L&E research

6 STEPS TO PERFECT QUAL

The L&E trust guide to ensure the success of your project

STEP 3

FIELDWORK AND DATA COLLECTION IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

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CONTENTS

STEP THREE: FIELDWORK & DATA COLLECTION IN QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

In a world focused on 'how much,' it's qualitative research that digs deep to uncover the truth in consumer behavior. If the goal of qual is to explore rather than confirm, then the best qualitative research is in the art of asking the right questions, with the right people, and sharing the journey they take you on, in order to result in true insight.

Our series of six white papers and webinars is designed to support you every step along the way in your project – to provide a guide to the key elements that will drive success and how we at L&E can help you.

Step 3 will guide you through fieldwork and data collection best practices to provide you with the best methods and practical tips to optimize the quality and depth of your data.

INTRODUCTION TO FIELDWORK AND DATA COLLECTION

Fieldwork and data collection might sound a bit drab, but it’s far from it.

Qualitative fieldwork techniques (as well as their outputs) have dramatically improved over the last few years in depth, speed, accuracy and efficiency due to a killer combination of technology and great minds.

This paper will explore new developments within fieldwork and data collection, from the best techniques to practical tips to create an optimal environment for getting maximum insight into a company, brand, product or service.

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EMERGING FIELDWORK TECHNIQUES (AND THE TECHNOLOGY THEY RUN ON)

To keep up with the growing demands of clients, qual researchers need to be able to offer greater speed, creativity, flexibility and collaboration in their techniques. Therefore, just as important as choosing the right technique is making sure your methodology is backed by the latest technology.

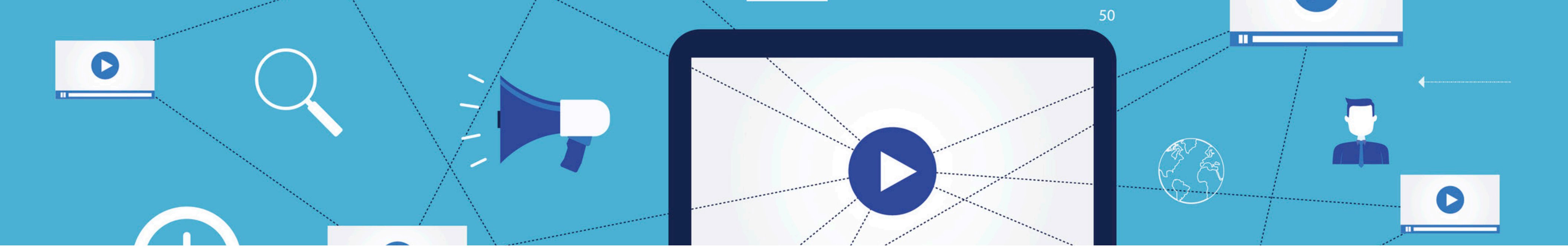
Technology is speeding up insight and bringing researchers, stakeholders, and brands closer than ever to the consumer. We're able to put respondents in a virtual environment, put stakeholders in the middle of the action, and accurately record sessions and edit video to provide engaging deliverables. The magic behind mastering fieldwork techniques comes in when new and old methods meet. Fieldwork techniques include the go-to focus group, in-depth interviews and online communities – to name a few – but the new technology backing these techniques are less commonly seen on the research scene.

Focus groups backed by 360° streaming, 21st century transcription and video editor tools. Technology has given researchers access to new and innovative ways to tap into the customer psyche and create a stronger, more visceral understanding of the marketplace, but it's hard to replace traditional face-to-face focus groups for delivering valuable insight.

Focus groups maximize the power behind a combination of minds – the researcher, the moderator, and the consumers – and provide opportunity to predict, discuss, brainstorm, or gather feedback. Focus groups encourage creativity and flexibility through an iterative approach where consumer insight can continue to drive the results.

There are several reasons a researcher would choose a focus group over alternative techniques. Focus groups are ideal for the following:

- Generate new ideas driven by consumers
- Determine how to simplify a complex activity e.g. complicated purchasing process
- Identify customer needs and pin down the primary buying motive
- Identify how a product is being used or brainstorm new motives for use
- Test new products or improve the product before it hits the market



- Explore a concept using stimulus aids
- Understand brand/product perceptions and level of satisfaction/room for improvement

However, you should never use a focus group if there is a concern for bias introduced by others in a group setting.

Focus groups are a great way to collect in-depth data, but the data is nothing if you can't pull it together into a stunning report and share it with stakeholders in an engaging way. Live streaming in HD and 360° view cameras offers a collaborative viewing platform for the ultimate stakeholder and brand engagement, anywhere in the world. With video being the ultimate storytelling medium to power informed business decisions, the right technology is required to analyze the wealth of data stored within video content to find the ultimate story. L&E Research's 360° streaming solution uses video analysis at scale, and includes video marking, editing and clipping tools to make presentations a snap. And transcription services help interpret data with fast, secure and accurate solutions. The latest transcription solutions include online portals for easy placement, and provide tools for the researcher such as identifying keywords and themes – and highlight relevant concepts that get to the heart of the research. Transcription services such as those offered by L&E's partner Focus Forward are even able to turn around full transcriptions within just six hours.

In-depth interviews backed by video analytics. In-depth interviews are another valuable idea and insight-generating technique used in qualitative research. In-depth interviews are loosely structured, supporting a free, iterative process to explore additional points and even change direction. In-depth interviews, whether face-to-face, online, or over the phone, are valuable for projective techniques, probing and follow up questions.

So, why should researchers choose to gather insight from in-depth interviews? In-depth interviews allow flexibility in location and level of contact, and can target participants who are spread across a large geographical region. In-depth interviews are also beneficial when the subject is highly sensitive such as medical interviewing. Plus, interviews are a better method of reaching the best insight when you need to avoid biased input and group influence.

But in-depth interviews are time consuming and offer a lot of data, which then needs to be quickly turned into insight via audio-to-text solutions. The good news is such tools in speech-to-text technology, which translate real human behavior into insight with speech, actions, and sentiment, are readily available. Video capture and intelligence platforms such as LivingLens also support L&E in transcribing and analyzing the content so it becomes searchable, meaning you can quickly find the story and easily navigate to the moments that matter.

Online communities backed with in-the-moment tools. Market Research Online Communities (MROCs) are online communities of any size designed for the purpose of market research – a result of the widespread use of social media and online networking portals.

There are many benefits to using an online community. First, MROC's make it possible to conduct research over a longer period of time, for months or even years. Or, fast-moving industries can gather insight almost instantly from a readily available group of people without notice or preparation. Another benefit is that you can get insight from unprompted interaction and contribution. MROCs are also a great solution to reach and engage with hard to reach audiences.

Online communities create engaging studies for the participants. By giving respondents in-the-moment access through mobile and social media, MROCs places online qual in the hands of consumers, and within their environment, making reach much more cost effective. The tools support fully customized activities and collaborative projects to engage respondents while giving researchers fast access to respondent-driven insight in real time. Online qual platforms such as Aha! incorporate discussions, ideation, storytelling templates, collage tools, perpetual mapping tools, bulletin boards, video uploads, concept testing, and more, all available on a single platform or in a mobile app. The platform quickly collects data and offers management and analysis tools to get the most out of the data.

Utilizing all tools in one portal. L&E works closely with multiple technology partners to provide researchers with optimal insight, led by new research techniques such as 360° streaming, video analytics and in-the-moment online platforms. And with exciting emotional measurement tools like Isobar's Mindsight Direct, the power of qualitative greatly increases the choices you, the researcher, can make to solve business challenges. These tools can all be utilized on a single platform using the L&E Client Portal. Using one portal makes it easy to manage and utilize all of your insight in one place - to create a bigger impact among client teams and stakeholders.

L&E works closely with multiple technology partners to provide researchers with optimal insight led by new research techniques...

PRACTICAL TIPS ON MAKING YOUR RESPONDENTS AND CLIENTS MORE COMFORTABLE ON SITE

Of course, to run a successful focus group and benefit from many of the above techniques, you need to make sure your recruits are prepared to open-up fully and to participate actively. This means delivering an engaging, creative and comfortable environment.

In order to dig deep into the qualitative conversation, you need to overcome two big obstacles – the participants' lack of comfort and familiarity with each other, as well as the techniques being used. If you've got a good group of participants, then you've got a lot of inexperienced people in your group, which means certain techniques can be intimidating to the first-timers.

Fortunately there are a few ways to avoid the 'awkward' room, or at least work past it. The first suggestion is to bring your group of participants together to meet prior to conducting the research so that they can get to know each other, learn about the problem being addressed, and become more familiar with the particular qualitative techniques you plan to use. Or...utilize online platforms like Aha! to create collaborative exercises, combining the power of online and in-person to create the exceptional collaborative participant experience, enabling them to communicate with each other while also enabling you to dive deeper into their feelings and experiences.

Thinking outside the box and using unique, fun and creative approaches and activities can also increase the likelihood of generating innovative and exciting insights and ideas should time or budget not allow for a multi-mode project. Here are a few more tips:

» Make it cozy. Maybe a living room setup or even an offsite location where people actually meet (e.g. at a car dealership if the subject is car purchases) is an option?
» Give them time. Rather than the usual 90-120 minutes, many researchers are now doing four to eight hours (with breaks) to generate creativity, especially in new product development.

- Getting multiple perspectives (and changing the participant's view). Getting a full 360 degree view isn't just about the camera in the room. For example, if the objective is to build a new baby stroller, then your participants need to not only see the product from a parent's perspective, but they need to see it from a baby's perspective. It's not too much to ask them to image sitting in their baby's stroller.
- Visualize the ideas. Since many people relate to pictures more than words, using visuals can help to generate ideas that words can't inspire. At one time that was limited to images you could show participants onsite…now emotional measurement tools like Mindsight Direct, by Isobar (an L&E technology partner) enable imagery to be measured online, which can be done in addition to the in-person research experience (allowing you to focus more on emotional probing and subconscious drivers when you're in session).
- Overdose on supplies: Sticky notes and markers are great tools for encouraging discussion (and having it all recorded). Respondents can brainstorm ideas, make lists (challenges, strengths and weaknesses, do's and don'ts, etc.) or hypothesize use.
- Reveal the personality of the customer or brand. To optimize customer insight, you really need to pin down everything there is to know about the customer's personality, style and attitude. To get these answers, have respondents describe a typical customer at a party. What are they wearing? Who are they talking to? How are they behaving? This scenario also works for brands. If a brand were throwing a party, where would it be? Who would be there? What food was being served? What kind of music was playing? This is a great exercise to nail down the brand's true differentiator from its brand persona.

Visualize the ideas. Since many people relate to pictures more than words, using visuals can help to generate ideas that words can't inspire.

CHOOSING THE RIGHT FACILITY

When conducting face-to-face research, pinning down the right facility goes in hand with getting the right respondents. But out of the nearly 20,000 US cities, how do you choose the one that best matches your research design and your recruitment needs?

Here's a good checklist:

» If recruiting is most important (and we all know in qualitative that it is), then learn how the recruiting gets done. How big is their panel, and how many in their panel meet your specifications? What's the "plan B" if the database can't fulfill your needs: what other recruiting options do they have? What technologies and quality control solutions are used to quarantine cheaters-repeaters? What percentage of "virgin" recruits do they envision they will be able to fulfill for your study? How many Recruiters will they have working on your study? Good recruiting companies should have these answers readily available.

» Limit the options to only the cities where your target respondents actually live, and consider cities that are not over-researched. Participants in "lesser traveled" cities usually demonstrate more standard buying behavior and are less likely to be considered professional respondents, leading you to true insight driven by real people. Plus, less travel and fewer costs are often a pleasant byproduct of not choosing the usual cities.

Never let personal preferences or budgeting interfere with meeting your research goals and objectives. Remember, great research is like a great meal: great ingredients in the hands of experts!

- Thoroughly explore the facility's features and capabilities to ensure it has the right room size, the right technology, and the right equipment. The right tools can make all the difference between a good project, and a great one.
- And finally...know how deep the bench is with your facility partner. Is there someone with research design experience should you wish for a second opinion, or to assure you that there's no concern fulfilling your project? Who will manage your project in the event something happens to your assigned PM, who else is on the team? If recruiting is struggling, do they have more Recruiters available? Do they offer online portals to monitor recruiting progress?

On top of these main considerations, other factors may include travel time, cost, and proximity to headquarters locations or manufacturing plants. However, make sure these factors are second to the above, so that the most important considerations are prioritized to lead you to the right facility. Never let personal preferences or budgeting interfere with meeting your research goals and objectives. Remember, great research is like a great meal: great ingredients in the hands of experts!

HOW L&E CAN HELP

L&E Research supports researchers through the power of a strong network. Choosing a facility to conduct data collection is much more cost-effective when using facilities that are run by the same company across several cities. If facilities are connected, they will have similar processes and excellent communication between teams in different cities.

This strong network also applies to L&E's range of technology. L&E invested over 7 figures building its proprietary technology platform (FMP) to run all of its operations, including recruiting, project management and onsite management services. And L&E partners with the most reliable, forward thinking companies to access a full suite of technologies for qualitative research techniques. You'll find the best solutions for your business needs all in one place for both convenience and the best price. L&E and its partners give resource to a combination of new techniques for qualitative research that capitalizes on scale, reach, cost, depth and speed for any project.

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www.leresearch.com

(877) 344-1574

bidrequest@leresearch.com

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