
Moderating and Interviewing tips

MODERATING AND INTERVIEWING TIPS

- 1.1 Enthusiasm
- 1.2 The first 5 minutes
- 1.3 Working with a discussion guide
- 1.4 Good practice tips – Dos and Don'ts
- 1.5 Managing difficult respondents

1.1 Enthusiasm

- This is critical to the success or otherwise of a discussion
 - shows the **subject is important** to you
 - sets a **tone/mood for the session**
 - reassures that you are **eager to hear from the respondents**
 - underlines that their **responses are of value to you**
 - conveys your **sense of ownership and commitment** to any observer

1.2 The First 5 Minutes

- ❑ Develop your own introductory routine and become practised so that it is second nature. It should include:-

Independent Market Researcher

'The word Independent is very important as it means that I don't mind what you say about things we are going to discuss. I don't work for the people who make the product and I don't work for their advertising or design agency'

Researcher working for Company

'I work in the research department of X Company and am not directly involved in coming up with the ideas we are about to discuss. I am only here to ask the questions, so please feel free to express your opinions & reactions openly'

- ❑ Reassure regarding the MRS Code of Conduct, confidentiality etc
- ❑ Outline for respondents the broad purpose of the study

❑ Introduce the rules of the discussion i.e.

- *'I want to hear from everyone'*
- *'No falling asleep!'*
- *'Direct comments at me rather than between yourselves'*
- *'Only one person at a time'*
- *'No right or wrong answers, it is your opinions that matter'*
- *'Please speak up so that I can hear everything you say'*

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- ❑ Get respondents to introduce themselves, eg.
 - *'I don't know any of you, so I would like to know your first names so that I have something to call you by - I've got to start somewhere so can I start with you?'*

 - ❑ Make sure you **write down their names** so that you can use them as the discussion progresses

1.3 Working with a Discussion Guide

- ❑ Guide **not** a questionnaire
- ❑ You may find it easier to have two versions: one pared-down for the moderator and one more detailed version which includes all issues to be covered across the project
- ❑ Keep objectives in mind
- ❑ Start broad/general - finish narrow/specific
- ❑ Be prepared to abandon the guide
- ❑ The guide is a hypothesis - respondents may have more interesting things to say
- ❑ Spontaneous first, then prompted second
- ❑ Notional timings

1.4 Good Practice Tips - Do's and Don'ts

- ❑ Be **confident**- respondents smell fear!
- ❑ Don't stint on the **warm up**
- ❑ Put lots of **energy** into the group
- ❑ **Use body language** to control the session
 - mirroring behaviour
 - use your hands/arms
 - lean towards or away from people
 - use eye contact
 - smile and nod



After a good group you should be exhausted!

❑ Don't

.... lead respondents

.... answer questions

.... ask compound questions

.... use jargon

.... reveal your preferences

.... side with respondents

.... put anyone down

.... second guess a respondent



Ideally, talk as little as possible!

1.5 Managing difficult respondents!

Have you come across any?

What are your worst fears?

❑ **Here are some typical difficult respondent types or situations you might encounter**

- Nervous
- Quiet
- Treat everything as a joke
- Gobby
- Late Arrivals
- Posturing
- Unexpressed minority opinion
- Lack of homogeneity
- Literacy

1. *Nervous/Quiet*



What would you do

?



Nervous/Quiet



□ How to deal with them:

- be open & friendly eg talk softly, smile, encourage everyone to come in and get comfy, encourage them to take coats off, get a sandwich/drink
- good clear introduction eg just market research etc
- encourage them to speak (beyond intro) in first 10 mins

2. *Jokers/Gobby*



What would you do

?



Jokers/Gobby

□ How to deal with them:

- let the jokers get away with it in the beginning because it can help to relax the group
- let the gobby person get away with the first couple of instances - if you come down too hard too soon, you will alienate everyone

**But you have to take control
– this is your show not theirs**

3. *Late Arrivals*

What would you do

?



Late Arrivals

□ How to deal with them depends on:

- how late they are
- where you are in the discussion; if you are past the point of no return eg completed all the contextual info and have moved onto showing rough ads/first concepts
- how many respondents you've got
- how important they are e.g very important customer to your client

4. *Posturing*

❑ How to spot them:

❑ Might be if....

- always give the PC answer to everything – typical of middle managers i.e trot out company policy not necessarily reflecting reality
- always the biggest/the best/the highest standards e.g never watch TV/ads/soaps, never read tabloids, never buy own label/buy all their food at M&S, buy designer labels only, bath/clean the house 5 times a day

Posturing



What would you do

?



Posturing

PC'er

David: Everyone is treated totally equally here

I know that's what we all aspire to but is it the reality...who is least likely to agree with you ...has anyone ever slipped through the fine mesh net

Snobby

Hyacinth: I change the bed everyday

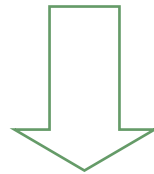
What happens when you don't?
(make it easier to acknowledge reality)
Most people/I don't do it anywhere near as often as that..is that true of anyone here?
(encouraging her/others to be more honest)

Posturing/unexpressed minority

How to deal with these:

- encourage a range of opinions by drawing on hypothetical or real respondent reactions
eg “the people in last night’s group said that they hated the ad”

or “someone said last night that this concept worked because...”



Create a platform/permission to be real/open

5. *Lack of homogeneity*



J. Howard Marshall

What would you do

?



Lack of homogeneity

□ How to deal with this:

- recognise differing levels of knowledge/different attitudes as early as possible, then:
 - use individual self-completion exercises
 - make sure the less knowledgeable/less sophisticated speak first
 - give less knowledgeable/less sophisticated permission to be open & honest (if necessary, side with them)

6. *Literacy*

- More commonplace than you might expect – relates to a range of problems from embarrassed about poor spelling, through to cannot read or write
 - not necessarily obvious – people cover it up very well

Literacy

□ How to spot it:

- uncomfortable body language
- spend time looking at other people writing
- pretend to write (producing a squiggle in the corner)
- claim to be dyslexic
- claim not to have reading glasses with them

Literacy

□ How to deal with this:

- reassure via intro:
 - *writing*: “don’t worry about spelling/mine is atrocious, this isn’t a test, I’m not expecting you to fill the whole page”
 - *reading*: “don’t worry if you don’t have your reading glasses with you - I’m going to read it out for you anyway”
- above all else **do not push** too hard = bullying – could humiliate