Using Workshops in Qualitative Research for Greater Consumer Involvement & Increased Client Buy In

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Using Workshops in Qualitative Research for Greater Consumer Involvement and Increased Client Buy in, Written by Joanna Chrzanowska, Genesis ConsultingWhy have workshops?
Many clients now have an extensive knowledge base of their consumers, and standard qualitative research finds it harder to deliver the insights. Increasing numbers of researchers are becoming trained as workshop facilitators (there are a number of overlapping skills) and are using workshops to
- Change the type of relationships they have with consumers; treating them as partners in the discovery process
- Add value to the relationship they have with clients, by getting involved at more stages of the project and making better use of the findings.
What kind of workshops?
Depending on the objectives, workshops with consumers or clients alone, or workshops where consumer, clients, stakeholders all interact.
What are the characteristics of a workshop?
- Because the participants (note, not â€˜respondentsâ€™) are active, not just reactive, workshops have potential to be more creative than focus groups, and generate more buy in than client meetings
- They thrive on difference and diversity instead of seeing it as a problem
- Workshops have team building benefits
- The use of democratic techniques evens out differences in power and roles
- Workshops offer flexibility? - different sizes and structures of groups
- They allow movement, techniques, exploration, extensive stimulus, work? with complex issues
- It is hard to manipulate the outcomes of a well run workshop.
When can you run workshops?
- Prior to research/ early stages
o?Exploratory scoping of subject
o?Clarify needs/objectives
o?Generate or develop ideas/ stimulus
o?Get client buy in to research
- With â€˜consumersâ€™/ public (as part of the research process)
o?Complex issues with non-experts
o?Can include new information
o?Large range of communications with wide ranging sample
o?Debate between and integrate different audiences
o?Participants can propose own issues
- With â€˜consumersâ€™/public AND client (â€˜Immersionâ€™)
o?Give client first-hand experience & understanding of consumer perspective
o?Direct exchange of ideas between client and consumer
o?Iterative/ development and refinement of plans, ideas
-Post Research to take forward findings
-Action planning
-Client buy in to and develop action
-To integrate learning
-To define future research needs
-Brainstorming / idea generation
How do you run workshops?
Workshops benefit from extensive and detailed planning and a resource to hand of a wide range of techniques to cope with unexpected situations. They also require that the facilitator have a specific skill set:
- Planning and setting up skills as a basic
- Modelling appropriate behaviour -? being even-handed, consistent, sensitive, enthusiastic
- Ensuring involvement and participation, confronting distractions, opportunities, needs
- Keeping facilitator neutrality -? not a participant, leader, opinion former, authority
- Enabling understanding - clarifying, helpful questions, listening, integrating ideas
- Keeping it task related - rerouting the unproductive, using tools & models, summaries
- Pushing for action outcomes -? specific and doâ€™able
- Managing time and following through
Facilitator responsibilities
- Fully understanding the clientâ€™s brief
- Designing a workshop to fit their needs
- Planning and setting up the workshop
- Facilitating what has been agreed â€“ managing processes and people

- Collecting outputs and making sure they are in actionable form (pre-agreed)

Facilitators design and manage the process, but are not responsible for the content that emerges from the workshop. This is because participants are required to take responsibility for themselves within the overall structure. Workshops can be more risky than focus groups because the outcomes are less predictable, but that is also the reason why they are valuable.

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