

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION OUTLINE – POWER DATA USERS

I. Introduction

A. Purpose of meeting: One thing that you all have in common is that as part of your job responsibilities you gather and analyze statistical data some of which is produced outside your organizations. That data may come from government sources or even private sector providers. We are going to talk about your experiences using data and get your opinions about the different sources you turn to for your data needs. Let me assure you once again that this is not a sales meeting of any kind. I don't have anything to sell you. This is a form of marketing research and all I'm interested in are your opinions.

B. About focus groups

1. Form of market research, not selling anything
2. Discussion will last about 90 minutes
3. Audiotaping/Videotaping
4. One-way mirror; associates viewing, notes may come in
5. All comments will be kept anonymous and confidential
6. Have courage of convictions; don't let group sway you
7. No right or wrong answers, only your opinion
8. Don't have to raise hands; but speak one at a time
9. Work for independent market research company
10. Turn off cell phones

C. Respondent introduction

1. Name
2. Name of agency and section or department (name of company/organization)

II. How Organizations are Using Data

- A. I would like to begin tonight by asking you to talk to me about your role within your organization, particularly as it relates to the gathering and analysis of business and economic data. Again, we are focusing on data that is produced by sources outside of your organization. Who would like to start?
1. Are there others in your organization who using “outside” data like yourself?
 - a. In your department/section? (How many users?)
 - b. In other areas of your organization? (Which ones?)
 2. What types of projects are you involved in that require you to use business and economic data?
 - a. That is, what are you using the data for?
 - b. Are the other data users working on similar or different types of projects?
 3. Is the “outside” data you use for these projects supplemented with primary data that is generated internally by your organization?
 4. What percent of your time is involved in the collection and analysis of business and economic data?
 5. How are you using the data? That is, what is your level of involvement with the actual data (serious data manipulation, modeling, just pulling key numbers, etc.)

III. Sources of Data Outside the Organization

- A. What sources outside of your organization do you typically turn to for the business and economic data you need? (RECORD)
1. Overall, do you use multiple data sources or just one?
 - a. For data needs in a specific area or topic, do you have choices of providers?
 2. What is it about the data provider(s) you use that sets them apart from others?
 - a. Appropriateness of subject matter, time-frame, geography, etc.
 - b. Quality of data (accuracy, sample size, consistency)
 - c. Depth of data (allows for application to specific sub-groups/geography)
 - d. Reputation of the provider
 - e. Cost
 - f. Provider offers technical support to users
 3. How do you typically access data for outside sources?
 - a. Online, hard copy, sent on disks, etc.
 - b. Mobile applications

- B. From your perspective, what constitutes “good” data?
 - 1. That is, what are factors you either look for or that make your life easier when using data from these “outside” sources?
 - a. Easy to access (access tools)
 - b. Timely (up-to-date)
 - c. Ability to manipulate
 - d. In a format that is easy to use
 - e. Accurate
 - f. Fit (answers my questions, don’t have to postulate)
 - g. Data breakdowns at the geographic level you need
 - h. Consistent in terms of methodology, definitions, collection, etc.
 - i. Technical support is available

IV. Awareness, Perceptions and Use of the Economic Census Data

- A. Thinking just about federal government data sources, (which ones come to mind) which ones do you use?
- B. If not mentioned: How familiar are you with data that comes from the Census Bureau?
- C. What types of data, if any do you use from the Census Bureau?
- D. How familiar are you specifically with economic statistics from the Census Bureau and the Economic Census data?
 - 1. What types of data are you aware of that the Economic Census provides?
 - a. *Note: We may want to ask about specific data products to see if they know they come from the Economic Census*
 - 2. How often is it conducted?
 - 3. How did you first become aware of the Economic Census?
- E. Are you using data from the Economic Census (or economic statistics from the Census Bureau)?
 - 1. For what types of projects are you using Economic Census data?
- F. Thinking about some of the factors we discussed earlier, what are your impressions of or your experience with the Economic Census data in terms of:
 - 1. Easy to access (access tools)
 - 2. Timely (up-to-date)
 - 3. Ability to manipulate
 - 4. In a format that is easy to use
 - 5. Accurate

6. Fit (answers my questions, don't have to postulate)
 7. Data breakdowns at the geographic level you need
 8. Consistent in terms of methodology, definitions, collection, etc.
 9. Technical support is available
- G. If not using Economic Census data, why not?
1. Not aware
 2. Not appropriate for our needs (explain)
 3. Using other sources
 4. Problems using Economic Census data in the past (explain)
 5. Timeliness
- H. As a data provider, what could the Economic Census do to improve their data or their service to you?
- I. Are you aware of their communications to data users?
1. What do you recall?

V. Closing

- A. Are there any final thoughts/feelings you can share about the how the Economic Census can better inform you about their data products or services?