

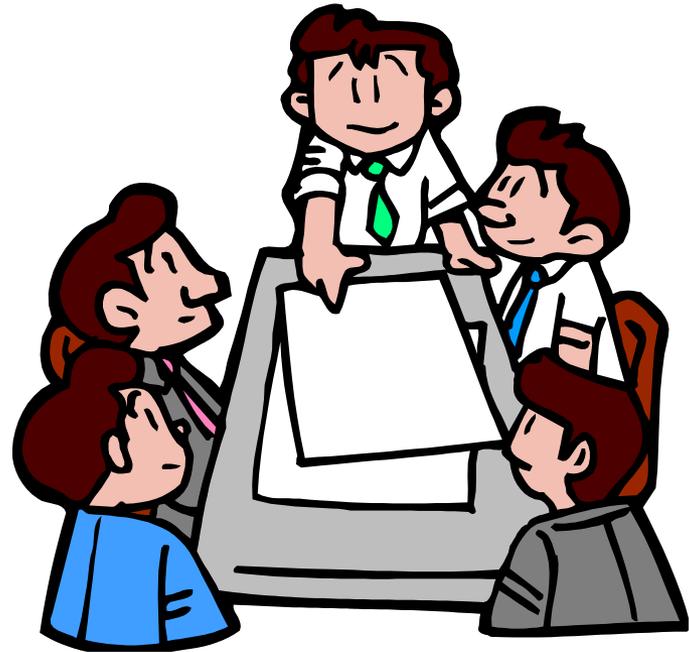
# Focus Groups



# A Focus Group Is . . .

## What

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



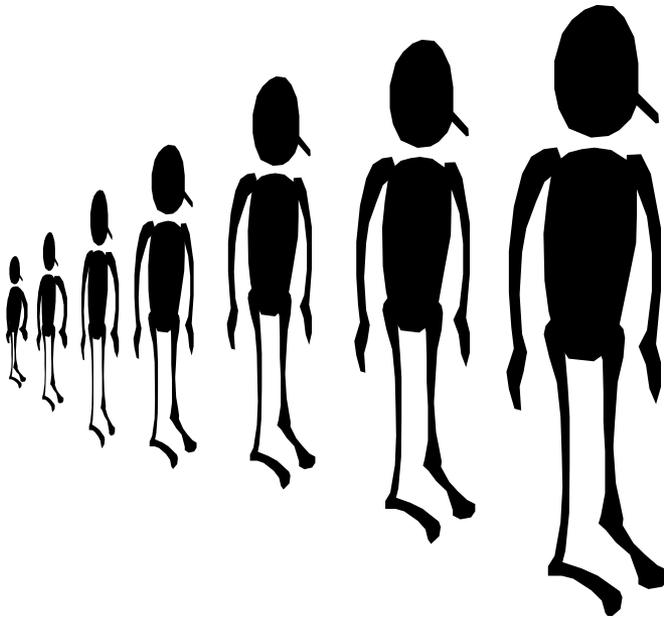
# A Focus Group Is . . .

## Where

- In a permissive, non-threatening environment



# A Focus Group Is . . .



## Who

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

# A Focus Group Is . . .

## How

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



# Why Do Focus Groups?

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

# When to Conduct **Focus Groups**

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

# Selecting Participants

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

# Incentives for Participants



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

# **Systematic Notification Procedures**

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

# Moderator Skills

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

# **Beginning the Focus Group Discussion**

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

# Asking Questions That Yield Powerful Information

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



# **Systematic Analysis Process**

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

# **Focus Group Analysis Tips**

**When analyzing focus group data, consider...**

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

# **Reporting Focus Group Results**

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