



# Continuous Improvement Toolkit

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## Focus Groups

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A **Focus Group** is a meeting that is conducted to obtain feedback on a particular topic from the point of view of a targeted participants. It is a type of **interview** that is made to a homogeneous group of people to collect their perception, opinions, feelings, ideas, and attitudes towards something. It provides an opportunity to share ideas and obtain an in-depth qualitative feedback through open questions and group dialogue.



Focus groups are commonly used in marketing research studies to acquire more knowledge about customers and markets. It is also used in project management and improvement initiatives to collect information from experts and professionals relevant to the subject matter. For example, a focus group can be used to design questionnaires before conducting a survey.

In the world of marketing, focus groups are seen as a reliable research tool to gather information on existing products or

services from a group of customers. They help understanding and prioritizing customer expectations and need, gaining insights into the satisfaction concerns, and verifying perceptions of a product or service. Focus groups are also used to acquire feedback on new products, services or concepts. Valuable information can be obtained about the potential market acceptance of a new product or service. They allow observing people interacting with a physical product or a prototype, and this is hard to obtain from other data collection methods.

Focus groups can be undertaken through different media. Face-to-face meetings are the most common, however, teleconference and online meetings are also possible and can be effective. The participants in an online focus group are connected via the internet, and participation in a teleconference only requires access to a telephone.

## How to Conduct a Focus Group:

- Define the objectives of the focus group.
- Decide who should moderate the focus group to facilitate the discussion. Consider hiring an outside facilitator if needed.
- Select the participants based of their relevance and potential contribution to achieving the objectives.
- Prepare the outline of the focus group and the list of questions.
- Invite the participants by mail at least two weeks prior the meeting. A follow-up call is required to confirm attendance two days prior the meeting.
- Conduct the focus group:
  - Start by stating your objectives.

- Ask questions in an interactive way where participants are free to talk with other group members.
- Allow everyone to respond to every question asked.
- Record important ideas and observed conversation patterns.
- Before completing, ask the participants for additional input or comments.
- Process then analyze the data. Data analysis can take place at group or individual levels.

## Further Information:

- It is important that the facilitator acts as a neutral person and support freedom of speech.
- Affinity diagrams are often used to find themes in the comments of participants.

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