

Developing Focus Group Moderator Guides

Communication Tips –
How to ask open-ended, non-
leading questions to assist with
information gathering



Disclaimer #1

You may never run a true focus group.

Focus Group: Scientifically selected group of people who reflect the audience segment.

Whatever you do label it for what it is, be clear in your expectations, and the relative value of the information you get from it.



Disclaimer #2

I can not teach you how to design a good moderator guide in 45 minutes.

What we can do is go over some key theories and ideas that you can put to use when you develop your own moderator guides.



Communication Tips

1. Know your audience
2. Frame your information as well as your questions



FRAMING

Framing refers to the radical notion that how you present information has an impact on how that information is processed and received by the intended audience.



What is a Frame?

- The way we talk about issues affects how we think about issues.
- If our audience is looking to make a quick match between incoming information and the stories they already know, we need to define that story as soon as possible.
- Once the story is identified, no further information is processed.



Frame Theory



We Grew Up Together.

A 27% import tax on Canadian lumber threatens American jobs by putting our biggest trading relationship at risk.

The United States and Canada are our two good neighbors. Together, we're poised to become the world's largest trading partners – almost 200 billion each year, providing millions of jobs. In fact, Canada is the number one customer for the goods and services from 37 U.S. states.

But a new 27% import tax has been imposed on Canadian lumber, creating a trade barrier that is damaging the relationship.

It'll be just a matter of time before economic harm on both sides of the border – because if it weakens America's biggest customer, it's only a matter of time before it undermines American interests as well.

Let's get the relationship back on track. Learn how you can help at www.partnershipforgrowth.com.

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Partnership for Growth

Let's Keep A Good Thing Growing.

Frameworks Institute

- Framing – the notion that how you present something influences what people think of and remember
- Friendship Frame – match made, information processed



Framing Matters

- This is a small family farm.
- These cows are sick.
- WHY?



Frameworks Institute

Framing Matters

- This is a small family farm.
- These cows are sick.
- **WHY?**



Frameworks Institute

Communications as Story Telling

- We must tell a story about the values that drive us to communal action.
- We must tell a story that invites people into the solution, by demonstrating that solutions exist.
- We must tell a story with storytellers that the public believes have no reason to lie to us, and who have the authority and knowledge of the issue.
- We must tell a thematic story, not an episodic story.

Remember:

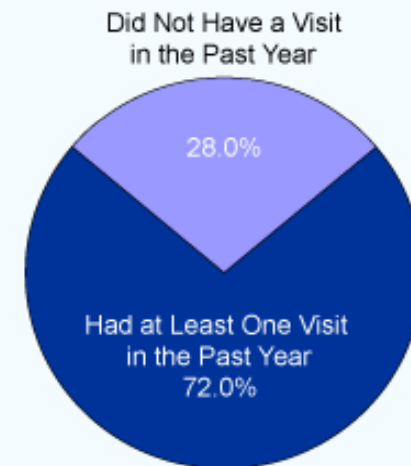
- *The story we want to deliver is not a simple slogan, a "silver bullet," or a bumper sticker, but rather a set of interrelated frames that resonate with deeply-held myths about what it means to be an American.*



We understand stories better than facts

- Frames overpower numbers. If the facts don't fit the frame, it's the facts that are rejected, not the frame.
- Most people can't judge the size or meaning of number; they need cues.
- Numbers alone often fail to create "pictures in our heads."

Receipt of Preventive Dental Care



Levels of Understanding

Ideas and issues come in hierarchies

- Level 1: Big Ideas like freedom, justice community, success, prevention, responsibility, stewardship.
- Level 2: Issue-types, like the environment, childcare, women's rights
- Level 3: Specific issues, like public land use, or earned income tax credits

Making it work for you

- We reason within the frame
- We assign responsibility to actors within the frame.
- We solve the problem with what we've got



Know Your Needs

- What do you need to know?
- Who do you need to hear from?
- How will you use what you learn?
- What tools do you need for the session?



Getting Started

Moderator Guides pretty consistent at the beginning:

- Welcome
- Explain why everyone is gathered
- Discussion ground rules
- Processes and schedule
- Releases or informed consent if needed
- Everyone to introduce themselves to the group
- Ice Breaker Exercise



Building Your Moderators Guide

- Start with the Level One big ideas, get them to the right filing cabinet.
- “We are going to start by looking at some pictures.” or “Today we need your help with words and language.”



Building Your Moderators Guide



- Move to Level Two – Issue Types, which drawer?
- “We are going to show you a series of posters and ask you a few questions about each one.”

Building Your Moderators Guide

- Then Level Three – Specific Issues
- Ask impersonal questions early
- Ask only one question at a time
- Ask neutral questions
- Don't ask “why?”
 Instead probe for meaning



Questioning the Questions

Does this question invite one word or one paragraph answers?

“What color are her eyes?” vs.

“How would you describe her eyes?”

Does the question leave the choices wide open or suggest which path we want?

“What kinds of problems are you having exercising?” vs. “Are you having any problems getting exercise?”



Check for Understanding

- What questions do you have about the poster?
- What do you think is the intent of the poster?
- What does the organization want of you?



Invite Reactions

- What do you think?
- What is your reaction?
- What am I missing?
- Help me understand what you meant by what you just said.



Where to find me:

Medical Care Development, Inc.

11 Parkwood Drive

Augusta, ME 04330

207.622.7566 x225

KPerkins@mcd.org

With many thanks:

FrameWorks Institute

Health Care for All

CDCynergy-Social Marketing Edition

HRSA

Kim Laramy/Ethos Marketing

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