
Protocol for Focus Groups

Introduction

Note to facilitators: suggestions for actual speech are in *italics*.

Facilitators introduce themselves.

We are conducting a review of factors affecting why people do or do not join the organisation, and why they stay or leave. Our reason for this is to ensure that we define the type of organisation we wish to become. The ... mean we will be recruiting ... people over the next year, and as part of our recruitment and employment strategy we need to know how you feel about working here. We can then build on any positive experiences and try to redress any negative ones.

Focus groups like this one allow us to get your honest opinions, without which we would be working with a series of assumptions and anecdotal tales. So, we urge you to speak openly. None of your comments will be attributed to individuals, and all the findings will be compiled without names of attendees.

We will be asking each of you to complete a questionnaire at the end of the session. Again, none of these will be traceable to any individual.

Ask each participant to introduce himself/herself.

Setting the context

This section is about finding out how people feel in broad terms about working for the organisation.

Note: For women-only/ethnic minority/part-time employee/employee with disability or other 'special interest' focus groups, the facilitator should (as appropriate) ensure that the discussion focuses on the specific group instead of all staff to ensure the smaller group is assessed. Additional suggested questions focusing on specific groups are given in **red**.

I'd like to start by getting a feel for what it's like to work here - can you just throw at me the first words which come into your head about what it's like working in this organisation.

(Write up on a flip chart and discuss each word in turn.)

If we had to choose only three of these words to give someone who is about to join the organisation an idea of what it's like to work here, which would you choose?

(Give each participant 3 votes to distribute as they wish [i.e. 1/1/1, 2/1 or 3] and note top scoring choices.)

Specifically, what does it feel like as ... [specific group member] to work here? Is there anything you would change from (or add to) the words and choices you have made? (flip chart)

Moving on now, what are the best things about working here?

(Write up on flip chart and discuss.)

And which things would you like to improve?

(Write up and discuss, noting suggestions for improvement)

Again, if you looked at the above from the perspective of ... [specific group member], would you change or add anything? (note any changes or amendments to emphasis)

Engaged performance factors

Here is set of cards. Each card has written on it an attribute covering the full range of reasons why people come to work. This includes the obvious reasons around earning money, but also other many other things which matter to people, such as job training, interesting work and so on.

Facilitators lead a card sort of the attributes, to identify the top 8 attributes **in terms of importance for improvement**. Emphasise this to the group. If possible, you should also identify the top 3 within the 8.

Specific groups to focus on their perspective

Why have you selected these 8 in particular?

Debate on:

- *Against **each** of these 8, where does the business now stand against the level definitions?*
- *Where **should** the business be against these, and what is the gap?*

Put a ring on the card where the business is now, and a tick where you believe the business should be (alternatively, to save on the cards, make notes on a flip-chart).

Lay the sets of cards out on the table

- *What can we do to address the gaps? Discuss each attribute in turn. Go into as much detail as possible.*
- *Among the gaps, what are a) the absolute priorities (the top two or three) and b) what does the group think should be addressed, in both cost and ease of change terms?*

(Facilitators: you will probably need to take a vote on this unless there is clear consensus. Flip-chart the selected attributes and give each member 3 points to distribute in any way they please.)

Do you know of any organisations in which the practices are, in your opinion, worth copying?

(Probe)

Note to Facilitators: Your organisations may consider certain elements to be of particular interest. If those elements were not amongst the 8 attributes selected, ask the group how the company stacks

up against these and the effect of these in terms of encouraging or preventing people/specific groups from working for the organisation.

Wrap up

Going back to the original purpose of the session (why people/specific groups do or do not choose to work for the organisation) have we covered all the matters you feel are relevant? Is there anything else you would like to highlight? (flipchart)

If there was just one thing you could change, what would it be? (flipchart the responses) Why? Finally, I'd like you all to take a few minutes to complete this diagnostic

(Facilitators: explain the instructions, re-emphasise the confidentiality & ideally get to complete at the end of the session. If time has run out, ask to return to HR/post to Hay by the indicated date and stress that we want **all** the copies back.)

Finish by thanking the participants and explaining the next steps in the process.