest toothpaste non-users. The groups will take place on:

Date 1 (City 1): **6:00pm (Crest Users)**
8:00pm (Crest Non-Users)

Date 2 (City 2): **6:00pm (Crest Non-Users)**
8:00pm (Crest Users)

Please recruit 12 for a show of 8–10. Respondents will be recruited from **databank or any other resources at your disposal.** Respondents will receive a cash gratuity of $___________ **(INSERT AMOUNT)** for their participation in the discussion. In order to qualify for the group, **ALL** respondents have to meet the following criteria:

- All respondents must be the primary purchaser of toothpaste for their household or share the responsibility equally with another family member **(Q.1).**
- All respondents must have personally purchased toothpaste within the past 4 wks/1 month **(Q.2).**
- **No** respondent may have any negative feelings toward Crest toothpaste **(Q.8a).**

  1.0 Please discuss any mentions in **Q.8b** with me immediately
- All respondents **must** be between 25 and 64 years old **(Q.9).**
- **No** respondent may have ever been employed at an advertising agency, public relations firm, marketing research company, a company that produces, distributes or sells toothpaste or work in dental health such as in a dentist's office **(Q.13a).**
- **No** respondent's immediate family member may have been employed at an advertising agency, public relations firm, marketing research company, a company that produces, distributes or sells toothpaste or worked in dental health such as a dentist's office within the past 2 years **(Q.13b).**
- **No** respondent should have participated in a group discussion for marketing research purposes within the past 6 months, or ever in a group discussion related to toothpaste or dental care **(Q.14a/b/c).**

Recruitment Instructions (continued)

- All respondents **must** feel comfortable expressing their opinions in a group. **(Q.15).**

- All respondents **must** be articulate and speak in well-understood English. Screeners without respondents' responses recorded verbatim are not valid. **(Q.16).**

Crest User Group

- All respondents must have purchased Crest brand toothpaste at least 2 of the last 4 times they have purchased toothpaste (Q.3/4/6).

Crest Non-User Group

- No respondent should have purchased Crest brand toothpaste as one of his or her last 4 toothpaste purchases (Q.3/5).

- Respondents should represent a mix of brands of toothpaste they purchase (Q.3/5).

- Respondents must not have purchased Crest brand toothpaste within the past year (Q.7).

In addition, please recruit the following mixes:

- **Age (Q.9)**
  25 to 34
  35 to 44
  45 to 54
  55 to 64
  ***No respondent should be under 25 years of age, over 65 years of age or refuse to give their age.**

- **Ethnicity (Q.10a/b/c)**
  White **(recruit 8 to 10 per group)**
  Recruit 2 to 4 per group of the following:
    Black
    American Indian, Eskimo or Aleut
    Asian or Pacific Islander
    Part of some other racial group
  ***No respondent should refuse to give their racial or ethnic background.**

- **Households with children under 18 living at home (Q.11)**
  Yes **(recruit 6 per group)**
  No **(recruit 6 per group)**

Recruitment Instructions (continued)

- **Gender (Q.12)**
  Male **(recruit 3 to 4 per group)**
  Female **(recruit 8 to 9 per group)**
  Recruit respondents according to the specifications. We need screeners to be completed and kept for each individual who is invited to participate. Any screener without verbatim comments is not valid. If you have any difficulties, **notify me immediately.**

Please rescreen participants twice. Once when confirmation calls are made (using the existing screener) and once when the respondent arrives at the facility to participate (using the rescreener provided).

In the focus group room, please provide a large, sturdy easel, flip chart, writing pads, and pencils. I will let you know prior to the groups any videotaping needs, the exact number of clients attending the groups and their specific food requests.

At the conclusion of the groups, please provide the moderator with 2 audio tapes, screeners for **only** those who participated, and sign-in sheets clearly showing “paid & sends.”

Research Client Checklist

CLIENT/COMPANY: ______________________	FAX #: ______________
CONTACT: ______________________	**JOB#:** ______________

We want to make sure everything is perfect for you project. Please take a moment to indicate special items, services, food, software requirements or equipment you may need so that we can arrange to have everything prepared and waiting when you arrive.

If you do not require any special services, please check here ( ) and read and sign in the box below.

Videotaping:	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ DK	☐ 1/2" ☐ 3/4"	☐ Stationary ☐ Operator assisted
	☐ Time code/special instructions (specify): ______________________		
Computer:	☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ DK	☐ Client Use ☐ Focus group ☐ IBM/compatible	
Also need:	☐ Printer ☐ Modem ☐ Multi-media PC (CD-ROM/sound)		
	Any additional memory, RAM, special cables, video/sound card requirements? ______________________ Special software needs?______________________		
Additional Equipment:	☐ VCR w/monitor ☐ Overhead Projector	☐ 1/2" ☐3/4" ☐ LCD Palette	☐ Podium ☐ Slide Projector
	☐ Other______________________		

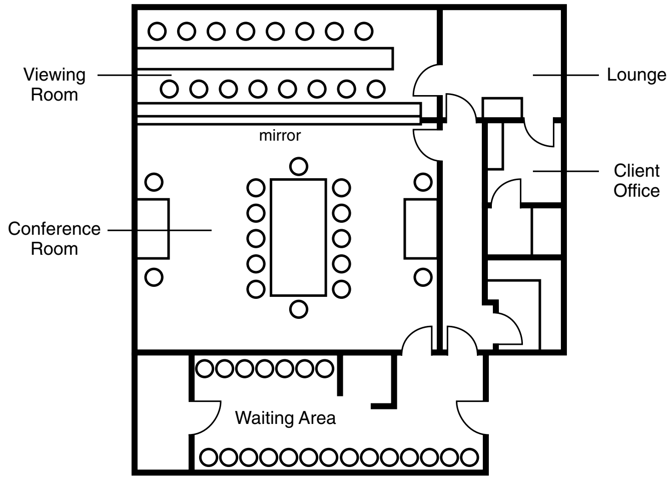
We have several catering options available, ranging from light snacks to complete dinners. Please indicate below whether or not you would like assistance with your food arrangements.

Food:	☐ I will contact you prior to project. ☐ I will make my own food arrangements when I arrive.

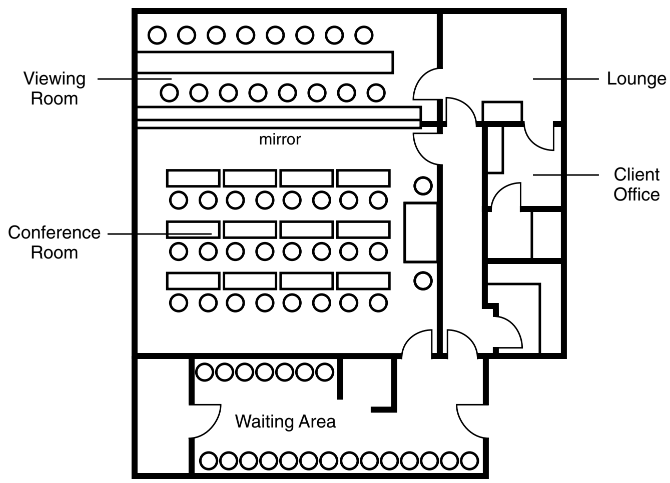
Please read your entire confirmation packet carefully, sign and fax this page back to (FACILITY) within three (3) working days prior to start of project. My signature at right is an acknowledgement that I have read and understood the attached confirmation, service agreement and request for advance (if advance required):	**Signature:** ______________ **Name** ______________ **Title:** ______________ **Company:** ______________ **Office:** ______________ **Date:** ______________

Sample Focus Room Layouts

Focus Group Style

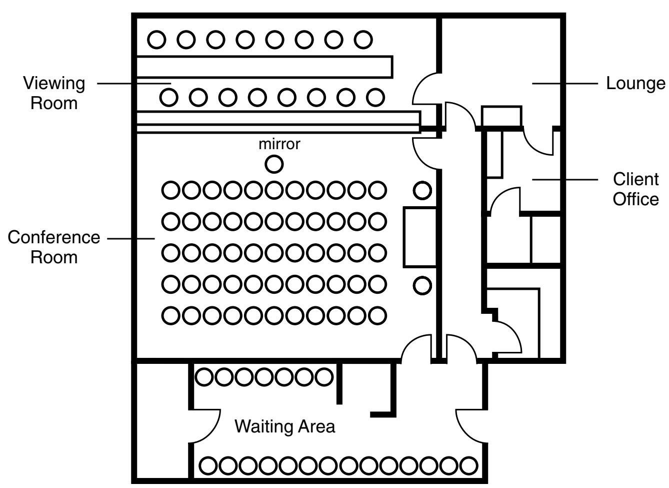


Seminar Style

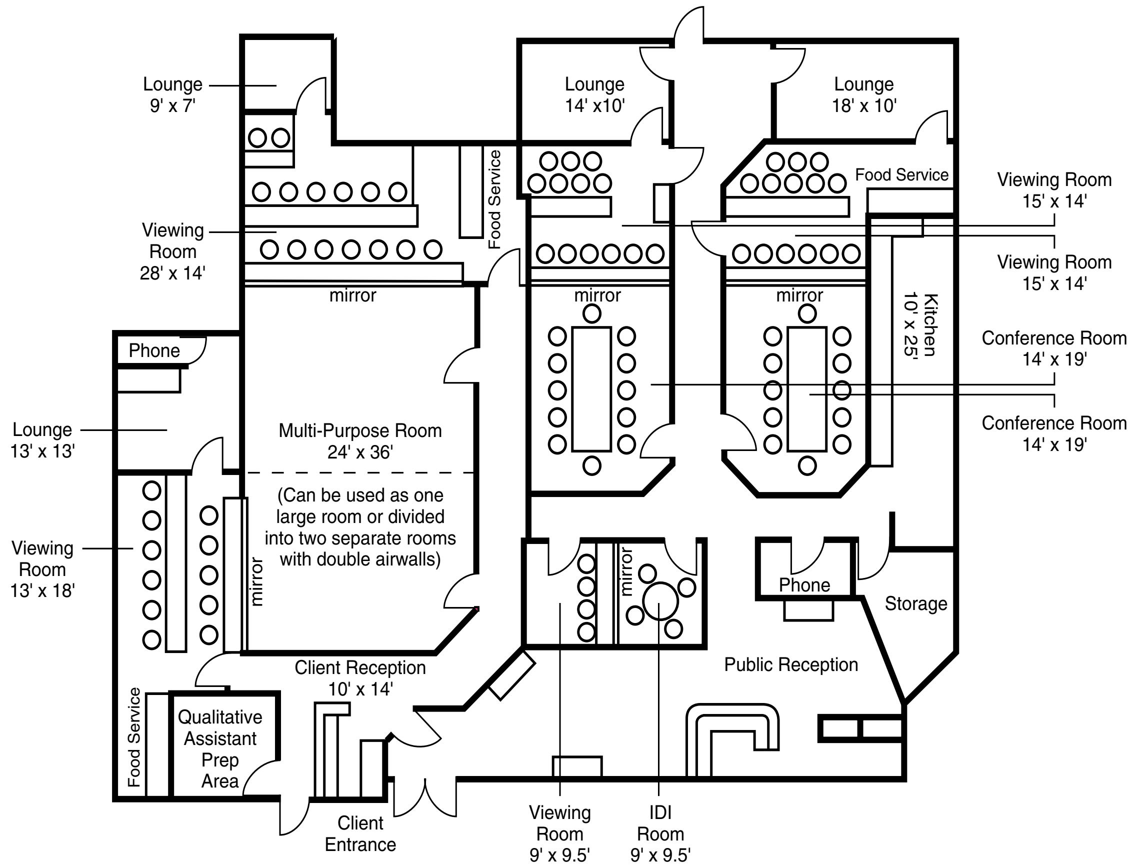


Sample floor plans from Nichols Research, Inc., Sunnyvale, CA

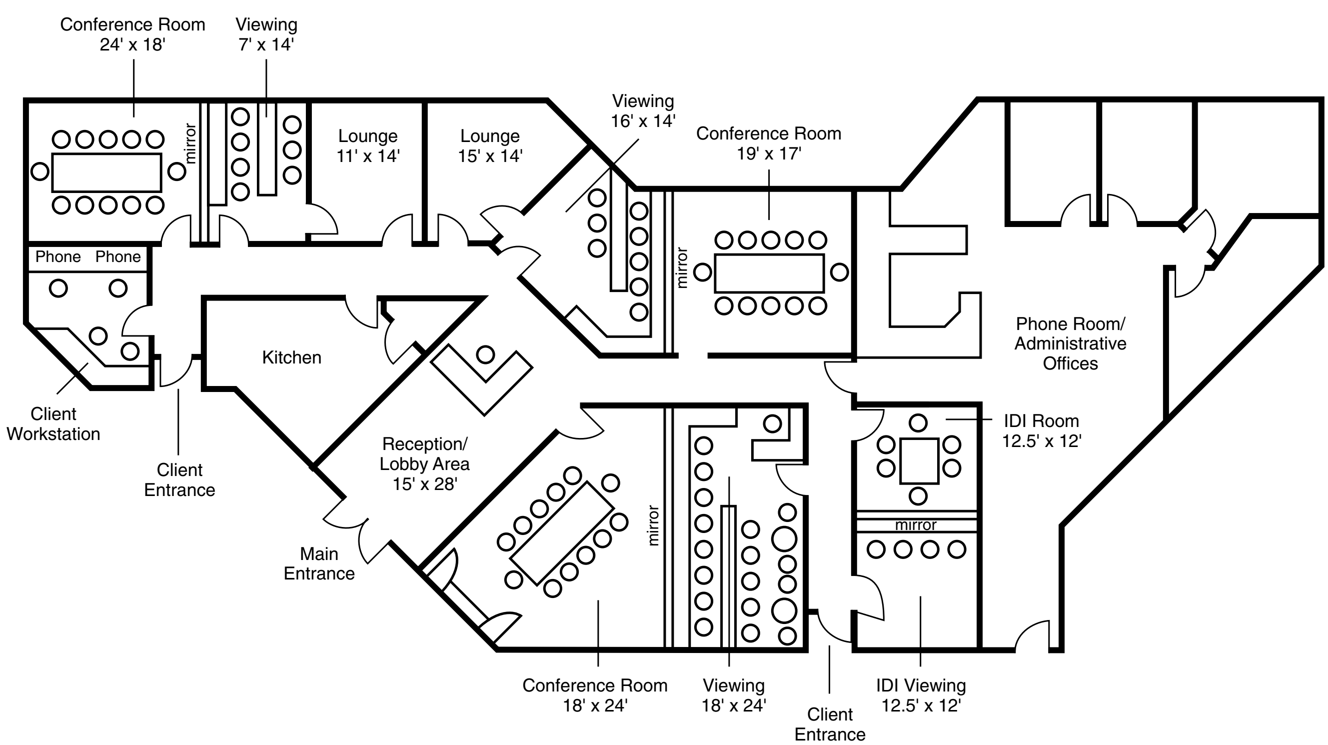
Theatre Style



Sample Facility Layouts



Sample floor plans from
Taylor Research,
San Diego, CA



Appendix B

Bibliography

"Focus Group Interviews," American Marketing Association, ISBN 0877571236.

Edmonds, Holly, *"Focus Group Research Handbook,"* American Marketing Association, 2000.

Greenbaum, Thomas L., *"The Handbook for Focus Group Research,"* Sage Publications, 1998.

Krueger, Richard A., *"Focus Groups: A Practical Guide for Applied Research,"* Sage Publications, ISBN 0803955677.

Krueger, Richard A., and David L. Morgan, Editors, *"The Focus Group Guidebook, Volume 1,"* Sage Publications, ISBN 07161908188.

Krueger, Richard A., and David L. Morgan, Editors, *"Planning Focus Groups, Volume 2,"* Sage Publications, ISBN 076190817X.

Krueger, Richard A., and David L. Morgan, Editors, *"Developing Questions for Focus Groups, Volume 3,"* Sage Publications, ISBN 0761908196.

Krueger, Richard A., and David L. Morgan, Editors, *"Moderating Focus Groups, Volume 4,"* Sage Publications, ISBN 0761908218.

Krueger, Richard A., and David L. Morgan, Editors, *"Involving Community Members in Focus Groups, Volume 5,"* Sage Publications, ISBN 076190820.

Krueger, Richard A., and David L. Morgan, Editors, *"Analyzing and Reporting Focus Groups, Volume 6,"* Sage Publications, ISBN 0761908161.

Mariampolski, Hy, *"Qualitative Market Research: A Comprehensive Guide,"* Sage Publications, 2001.

Merton, Robert King et al., *"Focused Interview: A Manual of Problems and Procedures,"* Free Press, ISBN 0029209862.

Rossi, Catherine A., Gloria E. Bader, *"Focus Groups: A Step by Step Guide,"* The Bader Group, 1998, ISBN 096647080X.

Templeton, Jane Farley, *"The Focus Group: A Strategic Guide to Organizing, Conducting and Analyzing the Focus Group Interview,"* Probus Publishing, July 1994, ISBN 1557385300.

MRA *Alert!* Newsletter Articles — Qualitative

**These article titles are current as of the publication date of this handbook.
To view these, and more recent qualitative articles,
visit www.mra-net.org and search for "Bridges."**

Facilities

"Focus Group Facilities: The Physical Side," Judith Langer, Langer Associates, Inc.
January 1997: pg. 6
"Focus Group Facilities: The Conference or Focus Group Room,"
Judith Langer, Langer Associates, Inc., January 1998, pg. 6

Technology

"Focus Groups Catch Up With the Technology Revolution,"
John Houlahan, FocusVision Worldwide, Inc., May 1999, pg. 18
"How Technology is Changing Focus Group Observation,"
James H. Nelems, The Marketing Workshop, Inc., July 1999, pg. 20
"Expanding the Qualitative Research Arena: Online Focus Groups,"
Casey Sweet, Quesst Qualitative Research, pg. 8
"The Growing Impact of Technology on Qualitative Research,"
John Houlahan, FocusVision Worldwide, Inc., October 1999, pg. 19
"Online vs. Traditional Focus Groups," Gabe Oshen, Interviewing Services of America, Inc.,
October 1999 pg. 22
"The How's, Why's, When's and Where's of Online Focus Groups,"
David Lewis, Strategic Focus, Inc., December 1999, pg. 21

Database

"Computerized Database Systems for Focus Group Recruiting," Kathy Pellman, MDSS, Inc.,
and Anndel Martin, Opinions Unlimited, Inc., March 2000, pg. 22
"Recommended Best Practices for Qualitative Database Development and Usage,"
Nancy E. Kolkeback, JRA, J. Reckner Associates, Inc., November 1998, pg. 4

Best Practices

"MRA/QRCA Joint Committee Endorses Best Practices," Jane Rosen, Nichols Research,
and Anndel Martin, Opinions Unlimited, Inc., June 2000, pg. 13

Miscellaneous Articles

"Mindshift for Managers: Change Is Inevitable, Growth Is Optional,"
Susan Murphy, June 1999, pg. 14
"Creating Great Partnerships: Qualitative Research Consultants and the Research Facility,"
Jan Lohs, and Sue LaGrippe, June 2000, pg. 22
"Follow-up on the Cheating and Repeating Signals," Anndel Martin, Research Unlimited,
June 1999, pg.13

"Turning The Focus Online"

Reprinted with permission from* Marketing News, *published by American Marketing Association, James Heckman, Feb. 28, 2000, pg. 15

The Internet has had such a profound influence on so many industries so far, many qualitative-research experts are wondering how they'll be affected — if the one-way Internet connection may soon replace the one-way mirror. After all, online focus groups can capture a lot of the same data — and even some of the emotional factors behind a respondent's opinion — without the cost of facility rental and transportation.

Online groups also promise a faster turnaround, and the respondent pool can stretch across the country as easily as across the city. However, online qualitative research has its limitations, and for studies in which intense conversations or body language is important, the traditional focus group still is the tool of choice.

"Each new technology has created new opportunities, caused some deep concerns about the way things must change and has ultimately led to an adjustment," says John Zogby, president of Zoby International, Inc., a Utica, N. Y. based research firm perhaps best known for its political polling. "An online focus group is something that can be put together in a matter of a few hours — a lot more easily than the traditional focus group. But it's an issue of how important intimacy and the creative interplay of discussion is in the focus group."

In a traditional focus group, the moderator and respondents sit in a room while the client watches from behind one-way glass. In the online version, respondents, moderator and client all log on to a virtual room on the Internet from anywhere in the country and take part in a discussion from the comfort of their living room or office chair.

Online focus groups basically work like a modified chat room. Respondents recruited either on the phone or by e-mail log into a Web site at a certain time to participate in the study. Once in the "room," the respondent's screen typically is divided into two parts: one side has the flowing text of the discussion, and the other can be used by the moderator — for example, he might show images for the respondents to comment on. Clients watch from their own computers and can send messages to the moderator without disrupting the focus group.

"Our software included a list of nonverbals (pictures that represent facial expressions and other gestures) that respondents could click on," says Josh Chasin, an independent marketing consultant who previously was the president and CEO of New York based Northstar Interactive, an online marketing research company. "If they want to roll their eyes, they click 'roll eyes' and the text line says 'Bob rolls eyes.' It gives them a chance to tell some of the nonverbal information."

One of the most obvious advantages of an online focus group is there is no need to reserve a facility, which could take weeks. An online group can be put together as soon as eight respondents agree to participate and the moderator logs on — a matter of hours or days. In addition, because the focus group conversation is text based already, clients can get a full transcript immediately, although the in-depth analysis may come a few days later.

"It really comes down to quality, and that depends on what you are trying to achieve," says Vince Talbert, executive vice president of marketing at Talk.com, a Reston, VA-based online telecommunications company that uses online focus groups. "If you want an initial reaction to a concept or product idea, online focus groups are an effective way to do that. When people have to write things down to communicate, they often are more articulate. They work harder at saying what they mean instead of rambling, like in speech."

While qualitative research on the Internet does save money, the savings are not as great as for quantitative research that goes online, for example. Qualitative research still requires a moderator, time — and often incentives — to recruit respondents and time spent analyzing the data.

"With qualitative, you're not saving on the methodology but on the travel expenses," says Yvonne Campos, president of Campos Market Research, Inc., a Pittsburgh-based online research company. "We did a traditional focus group last night with eight people. We had to fly to the city to observe, plus fly in the moderator and plus the time spent away from work." With an online group, the only time spent on the project is during the focus-group session.

On the downside, online focus groups lack the in-depth emotional information obtained from body language or tone of voice. Respondents do have some opportunity to express strong emotions in an online focus group, by using e-mail style emotions such as a happy face :) or typing sentences in capital letters to indicate yelling, for example. However, such clues must be artificially introduced by the respondent rather than coming out naturally in a conversation.

"Offline focus groups are more appropriate for concept-building, such as when you need to gauge respondent reactions and have a dynamic conversation," says Dan Kimball, vice president of strategic planning at Questus Inc., a Tiburon, Calif.-based interactive-marketing agency that turns to online focus groups to evaluate marketing concepts. "Online does not really generate that spontaneous conversation. You can target some of the feedback, but you don't get that one-on-one exchange."

Also, almost by definition, the respondent pool for an online study tends to be more affluent consumers who are comfortable working on the Internet, although this is changing. As a result, the focus group's conclusions may not accurately be projected on the general population. Of course, for studies looking at Internet issues, such a usability study for a Web site design, a respondent pool tilted toward the computer literate is an advantage.

Many qualitative research experts predict that the drawbacks will grow less important as Internet technology develops. And while online focus groups probably will never completely replace the traditional version — sometimes respondents need to touch an object or taste something, for example — online focus groups will play an increased role in qualitative research studies.

"To capture body language and intense discussions, I opt for offline focus groups," Zogby says. "For speed or for capturing a lot more data and conversation detail, I go for online. But as the techies increasingly perfect the interactive technology, we will have the intimacy that is currently missing — such as a full-body shot of someone sitting so we can get some of the body language."