

Focus Group Playbook

A good focus group is an organised facilitated conversation. The aim is to extract valuable insights from the participants, usually between 6-12 people. It is an active meeting lasting 2-3 hours and your role as the facilitator is to stimulate reflection and conversation; it is not to guide the discussion or make suggestions. Your goal is to make the focus group a safe place to share.

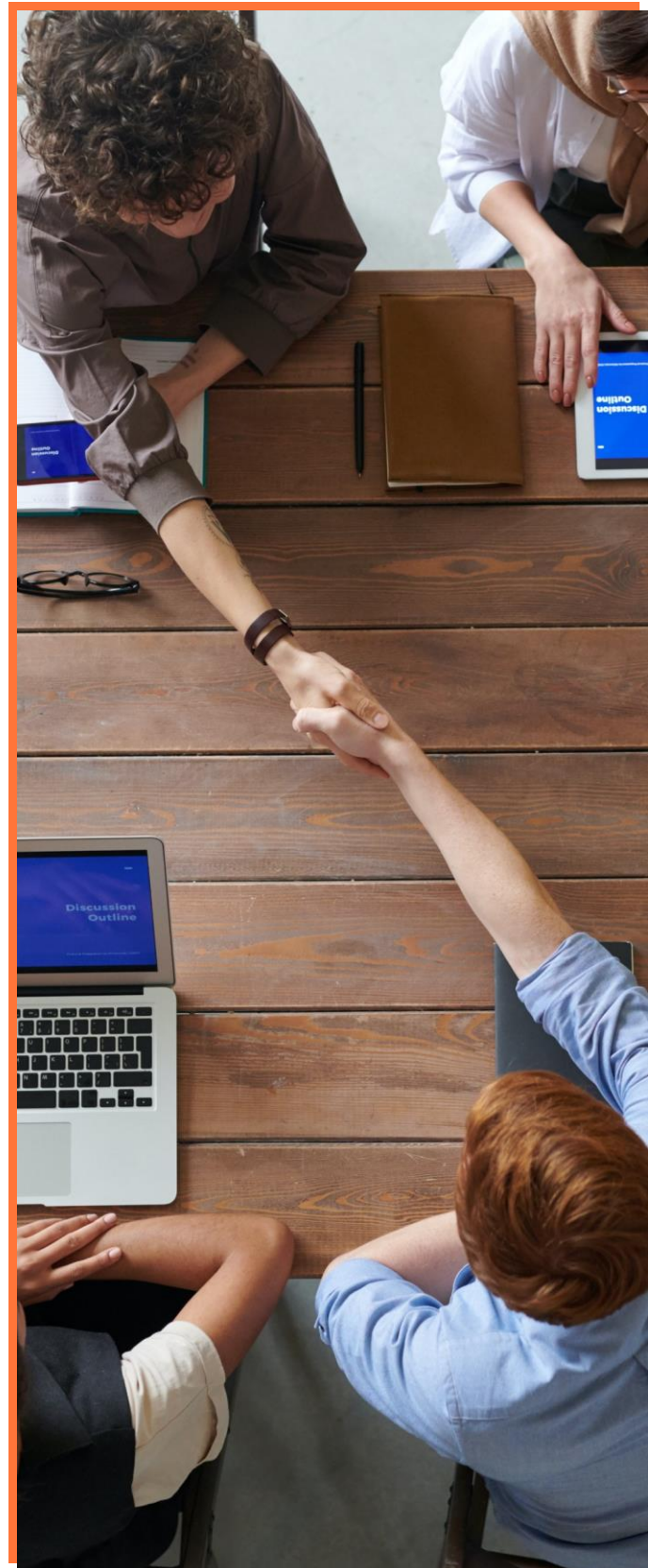
Getting Started

The aims of the focus groups are:

1. Understand our audience's challenges, concerns and pain points in their day-to-day lives, that we can help solve.
2. Create awareness of the project.
3. Get the audience's commitment to support the project.

Things you need:

1. A laptop
2. A screen
3. A slide deck with an agenda, context and next steps
4. Sticky notes
5. Felt pens
6. Flip chart
7. Speaker (to play relaxing/energising music)
8. Phone camera (for taking pictures of input)



Section	Agenda Item	Purpose	Time
Introductions	Brief introductions	Get to know who's in the room	4 minutes
	Agenda walkthrough	Help people understand what is going to happen	1 minute
	Context setting	Share the purpose of the focus group, approach and timelines	10 minutes
Pain points	Exercise to identify people's pain points	Start to understand the difficulties people face day-to-day	15 minutes
	Discussion/reflections on the exercise	Discuss collective experiences	45 minutes
Challenges and concerns exercise	Mapping daily challenges and concerns	Further exploration of the common challenges and concerns the audience needs help with	10 minutes
	Discussion of daily challenges and concerns	Discuss collective experiences	20 minutes
What would help: Q&A	Recommendations and ideas	Time to make suggestions of possible solutions	5 minutes
Wrap up	Close, questions and next steps	Set out progress and expectations of further input required	10 minutes

Types of Focus Group

EMOTIONAL CURVE

Ask people to plot their transition into their role, or a 'day in a life' highlighting the highs and lows. What works, what doesn't? What and where are their pain points?

This approach is the repurposing of a 'Customer Journey Map' exercise that is commonly used in Design Thinking.

PERSONA DRAWING

Ask people to draw a character (a Persona) labelling it on one side with the skills that they need to be successful in their roles. On the other side, ask people to write the barriers get in the way of them achieving their professional goals.

TASK REVIEW

Ask the audience what their top ten most common tasks are in their role.

Ask people to identify the top three most challenging tasks over a day, week, month and year.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

What do you find most helpful when you hit a problem?

Where have you seen it done well?

What advice would you give to a colleague?

What technology do you currently use in work and personal life?

NEXT STEPS

Once all the focus groups are completed it's time to write a report summarising your findings and making recommendations. This can then be shared with stakeholders so they understand the issues, and with the audience so you can make sure you've captured their sentiment accurately.

Then you can start thinking about what you need to create or curate to help the audience do their jobs better. Use the concern task resource model to list out the assets in a spreadsheet.



Top Tips

01

Aim to capture the composition of the group (role, grade, time in role, gender etc.), quotes, people's emotional reactions to topics.

02

Always have a facilitator and a note taker in the session and make use of whiteboards, sticky notes and flipcharts. Take a photo of content on the whiteboards/sticky notes so you can refer to this later.

03

Make sure you explain any answers will be confidential.

04

Listen more than you speak.

05

Keep the conversation flowing from one question to another.

06

Address disruptors who try to take the discussion off on a tangent.

07

Bring people into the conversation who may be less vocal.

08

Select your venue carefully keeping in mind that the type of room and the environment can have a significant impact on people's openness.

09

Let the audience members know what will happen next.

10

Look to identify any potential stars that could come across well on film and/or have a story that would really resonate.

Common Mistakes

01

Giving one person too much “air-time”

02

Keeping everyone sat down

03

Getting stuck on one topic of conversation

04

Coming into the focus group with the solution already decided

05

Representing what the business wants, rather than what the audience needs

06

Accepting proxies for audience members

07

Including SMEs in the focus group whose job it is to make sure things are done a certain way

08

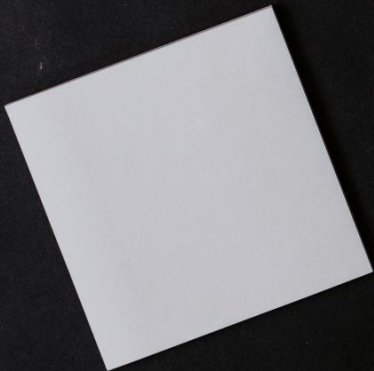
Mixing senior with more junior people

09

Having a solution in mind before you start the focus groups

10

Not leaving yourself enough time after a focus group to collect your thoughts



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