

Strategic Focus Group Testing Explained by Fallon Research & Communications, Inc.



Who uses focus group testing:

- Public agencies to explore citizen satisfaction or test ideas for services or funding
- Campaigns to explore concepts or gain insight into problems and proposed solutions
- Corporations & private entities to learn why the public or consumers hold opinions about complex topics and how to distill them into more comprehensible messages

Why do it:

- Gain unvarnished candor about image problems, controversies, unexpected election results or acquire feedback about new ideas to refine them
- Serves as a “test kitchen” to gauge reactions in a controlled environment to minimize risks
- Recalibrate language used to communicate
- Evaluate effectiveness of ads and commercials
- Test assumptions and understand rationales – that is, understand why people hold the opinions that they do – rather than measure them. Focus groups yield qualitative research that is non-generalizable (i.e. why, not how much), which is why they often precede surveys, so informed decisions can be made about topics to include

What does it cost:

- Typically, about \$8,000 per session, or 2 sessions, back-to-back, for \$13,000 (paid in advance)
- The rates are fully-inclusive, covering all aspects of the studies, including moderator services
- Deliverables include a moderator’s guide (subject to final approval of the client), redacted session transcript and report of key findings & interpretations

Structure of the sessions:

- Semi-structured discussion with pre-determined open-ended questions for the moderator to use
- Use of some handout exercises to facilitate discussion, ballot test and avoid “band wagoning”
- Typically, 90 minutes at a facility with a two-way mirrored suite, so clients can anonymously observe (or using side-by-side hotel conference rooms and closed circuit television in areas that do not have a focus group facility, which costs \$500 more)

Populating the sessions (recruiting participant-respondents):

- Fallon Research conducts blind recruiting to avoid having respondents with atypical knowledge and ensure spontaneity by preventing them from researching topics beforehand
- Selection criteria is based on study parameters established by the client
- Respondents are incentivized by Fallon Research to ensure attendance

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