

Workshops

What are ... workshops?

Workshops are usually one day events that bring people together to explore various aspects of a specific issue.

They usually consist of between 10 and 30 people and normally have a broader remit than a focus group.

They may include breakout sessions where the people are split up into smaller groups to explore one or more aspects of the workshops theme in more detail before coming back and presenting their conclusions to the whole workshop audience.

Workshops should be facilitated by someone who is independent and does not have a direct stake in the issue being discussed.

Why use this technique?

It allows for the exploration of people's views, motives, desires, aspirations, ambitions, values and behaviours. They are useful for acquiring large quantities of open-ended information. Often used to clarify and identify issues prior to implementation. It can help to increase understanding of people's motives and behaviour.

This is an effective method to use when consulting with Stakeholders and Partners.

When should you use it?

This technique should be used when:

- Looking for qualitative feedback on proposals
- Generating new ideas
- Identifying issues for larger consultation practices
- Tracking perceptions of issues
- Seeking to understand behaviour and motivation
- Confidence constrains people participating in a one-to-one interview



What type of information does it produce?


Qualitative. Even one focus group skilfully facilitated will generate a large volume of qualitative data.

Workshops are more qualitative as they are exploring issues rather than reaching decisions.

What are the advantages?

- It is helpful in obtaining wide-ranging views
- It enables people to express their views
- It can generate detailed information
- It is useful for exploring sensitive and difficult issues
- Participants have the opportunity to fully interact
- You can set the framework and parameters of the discussion and intervene to keep it on course
- You can control the flow of the discussion but should not pre-judge the outcome
- The facilitator can respond to negative non-verbal signals
- It can include people traditionally excluded or uncomfortable in more formal surroundings
- It is quicker than interviewing 12 people.

What are the disadvantages?

- Small numbers mean you cannot extrapolate results to the whole population
 - It is not statistically reliable
 - It may not be representative of wider population
 - danger of one or two members influencing the group data
 - It is time consuming
 - It requires trained facilitators and observers
 - People might not attend
 - You may have to hire equipment and venue and pay incentives
 - recruitment may be time-consuming
 - You may have to hire a suitable venue
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What are the costs and practicalities?

- It often requires trained facilitators and observers who may have to be commissioned.
- You may have to hire a venue
- You may have to pay incentives for people to attend (perhaps to cover travel costs)
- You must be clear about the purpose of the exercise and know who should make up the target group
- You need to consider how easily hard to reach groups can get involved? (E.g. Are any special arrangements required)?

