



Q R C A *IDEAS & TOOLS
FOR QUALITATIVE RESEARCH*

VIEWS

SPRING 2011
VOLUME 9 • NUMBER 3



The Sleepover:

MODERATOR-LESS RESEARCH WITH KIDS AND TEENS

**BEHAVIORAL ECONOMICS
CHALLENGING THE ESSENCE
*OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH***

**SOCIAL MEDIA
CONVERSATIONS...
*MINING FOR INSIGHTS***

**WEBCAM
FOCUS GROUPS...
*BEST PRACTICES***

THREE PLACES to Find HUMOR

in Qualitative Research

BY MICHAEL CORLON

Truth ▪ London, U.K. ▪ mjcarlon@mac.com

I started my marketing research career in the agency business. As a junior-level employee, it was my job to take notes and manage the back room, which was often filled with clients and members of our own creative team. I quickly learned that this later group was not always there to learn from consumers; rather they viewed group participants as fodder for their stand-up acts. I must admit to laughing at the likes of one creative director in particular who often kept the back room in stitches. However, as I matured into the research business, I quickly learned how counter-productive making fun of participants is to the research process.

Fast forward a decade and a half later, and I am the guy in front of the glass asking the questions. While I am not as privy to the back-room shenanigans of years past, I have found more “harmless” ways of finding humor in the qualitative research practice. I will share three of them here.

1 Playing scrabble with concept letters

Last year, I was in Columbus, Ohio, running some focus groups for a client looking to get a read on various ways to bundle features and benefits for a new product. There were five “concepts” highlighting different features, and each was named with a letter: A, F, R, S and T. Those of you who are good at anagrams are already laughing.

After reviewing each concept with respondents, I wanted them to rank in order the ones they liked best, and I therefore set up this exercise as follows:

“Let’s see, we have reviewed concepts F, A, R, T and S. Please put them in order for me starting with the one you like best and ending with the one you like least.”

My clients in the back room immediately caught on to what I did, and the backroom erupted in laughter.

What can I say? I could not hold it in!

2 Uncovering unintended product benefits

During a recent project, our task was to understand how consumers describe the benefits of a new product (a walk-behind lawnmower) in order to help my client and their agency understand whether or not they are focusing on the right selling points in sales materials.

One of the features in question was a foldable handle. I asked the respondents what they thought the core benefits were and then turned to one respondent who, shall we say, had a certain “zest for living” (and by “zest” I mean that he was most likely trying to deal with his non-existent glaucoma just minutes before entering my session). I am pretty sure my client was not expecting the following exchange.

Me: “We have not heard from you yet, Jerry Garcia (name changed to protect the guilty). What are some of the benefits of

a foldable handle on a walk-behind lawnmower?”

Jerry Garcia: “I love the foldable handle. After I am done cutting the lawn, I fold it up and hide it under my deck so the bums don’t steal it.”

I can’t wait to see if my client decided to include “theft prevention from hobos” on their updated sales materials.

Contradictory arguments

The following exchange was between myself and a nice woman from Cincinnati on the topic of refrigerated heat-and-serve entrees. I started the session by asking people what they thought of the idea of these meals as a whole, and the participant in question said she did not like these types of products. The conversation went something like this:

Me: “And what do you think of these products, Molly?”

Molly: “I do not like them.”

Me: “And what are all the reasons you can think of why these are a turn-off for you?”

Molly: “I only have one.”

Me: “Let’s hear it.”

Molly: “I don’t like these products because the Bible tells you these products are not good for you.”

Me: “Where in the Bible does it say that heat-and-serve refrigerated entrees are not good for you?”

Molly: “Well, the Bible says not to eat unclean foods.”

Me: “What did you feed your daughter for dinner last night?”

Molly: “McDonalds.”

Everyone else: “LOL”

You really can’t make this stuff up.

As this article concludes, I will leave you with one challenge question. How many of each animal did Moses put on the Ark?

If you answered two, you are wrong. Moses did not build an Ark; Noah did. Until we meet again! 📧

Mike Carlon is a vice president with Truth, an insight consultancy based in London. Working out of the New York office, Mike lives in Stamford, CT, with his wife Nicole and their eight-year-old triplets, Grace, Patrick and Maggie.

WE REALIZE THAT IT’S
“LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION.”
SO WHICH LOCATION DO YOU PREFER?

- (A) OUR CONVENIENT DOWNTOWN CHICAGO FACILITY
- (B) OUR ORIGINAL OAK PARK FACILITY
- (C) OUR BRAND NEW OAKBROOK FACILITY



CHICAGO OAK PARK NEW OAKBROOK



Announcing our NEW Oakbrook facility. Come see for yourself why Impulse Survey consistently rates Focusscope as having some of the world’s best research facilities.

WWW.FOCUSCOPE.COM
708.386.5086

