

SUPPORTING STATEMENT: SECTION B

Commercial Service Market Segmentation Study of Moderate U.S. Exporters Focus Groups
February 2007

SECTION B. COLLECTIONS OF INFORMATION EMPLOYING STATISTICAL METHODS

1. Universe and Respondent Selection

In order to lessen the burden on the public and to defray government costs, it will be the responsibility of Pacific Consulting Group (PCG) to recruit client focus group participants. PCG will recruit and schedule eight telephone focus groups.

2. Procedures for Collecting Information

Stratification and Sample Selection: PCG will recruit a balanced set of small and medium-sized U.S. exporters from across the industry spectrum. PCG will confirm 9 participants to ensure that at least 5 participants attend each focus group. A private vendor from a list of small and medium-sized businesses will recruit exporters.

Specialized Sampling Procedures: There are no unusual problems requiring specialized sampling procedures.

3. Methods to Maximize Response

The client focus groups will be conducted by telephone. This method was chosen in order to get the most statistically diverse and random sample to increase the validity of the data. It will also relieve the burden of traveling for the participants. A “multiple category” design will enable feedback to be gathered from a variety of client groups. Each group will be asked a series of eleven to thirteen questions. These questions are tailored for each target audience; to facilitate analysis, the questioning route will be identical across groups in the same target audience. Focus group research suggests that a “questioning route,” in which questions are scripted and arranged in a specific order, is best suited to public-sector focus groups using in-house moderators. This approach, rather than a “topic guide” that simply outlines issues to be covered, cultivates consistency across groups and thus improves analysis of results.

The questioning route is structured to harvest maximum feedback from participants. Initial questions set the scene, establish the commonalities between group participants, and get participants comfortable talking about the topic. The middle questions are the highest yield questions, which will generate the most information and take the most time to discuss. Closing questions allow participants to share any additional thoughts or topics that were not covered; these questions also allow participants to give advice on improving the focus groups for future sessions.

In order to maximize response, the moderators will:

- Respond to participant comments
- Pause after a participant comments to prompt additional points of view
- Probe participants for further comments and feedback
- Get everyone involved

In order to enlist cooperation:

- The purpose and objectives of the project will be effectively and accurately presented, relating its goal to the participants
- Care will be taken to ensure that the participants are not threatened by the task or the use of their responses
- Only effective, well-trained moderators will be used

4. Testing Procedures

Since questioning route construction is one of the most critical stages in the focus group development process, a great deal of thought has gone into the design issues involved (e.g. development and pre-testing) regarding the client focus groups. In order to prevent the resulting data from being seriously misleading, PCG has worked with ITA and the appropriate program and field staff within the organization to make sure the concepts are clearly defined and questions unambiguously phrased. Additionally, designing a suitable focus group questioning route requires attention be given to its length and the order of in which questions are asked—long questioning routes are apt to induce respondent fatigue and errors arising from inattention, incomplete answers, and refusals. When conducting a focus group, it is important that the moderators are extensively trained and prepared. At different stages during its development, the entire questioning route will be tested in-house (e.g. mock focus groups) to identify weaknesses and potential difficulties and to ensure that the questions are clear and comprehensible.

5. Contacts for Statistical Aspects of Data Collection

Individuals who will be or have been consulting on the statistical aspects of the design of the ITA user satisfaction surveys, as well as those individuals who will actually collect and/or analyze the information, are:

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