

# Table of Contents

---

Acknowledgments	ix
Introduction to the Focus Group Kit	xi
<b>1. About This Book</b>	<b>1</b>
An Introduction to Focus Groups	1
First Encounters With Focus Groups	4
<b>2. Why Should You Use Focus Groups?</b>	<b>9</b>
Listening and Learning	9
Strengths of Qualitative Data	11
Projects That Use Focus Groups	13
Problem Identification	13
Planning	14
Implementation	14
Assessment	15

<b>3. Focus Groups in Use: Six Case Studies</b>	<b>17</b>
Case 1: Designing a First Effort at Quality Improvement	18
Case 2: Evaluating a Training Center	19
Case 3: Assessing Community Needs	20
Case 4: Creating an Educational Booklet	22
Case 5: Generating Items for a Survey Questionnaire	24
Case 6: Anticipating Responses to a Major Change	25
<b>4. What Focus Groups Are (and Are Not)</b>	<b>29</b>
Focus Groups Are a Research Method	29
Focus Groups Are Focused	31
Focus Groups Use Group Discussions	32
A Few Things That Are Not Focus Groups	33
<b>5. A Capsule History of Focus Groups</b>	<b>37</b>
Social Science Origins	37
The Move to Marketing	39
A Widespread Research Method	40
The Future of Focus Groups	43
<b>6. Some Myths About Focus Groups</b>	<b>45</b>
Focus Groups Are Low-Cost and Quick	46
Focus Groups Require Professional Moderators	47
Focus Groups Require Special Facilities	48
Focus Groups Must Consist of Strangers	49
Focus Groups Will Not Work for Sensitive Topics	49
Focus Groups Produce Conformity	50
Focus Groups Must Be Validated by Other Methods	51
Focus Groups Tell You How People Will Behave	52
Some Beliefs That Should Be Encouraged	52

<b>7. What Do You Get From Focus Groups?</b>	<b>55</b>
Reasonable Expectations	55
Appropriate Uses for Focus Groups	57
Consider Focus Groups When There Is a Gap Between People	57
Consider Focus Groups When Investigating Complex Behaviors and Motivations	58
Consider Focus Groups When You Want to Understand Diversity	59
Consider Focus Groups When You Need a Friendly, Respectful Research Method	59
Inappropriate Uses for Focus Groups	60
Avoid Focus Groups When They Imply Commitments You Cannot Keep	60
Avoid Focus Groups If the Participants Are Not Comfortable With Each Other	61
Avoid Focus Groups When the Topic Is Not Appropriate for the Participants	61
Avoid Focus Groups When a Project Requires Statistical Data	62
<b>8. Resources Required to Do Focus Groups</b>	<b>65</b>
Planning	66
Recruiting	67
Moderating	68
Analyzing and Reporting	69
Other Costs	71
<b>9. It's All About Relationships:</b>	
<b>Working Together</b>	<b>75</b>
Sponsors	76
Relationships Between Sponsors and Researchers	76
The Relationship Between the Sponsor and the Participants	78

Researchers	81
Participants	81
<b>10. Ethical Issues</b>	<b>85</b>
Are Participants “At Risk?”	85
Privacy: Basic Issues	87
Privacy: The Sponsor’s Relationship to the Participants	89
Privacy: What the Participants Learn About Each Other	90
Dealing With Stressful Topics	91
Setting Boundaries	93
Protecting the Sponsor’s Privacy	94
<b>11. Checklist: Are Focus Groups Right for You?</b>	<b>97</b>
References	99
Index to the Focus Group Kit	101
About the Author	103