

This webinar is produced by PRC – Practical Resources for Churches



[www.prcli.org](http://www.prcli.org)

#### About PRC

PRC is a nonprofit non-denominational resource center offering consultants, workshops, webinars and resources to congregations.

Our webinar program is supported by the following organizations:

- The United Methodist Church, New York Annual Conference
- The United Church of Christ, New York Conference
- The United Church of Christ, Massachusetts Conference
- The Presbytery of Long Island
- New Jersey Association of the United Church of Christ
- Southwestern PA Synod of the ELCA
- Donations from individuals like you



**COACHING**  
to  
**CONNECT**

*Practical help for productive relationships*

## Focus Group How-To

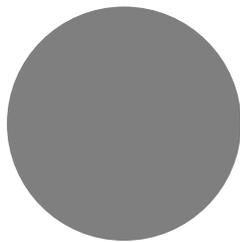
A Way to Listen Purposefully

Jim Merhaut

[www.coachingtoconnect.com](http://www.coachingtoconnect.com)

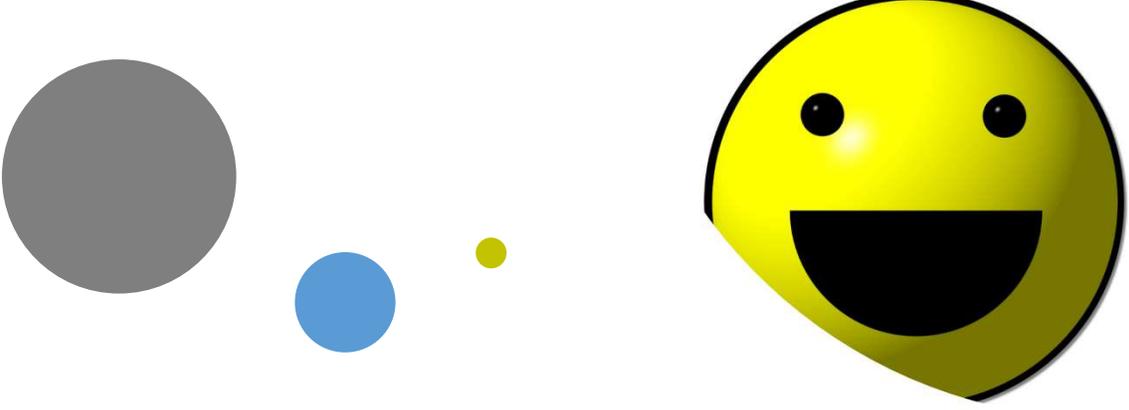
## The Challenges of Qualitative Research

- Takes time and effort
- Lacks scientific clarity
- Requires skilled facilitation

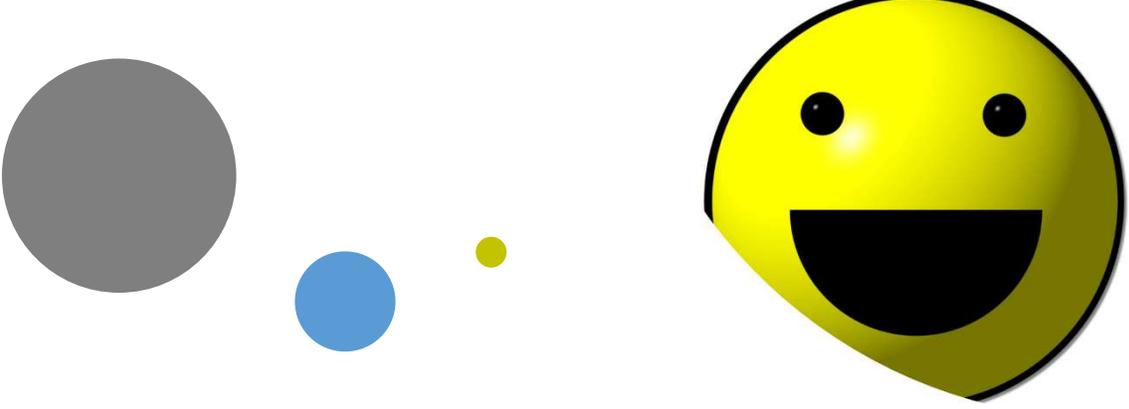


## The Advantages of Qualitative Research

**Reveal themes  
in a community**



The Advantages of Qualitative Research | **Get behind the numbers**



The Advantages of Qualitative Research | **Capture energy and enthusiasm**

## A Focus Group is...

---

- Homogenous group of 6-10 people
- Led by a moderator
- 45-90 minutes
- Comfortable & Safe
- 5-8 well-crafted questions
- Repeated 3-5 times



## A Focus Group is...

---

- A way to learn
- A way to clarify a problem or issue
- A way to fine tune a product or plan
- A way to evaluate



A Focus Group is not...

---

- A conflict resolution session
- A promotional opportunity
- A teaching opportunity



Homogeneity  
– Leveling the  
playing field

**Gender** – Will men and women feel comfortable together?

**Age** – Will young or old feel intimidated?

**Power** – Will the powerless feel threatened?

**Cliques** – Will a mob mentality dominate?



## Focus Group Planning: Before the Meeting

- Gather a planning team
- Define your purpose/write your purpose statement
- Select a location
- Identify your target audience
  - What are their common characteristics?
  - Create a list of potential participants.
  - Send invitations to achieve your goal of getting 6-8 participants
- Generate 5-8 questions that connect with your purpose
- Select a moderator and a recorder
- Gather supplies & Plan Hospitality
- Script the meeting: welcome, purpose, questions, closing comments

## Over-invite



### **If you know invitees...**

- Expect a no-show rate of 10-20%.
- If you want 8, invite 9 or 10.

### **If you don't know invitees...**

- No-show rate is higher, up to 80%
- Personal invitation reduces no-show rate

### **Include Start/Stop Times**

## Two Roles

---

### 1. Moderator

- Asks questions
- Empathetically tracks comments & energy
- Asks follow-up clarifying questions
- Clarifies disagreement
- Keeps personal opinions to self
- Engages all participants



## Two Roles

---

### 1. Recorder

- Takes notes, matching comments to participant (number system)
- Records results of any votes that the moderator may take
- May use recording device with permission
- Record non-verbal communications





# Focus Group

From Beginning to End

## Be hospitable

Rule of thumb: **Empathize!** How do you want to be welcomed?

- Provide nametags or nameplates
- Refreshments
- Comfortable seating, circular
- Privacy



## Introductions

Moderator and Recorder introduce themselves

**Hi! My name is...**

## The Very Important Purpose Statement

- What do we want to learn?
- How will we use what we learn?

**The “Why?”**

## Ground Rules

1. YOU WILL NOT BE JUDGED; SAY WHAT YOU ARE THINKING
2. LIMIT COMMENTS TO 2-3 SENTENCES
3. YOU MAY SHARE YOUR COMMENTS AFTER YOU LEAVE, NOT OTHERS' COMMENTS
4. SILENCE YOUR CELL PHONES
5. IF YOU DISAGREE, DISAGREE WITH THE ISSUE, NOT THE PERSON
6. ONE PERSON SPEAKS AT A TIME
7. STAY ON TOPIC



## The Questions

- 1-2 Icebreaker Questions
- 4-7 Exploration Questions
- 1 Exit Question
- Closing Comments

## Sample Purpose Statement & Questions

---

### PURPOSE:

What are the strength and growth areas of the Visitor Center at Grand Teton National Park?

Answering this question will help us develop strategies to improve the experience of visitors to the Visitor Center.

## Sample Questions for Visitor Ctr. Focus Group

- What is your name? Where are you from?
- Think about what you've seen in the visitor center – what did you like most?  
*Probe: What was it about \_\_\_\_\_ that you liked?*
- What did you like least?  
*Probe: Why didn't you like it?*
- What is missing from the visitor center?
- If you approached the information desk, how was the quality of the service you received?  
*Probe: What was particularly good about your experience?*  
*Probe: How could it have been a better experience?*
- What else would you like to tell us about the Visitor Center?

## Sample Purpose Statement & Questions

### PURPOSE:

What do our citizens value in a town square?

Answering this question will guide us as we develop the characteristics and features of the new town square.

## Sample Questions for Town Square Focus Group

- How many cities have you lived in, and how many had a town square?
- What is your fondest memory of time spent in a town square?
- What does a high-quality town square look like?
- What takes away from the effectiveness of a town square?
  - *Probe: How would you address that?*
- If money were no object, what would be the most important thing to add to our town square?
- What level of financial donation would you be willing to make to support the development of our town square?
- What else do you want to say to those who will develop our town square?

## Sample Purpose Statement & Questions

---

### PURPOSE:

What kind of worship experience would attract *nones & ones*?

Answering this question will help us develop an alternative worship service for those who want to worship but can't find a church that works for them.

## Sample Questions for Alternative Worship FG

- What church were you brought up in?
- How do you currently connect with God?
- What would you want to experience in a meaningful worship service?
- What must never happen in a meaningful worship service?
- Where is the ideal place for a meaningful worship service?
- What prevents you from attending a worship service?
- What do you need to know in advance before attending a worship service for the first time?
- Other than Sunday morning, what is the best day/time for worship?
- What else can you tell us to assist us in developing a meaningful worship experience?



## 3 Ways to Listen

1. Listen to...
  - What participants are saying - words/phrases
  - What participants are not saying
    - Rising and falling energy in their voices
    - Body language/posture/facial expressions
2. Listen for...
  - The participants' agenda – What they really want?
3. Listen with...
  - Your emotions
  - Your intuitions
  - Your frame of reference

And then  
there's this  
guy...





### Focus Group Planning: After the Meeting

- Immediately following the meeting:
  - Moderator and Recorder discuss first impressions
  - Record your thoughts about most important moments
- Prepare a report for planners ASAP
  - Full transcript of recording?
  - Written?
  - Verbal?
  - PowerPoint?



### Focus Group Planning: After the Meeting

#### **Develop an action plan:**

- Prioritize the themes
  - Name the themes
  - List the themes
  - Rank the themes
- Brainstorm action steps around each theme beginning with the most important
- Rank action steps
- Implement/Test highest scoring action steps
  - Who?
  - What?
  - When?