

Market Segmentation Focus Group Discussion Guide

(Moderator notes are in italics)

Script Overview

Hello, I'm _____ from Pacific Consulting Group. I will be moderating our discussion today. The topic we'll be discussing is your interest in and experience with exporting. We want your help so government services such as Commercial Services, Export-Import Bank, and the Manufacturing Extension Partnership can communicate and improve the services they provide you and your organization, and others like you. Your input will help Pacific Consulting Group develop a questionnaire that will be conducted by phone later this year

I would like to thank all of you for calling in. Our discussion will take about one hour. We would like to know your real attitudes and feelings, so please be as open with us as you can. I am part of an independent company who has been hired by Commercial Services in the Department of Commerce to objectively evaluate the service, so please feel free to be as candid as possible. We are recording this session so I don't have to take notes while you talk. We also have some people listening in. We will not be reporting individual identities; our focus here is on your experiences and opinions. You will need a piece of paper and pen or pencil.

We are going to focus specifically on your experience with exporting and exporting services. The overall goal of the research is to develop a questionnaire that can be used to gather feedback from a much wider audience of users.

Introductions

Before we get started, let's go around and quickly introduce ourselves and please tell us the name of your company, your business, the percentage of your business products and/or services that are exported, and how long you have been exporting. Let's start with **(NAME)**.

- Respondent
- Member organization
- Export history

Explore each of their answers a little in order to get the dialogue started, to indicate interest, and to encourage participation.

Focus Group Question Guide

1. Please tell me why you have chosen to export.
 - a. Probe

- b. What perceptions of the opportunities in foreign markets did you have prior to exporting? How did your perceptions align with reality?
- c. How successful would you rate your export business?
- d. What are the perceptions and realities of the hassles, expenses, or barriers associated with exporting? What would help resolve these?
- e. What are the key issues surrounding your exporting?
- f. What are some significant obstacles?
- g. What has influenced your success with exporting?
- h. What type of investment have you made in assuring foreign sales?
2. In general, have you used governmental services to assist your export business?
 - a. If yes, which ones?
 - b. If no, why not?
3. What services did you use?
 - a. How would you describe your experience?
 - b. Continue to probe
4. Are you aware of or have you used the Commercial Services? Probe.
5. Are you aware of or have you used the Export-Import Bank services? Probe.
6. Are you aware of or have you used the Manufacturing Export Partners? Probe.
7. Are you aware of or have you used Census services? Probe.
8. Are you aware of or have you used any other federal services? Who are they? Probe.
9. Where else have you turned for resources?
 - a. How did you hear about them?
 - b. What was your experience.
 - c. Would you use them again?
10. How do you become aware of exporting resource providers?
11. Are you willing to pay for services?
 - a. If yes, how do you determine a fair price?
12. If you didn't consider a federal agency as a business partner, why not?
13. What other needs do you have?

Previous Experience Criteria

I'd like to talk about your overall experience or unmet needs with federal agency services. I'd like each of you to think in broad terms at first, and then we'll get to the more specific ways in which you judge the service you received. What we are trying to do here is develop a ranked list for the service provided.

Okay, let's start by having each of you write down 4 or 5 areas which you feel determine whether you are or would be satisfied or dissatisfied with the service you receive from a federal agency. For example, if I asked you to rate service in a restaurant, you might think about several things: the food itself, the way it was served, the physical environment, and what you pay. It's not just one aspect of service that's important, but a combination of several. After we identify some broad categories, then we'll go back and discuss each one in more detail.

Are there any questions?

Allow a few minutes of silence for respondents to think about this, then ask each one to share his/her list with the group. Note each category to be probed in the next part of the discussion. Probing (NOTE: Do NOT read category headings. Only probe when respondents are finished speaking about a particular part of the process.)

The decision about which of the following topics to discuss will be based on the population of the group and participants' conversation.

What attributes would you deem critical to a business partner such as a federal agency in assisting you with exporting: (possible responses; probe for more details)

- Responsiveness
- Customer service
- Working with one assigned person
- Access to online resources
- Ability to meet in person
- Business knowledge
- Networking opportunities
- Contracts in foreign countries
- Competence
- Ability to quickly size up what the company needs and customize the solution
- Financial assistance

Add any additional categories mentioned by respondents to this list and probe those as well. As conversation winds down, select which larger categories are relevant to this group and will be discussed.

Now, let's take each of the broad categories that you've identified and find out what criteria you would use to decide just how good or bad the service is for that category. Let's return to the idea of a ranked list. If we are evaluating the restaurant and the larger category is food, some of the more detailed things we would consider might be the quality of the food, the quantity of food, how well it was cooked and seasoned, etc.

Let's start with (FIRST CATEGORY). What do you expect from (FIRST CATEGORY)
Probe each topic you select for specifics that determine satisfaction.

Which of the above items are most important to you?

Let's talk about specific examples of excellent service you received, and examples that fell short of expectations. *Probe for specific examples.*

Wrap-up

Do you have any additional advice for federal agencies on how to improve export support and service? Those are all the questions that I have. On behalf of both PCG and the Department of Commerce, thank you for your time and participation today.