

**U.S. Mint Focus Group Research  
Discussion Guide  
Customers**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

**According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 1525-0012-\_\_.**

- **Ground Rules:** Audio-taping, confidentiality, candor, cell phones, pagers, etc.
- **Background & Objectives:** The purpose of today's discussion is three-fold; namely to: 1) learn about your current coin collecting interests, behaviors and purchases; 2) gather your feedback regarding current U.S. Mint products; and 3) ascertain your reactions to some new product and marketing ideas.
- **Introductions:** First name, types of coins that are especially liked, length of time collecting and/or buying U.S. coins.

**II. CURRENT COIN COLLECTING/BUYING PRACTICES**

- ***What types of coins and coin-related products have you bought from the U.S. Mint? Probe...***
- ***Thinking specifically about the coins that you buy from the U.S. Mint, what specific products and how much of each do you typically purchase directly from the U.S. Mint in a year? Probe...***
  - Annual coin sets
  - Commemorative coins
  - Bags/rolls
  - American Eagle Proof and Uncirculated coins
  - American Buffalo
  - First Spouse Coins
  - Presidential \$1 coins
  - Medals
  - Other items (e.g., specialty products)

- ***What types of coins do you expect to purchase from the U.S. Mint in the next year? Probe...***
  - Annual coin sets (e.g., quarters, uncirculated, proofs, silver proofs, etc.)
  - Commemorative coins
  - Bags/rolls
  - American Eagle proof and uncirculated coins (e.g., silver, gold, and platinum)
  - American Buffalo
  - First Spouse Coins
  - Presidential \$1 coins
  - Medals
  - Other items (e.g., specialty products)
- ***What U.S. coins, if any, do you buy from other sources such as dealers, Internet auctions, etc.? Probe...***
  - Which specific coins/sets?
  - Precious metals (e.g., American Eagle Investment [bullion] coins)?
  - For items that could be obtained directly from the Mint: Why use these other sources and not the U.S. Mint?

### **III. ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT COIN PRODUCTS, PRODUCT BREADTH, AND PRODUCT QUALITY**

*[Distribute core products.]*

- ***Overall, what are your impressions of the coin products that the U.S. Mint produces? Probe...***
  - Which ones are best? Worst?
  - How about their artistry, appearance, etc.?
  - What about their packaging?
- ***Explore product interest/preference issues identified by U.S. Mint team***

#### IV. CUSTOMER INTERACTIONS/SERVICE ASSESSMENT

- ***For what reasons, if any, have you contacted the U.S. Mint via telephone or written communication?***
  - What reason prompted your contact (e.g., inquiry about delivery, product availability, etc.)?
  - What was your overall assessment of these interactions?
  - **What were your specific reasons for dissatisfaction with this interaction (if applicable), and what do you think the U.S. Mint representative should have done differently?**
  
- ***Overall, what is your assessment of the type/level of customer service you receive from the U.S. Mint?***
  - Does it exceed, meet, or fall short of your expectations? Why? **Probe** whether customers have “given up” on receiving support
  - Is it what you prefer or should it be different? How?
  - **Probe** to what degree you believe the customer service professionals are...
    - Helpful?
    - Knowledgeable about product? (**Probe** knowledge of availability, features, etc.)
    - Courteous and respectful?
    - Responsive to your needs?
    - Able (and/or empowered) to address your concerns/issues?
  - How do you feel about the wait times you experience when contacting a representative?
  
- ***Thinking about placing your orders, inquiring about your orders, and other reasons you contact the U.S. Mint, how does its customer service compare with other companies/service providers that you deal with?***
  - What makes the U.S. Mint better or worse?
  - What would the U.S. Mint need to do to set the standard or offer the best customer service of any companies you deal with?
  - How could order placement be improved?
  - How could its handling of informational inquiries be improved?
  - How could its problem resolution processes be improved? **Probe...**
    - Helpfulness of representatives in seeking to solve your problem
    - Speed of response/resolution
    - Fairness

- **Let's now talk about your receipt of orders. How would you rate each of the following...**
  - Accuracy of the order (e.g., completeness, more or less than ordered)?
  - Condition of the merchandise when package is opened?
  - Packing materials used and way the order was packed?
  - Timeliness of receiving your order?
  
- **What problems, if any, have you had with your orders?**
  - When did these problems occur?
  - What was wrong? (Describe in detail.)
  - To what extent have you had any billing problems?
  - How about delayed delivery time?
  - What about damages or poor product quality?
  - Other problems?
  - In your view, how was the problem handled - to your satisfaction or not?
  - What about the speed with which your problems were handled/resolved?
  - Was the problem resolved fairly or not?
  
- **Consider the subscription ordering program (if applicable). How would you assess or evaluate that program overall?**
  - What works well and what does not work so well?
  - What, if anything, would you like to be changed?
  - Do you always get subscription notices?
  - Are these notices clear? Informative? Missing important information?
  - What about having different types of payment options (e.g., account draw down, automatic debit from credit card on file, etc.)?

## **V. PERCEPTIONS OF THE U.S. MINT (SALES AND MARKETING))**

- **What are your overall impressions of the U.S. Mint?**
  
- **How well do you feel the U.S. Mint is doing in its marketing of collectible coin products? Probe...**
  - Positives
  - Negatives (**Probe** any objections to things the U.S. Mint is doing)
  - Performance on introduction of new products
  - What could the U.S. Mint do better for customers? (Interject: If you were Director of the Mint, what (practical) things would you do?)

*[Capture ideas on flipchart.]*

## **VI. MISCELLANY & WRAP-UP**

*[Complete rating sheets defined by U.S. Mint related to specific topics discussed.]*

- ***Probe additional issues identified by U.S. Mint; thank and conclude***