

Putting the Focus Back in Focus Groups

Run-of-the-mill focus groups tend to suffer from a lack of focus and leave you wishing for clarity. Brandtrust focus groups leverage more rigorous social science disciplines to dig deeper and more truly reflect what customers really think and feel.

Please contact us to explore how our focus groups will help you quickly gain better, richer insights into your customers' behaviors.

DARYL TRAVIS

daryl.travis@brandtrust.com
phone: 312.440.1833 x214

KATIE SUIB

katie.suib@brandtrust.com
phone: 312.440.1833 x222

LEVERAGING THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

We've leveraged what the social sciences have taught us about individual psychology and group dynamics to design group studies that are more focused, more reliable and more effective at addressing the business questions focus groups are intended to answer. Focus groups are an important tool in business and can often be the best research option when there is a need for quick exploratory work or to establish foundations for a broader study. It is also a methodology that has changed very little since its inception in the 1940s, while the world has changed considerably. With this in mind, we challenged ourselves to improve the focus group approach by harnessing the best of what the format has to offer, offsetting the weaknesses that all too often plague focus groups.

GROUP CONSENSUS REDUCTION — THE PHASED DIALOGUE APPROACH

Any form of group study runs the distinct risk of becoming unduly influenced by a phenomenon known as group consensus. Fortunately, this dynamic has been well studied in the social sciences and its negative consequences can be significantly reduced if the right disciplines are applied. At Brandtrust, every moment of a group study is designed to help participants remain true to their own voice and share their own thoughts — from pre-work

designed to minimize priming to personality profile tools designed to manage group dynamics. Ultimately, this phased dialogue approach yields results that instill increased confidence in research findings.

GROUNDING THEORY MODERATION — THE AUTONOMOUS APPROACH

Respondent priming is always a concern in consumer research. But the challenges of priming are not limited to respondents. Studies have shown that even the best moderators can unwittingly be primed through conversations with clients or through extensive knowledge (and biases) in the field of study. As a result, they may unintentionally steer the conversation in a group study — minimizing the validity of the findings. Given this dynamic, Brandtrust utilizes an approach to moderating based in grounded theory — a model that essentially encourages a “beginner’s mind” to answering research questions. By working in research teams, we can isolate the front room moderator from any information not necessary to conduct the study — the detailed project knowledge rests with the back room consultant and the client team that is working in the back room. As a result of utilizing this autonomous moderator approach, group studies yield findings that are more free of moderator steering.

Most companies find themselves data rich, yet insight poor, with conventional research methodologies leaving them frustrated and dissatisfied. Are you ready to improve your Focus Groups?

Conduct Focus Groups that dig deeper and speak more truly to what customers *really* think and feel.

SYSTEMS THEORY MODERATION — THE PAIRED APPROACH

An effective group study recognizes that there are often as many important issues to address in the observation room as the room being observed. The two rooms are part of a single system — so both rooms need to be addressed. This is another reason why we utilize a paired moderator approach — with one researcher moderating the front room and a Brandtrust consultant moderating the back room. In an effort to minimize the group consensus effect in the back room and to help less experienced back room participants effectively interpret the session, our moderators use active listening exercises that include linguistic analysis, facilitate group dynamics observations and identify respondent psychological drivers. The net result is an engaged back room team that is focused on accurately answering the research questions.

BETTER RECRUITING — THE BEHAVIORAL-BASED APPROACH

Good research results require the right respondents and balanced group dynamics. Although this foundational goal may seem obvious, it is often not achieved. With this in mind, Brandtrust typically utilizes strong behavioral screening criteria to find the right respondents (we also utilize techniques to filter out “professional respondents”). Our group studies are also typically designed with homogenous clusters of respondents who have similar levels of experience with the topic at hand — yielding more focused conversations. And, we employ personality profiling techniques that allow us to both design more effective groups and to provide greater understanding of the respondents’ dynamics. These three techniques are proven steps to yield the best possible results.

BIAS FOR ACTION — THE ACCELERATED DECISION-MAKING APPROACH

Given the nature of focus groups, clients typically want answers right away. Because of this business need, the back room consultant guides the client team in developing meaningful conclusions throughout the process. As a result, the team can immediately walk away from a project with a short list of insights and actions.

While we are sometimes called upon to create extensive reports that capture every detail of respondent feedback, our clients find that they get much more value from our concise and focused executive summaries. These reports can be turned around in 24 hours and deliver the key learnings, insights and implications that are going to be most helpful for meaningful decision-making.

BRANDTRUST — BRINGING THE QUALITY BACK TO QUALITATIVE

Brandtrust specializes in understanding the complexities driving human behavior and applying this knowledge to uncover better consumer insights through improved research methodologies. Many leading brands use Brandtrust to unravel the psychological tangles that often derail traditional research and concept testing approaches. In doing so, Brandtrust helps organizations change the way they think about how their customers think.