

# FOCUS GROUPS

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**Anne Jacox  
Cue Research Inc.**

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# My Background

- **Anne Jacox, Cue Research Inc.**
  - B.A., Psychology, CMRP
  - Qualitative training through RIVA in Washington D.C.
  - Instructor at GMC
  - Company established in 1991
  - Approximately 3,000 focus groups conducted

# Clients - Examples

- **AADAC**
- **Alberta Health and Wellness**
- **Alberta Pacific Forest Industries**
- **ASBA**
- **BC Hydro**
- **EPSB**
- **Finning**
- **Canada Safeway**

- **Canadian Council of Professional Engineers**
- **NAIT**
- **Nova Chemicals**
- **TELUS**
- **University of Alberta**
- **VanCity Savings Credit Union**
- **Windsor Tourism**

# Common Uses of Focus Groups

- **Exploratory**
- **Image evaluation**
- **Advertising/concept evaluation**
- **Employee/member satisfaction**
- **Product development; packaging**
- **Uses with quantitative research**

## Advantages

- Group dynamic
- Breaks down resistance to offering comments
- Less costly than quantitative (usually)
- Group can be viewed in progress
- Changes can be made as project progresses

# Qualitative Research

## Limitations

- Cannot generalize to population (i.e., convenience sample)
- Methodology problems (e.g., wrong respondents, too many targets, poor design)
- Results can be misinterpreted
- Problem respondents

# Qualitative Research Process

- **Background**
  - What is the research problem/issue?
- **Objectives**
  - What is the key area of interest/issue that needs to be addressed?
  - What action will be taken as a result of this research?

# The Research Process – Cont.

## Methodology

- Recruitment criteria/recruitment screener
  - **Specification considerations (who do we want to talk to):**
    - *Males versus females versus mixed*
    - *Age ranges (teens versus young adults versus older adults)*
    - *Other variables, such as income, interest, readership, etc.*
- Professional recruiter versus volunteer

# The Research Process – Cont.

## Methodology

- Incentives versus no incentives
- Facility considerations
  - Location of facility
  - Type of facility
  - Observers
  - Recording
  - Refreshments

# Planning & Implementation

- Number of groups/target audiences
- Locations
- Type of facility
- Screening questions
- Disclosing the client
- Privacy legislation
- Amount of incentive
- Moderator's guide, materials

# The Moderator

- **Vested Interest**

- Advantages

- *Cost*
    - *Knowledge of issues*

- Disadvantages

- *Knowledge of issues; assumptions*
    - *Credibility*
    - *Knowledge of respondents; confidentiality*
    - *Process problems*
    - *Time commitment*

- **Independent**

- Advantages

- *Honest disclosure*
    - *No fear of reprisal*
    - *No answers for respondents*
    - *Experience*
    - *Responsibility for project methodology*

- Disadvantages

- *Cost*
    - *Knowledge of issues*

# Role of Moderator

- Guide the discussion
- Ask questions; probe for clarity
- Control dynamics of group
- Ensure opinions are heard
- Understand when to go in another direction or explore an unanticipated direction
- Thank respondents

## Components of the moderator's guide:

- **Introduction (approximately 10 minutes):**
  - **Introduce moderator and function of moderator**
  - **Introduce/clarify topic of discussion/reason for meeting**
  - **Explain why focus groups are being used**

## Introduction – continued:

- **Role of respondents**
- **Recording – why a recording of session, who hears tapes/has access to tapes, what happens to tapes**
- **Observers – introduce observers and their role in the research process**
- **Reporting – explain how results will be used**
- **Participant introductions – simplicity**

## General Topic Headings

- Look at objectives
- Three to five key areas of investigation
- Summary

## Types of Questions

- Open ended
- Closed
- Probes – use of “why”
- Self-completion exercises
- Use of questionnaires
- Projective techniques

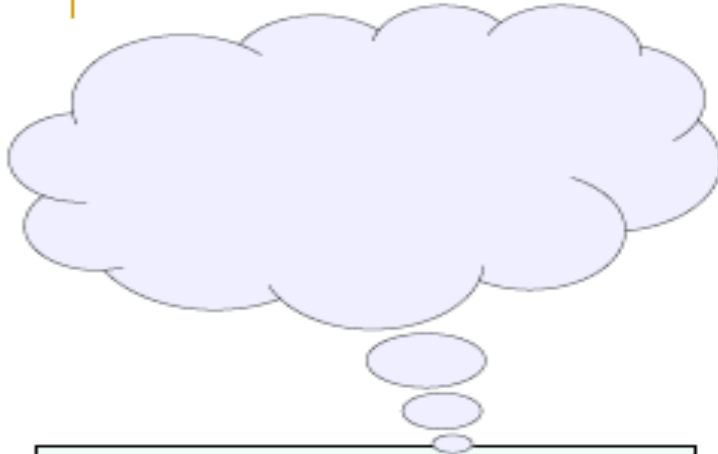
# The Moderator's Guide – Cont.

## Summary

- Review
- Final recommendations or observations
- Thank you

# Techniques

What they are REALLY thinking and feeling  
but NOT saying out loud

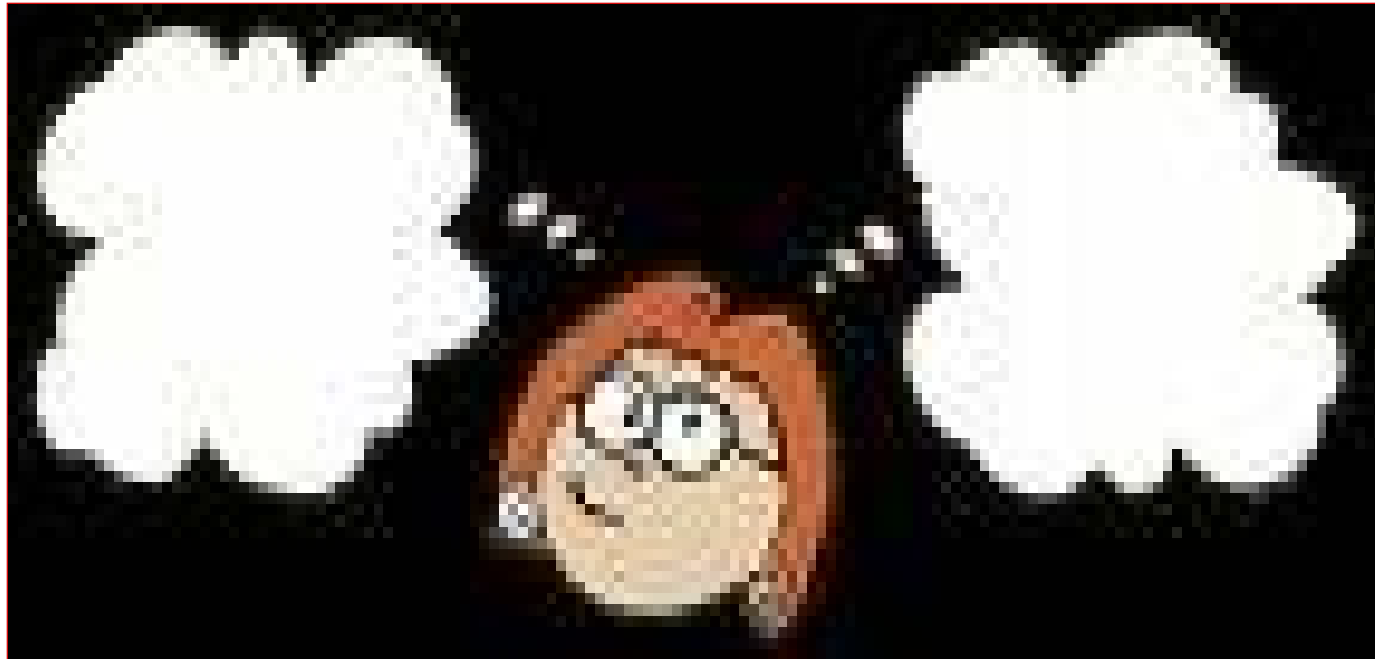


■ What they are saying out loud

What I am REALLY thinking and feeling,  
but NOT saying out loud



What I am saying out loud



## Table of Contents

- **The Research Investigation**
  - *Research Objectives*
  - *Research Methodology*
  - *Limitations of the Research*
- **Executive Summary**
  - *Key observations and moderator comments*
- **Key Research Findings**
  - *Use of quotes versus no quotes*
- **Appendix – Moderator's Guide**

# Mistakes Clients Make

- **Too many objectives**
- **Target group is too broad**
- **Want large groups**
- **Want to quantify information**
- **Not enough groups/too many**
- **Wrong locations**
- **Want to do the recruit**
- **Want entertainment**
- **Don't go to groups**
- **Don't listen to groups**
- **Don't do groups**

# **Mistakes Researchers Make**

- **Not enough attention to screening questionnaire**
- **Inflexible during group**
- **Reluctant to eject problem respondent; too quick to eject problem respondent**
- **Serial interviewing**

- **Questions**