

Chapter 3

Gaining and Using Target Audience Insights

Understanding your target audience—its culture, lifestyle, behaviors, interests, and needs—is vital to developing an effective counter-marketing program. Market research can help you gain those insights.¹

Once you've determined who your target audience is, you'll need to gather relevant information about that audience. This information will help you tailor your counter-marketing messages and materials and ensure that your programs will be effective.

One way to gain insights about your target audience is through market research, which can help you understand the audience's motivations, interests, needs, culture, lifestyles, and behaviors and determine the best channel(s) for reaching the audience. Market research can help you explore ideas for activities and concepts for messages and identify and develop stronger ideas and eliminate the weaker ones. It can be used to pretest messages and materials in near-final stages, to fine-tune the process while changes can be made, and to serve as a “disaster check.” Market research also can be a mechanism for pilot testing new tactics and interventions before using them more broadly. Market research for development of counter-marketing efforts is often called formative research. Other types of research for the purposes of process and outcome evaluation are discussed in Chapter 5: Evaluating the Success of Your Counter-Marketing Program.

¹This chapter has been excerpted and adapted from the National Cancer Institute's *Making Health Communication Programs Work: A Planner's Guide* (2002).

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This chapter describes market research tools commonly used to gain insights into target audiences.² These tools include focus groups, individual in-depth interviews, central location intercept interviews, theater-style pretests, and surveys. Diaries and activity logs, gatekeeper reviews, and readability testing are also described.

Some tools are better suited for certain purposes than others, so most programs use a combination of methods. For example, focus groups with members of your target audience can help you learn which approaches, messages, and channels are most likely to succeed with that audience. The focus groups could be augmented with individual in-depth interviews to probe more deeply into motivations, particularly if the issues are controversial or very personal or if the audience members are influenced heavily by their peers. Messages and materials might be tested through central location intercept interviews, in which respondents are recruited and interviewed at malls or other public settings, or through theater-style pretests, which use a simulated television-viewing environment to replicate a real-life viewing experience. Use of multiple tools can help confirm the validity of your findings.

Regardless of the tools you use, be sure to apply the results. Market research can provide critical data at various stages of your

program, but that information won't do much good if it isn't used. Other chapters in this manual explain when and how to incorporate your results into program planning and development. (In particular, see Chapter 2: Planning Your Counter-Marketing Program, Chapter 4: Reaching Specific Populations, and Chapter 7: Advertising.)

Market research generally isn't something you can do on your own. Your program could stray off course if you use the wrong method, use the methods incorrectly, recruit the wrong type or number of participants, or misinterpret results. Unless you have the appropriate skills and experience, do-it-yourself market research can yield the same kinds of results as do-it-yourself plumbing. This chapter is designed to give you background on methods and techniques that will help you work with market research professionals. However, don't turn over complete control of the research to your ad agency or market research firm. You need to be involved in every step of the process.

The Importance of Market Research

Sometimes program managers want to eliminate market research to cut costs, especially when the budget is tight. However, spending some money on market research up front can save your program money in the long run. The initial expenditure can help ensure that the program elements are likely to

² Some of the research methods described here may require Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. Nearly all government agencies, academic institutions, and other organizations require an assessment of the impact on human subjects involved in qualitative and quantitative research, including the protection of collected data. Some data collection efforts are exempt from IRB approval. For each research project undertaken, it is recommended that you consult the IRB expert in your organization.

be effective, rather than having no impact or, even worse, creating a backlash. If you air ineffective ads, you lose much more money in media placement funds than you would have spent on market research to determine the likelihood of success. Unfortunately, this is only one example of the many negative outcomes of insufficient market research.

Market Research on a Limited Budget

Few program managers have the luxury of conducting as much market research as they would like. When faced with a tight budget, try the following:

- Contact others in tobacco control to find out what research they've done. Can you use their findings in developing your own program? Do they have research designs and instruments you can use as models? Can you solicit advice from experienced managers on making the most of your tight budget? Can they give you advice or referrals to resources from other experts, such as those in your community with expertise in commercial marketing and advertising or in market research? Have you contacted a project officer or health communication staff member from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) for advice, referrals, or both?
- Be sure your program plan fully explains the need for market research and spells out a thorough market research plan. If you can't secure the funds you need this year, try to convince decision makers

now that investing in research next year will pay off. Point out that market research is a core component of effective counter-marketing programs.

- Beware of too many shortcuts. You need to conduct enough market research to feel confident that the findings provide clear direction. For example, if you've tested message concepts in a few focus groups and the results are inconclusive, you probably need to conduct a few more focus groups.
- Whenever possible, consult with market research experts during planning and implementation, even if you have to cut corners elsewhere. For example, you may be able to save money by recruiting research participants through community organizations instead of paying a contractor to handle recruiting.
- Always ask prospective contractors and vendors for nonprofit rates.
- Ask professionals with market research experience if they'd be willing to donate their time.
- Use a market researcher you can trust to be objective and to not "color" results to match a program or advertising agency bias.

Qualitative and Quantitative Research Methods

Two main categories of market research can be conducted with target audiences: qualitative and quantitative research. Qualitative research

seeks to gain in-depth knowledge about perceptions, motivations, and behaviors. It can answer the questions “why,” “when,” and “how”—questions that are critical to developing effective media campaigns. Common methods of qualitative research include focus groups and individual in-depth interviews.

Quantitative research seeks to provide estimates of knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors in a population of interest. It can answer the questions “How many?” “How much?” and “How often?” Common methods of quantitative research include surveys using random sampling and convenience sampling. Because each approach provides a different kind of information, it’s often best to use both.

Qualitative research methods should be used for the following purposes:

- To develop materials and to determine reactions to concepts or draft materials
- To explore a topic or idea
- To gain insights into a target audience’s lifestyle, culture, motivations, behaviors, and preferences
- To understand the reasons behind the results from quantitative research

Qualitative research should be conducted by using the following methods:

- Select a small group of people on the basis of certain common characteristics.
- Convene a discussion through focus groups or in-depth interviews or

observe individuals’ behaviors in their homes, schools, malls, supermarkets, or other settings.

- Keep the discussion somewhat unstructured, so participants are free to give any response, rather than choosing from a list of possible responses.

Use a discussion or interview guide to make sure you ask questions relevant to your research purpose, but be prepared to revise the sequence of questions on the basis of participants’ responses, rather than having to stick to a set order. (See Step 5 in the section on Designing and Conducting Focus Groups or Individual In-Depth Interviews, later in this chapter, for discussion of how to develop a moderator’s guide.)

Qualitative research results aren’t quantifiable and can’t be subjected to statistical analysis or projected to the population from which respondents were drawn. The participants don’t constitute a representative sample, the samples are relatively small, and not all participants are asked precisely the same questions. Even though you can collect very valuable information from qualitative research, and even if you conduct a great deal of it, you won’t get findings that you can project to the target audience as a whole. For that, you need quantitative research.

Quantitative research methods should be used for the following purposes:

- To determine “how many,” “how much,” and “how often”

- To profile a target audience for communication planning, such as measuring which proportion of the audience thinks or behaves in certain ways
- To measure how well your program is doing (See Chapter 5: Evaluating the Success of Your Counter-Marketing Program for a more complete discussion of surveys and program evaluation.)

Quantitative research should be conducted by using the following methods:

- Select a large group of people.
- Use a structured questionnaire containing predominantly closed-ended or forced-choice questions.

Quantitative research results can be analyzed by using statistical techniques that can provide estimates of behavior or beliefs of interest for the target population. These results can be representative of the population from which respondents were drawn if they were randomly selected. In some cases, oversampling of specific population groups is necessary to provide data on those groups. In addition, the results can help in segmenting broad target populations (e.g., high school students) into more specific groups with similar characteristics.

Quasi-quantitative market research tools (e.g., central location intercept interviews and theater-style pretests) are usually used to pretest messages and materials. Although these tools are used for measurement and typically involve questionnaires with mostly

forced-choice questions, the results can't be projected to the audience as a whole, because participants aren't chosen in a way that produces a representative sample.

Here's a closer look at the different research methods and tools, along with a discussion of how to conduct the research and use the results to inform your project.

Qualitative Research

Use qualitative research to:

- Learn what drives the audience's behaviors and understand what is needed to influence their awareness, knowledge, attitudes, intentions, and behaviors
- Determine whether your materials communicate the intended messages effectively and persuasively
- Understand why your program is or isn't working as expected
- Gain insights into findings on the effectiveness of the program's implementation

The most common tools used in qualitative market research are focus groups and individual in-depth interviews. Many innovative methods may also be appropriate:

- Friendship pairs, in which best friends (commonly teens or preteens) are recruited to discuss sensitive subjects
- In-home observations, in which you gain permission to spend one or two hours in someone's home to learn about their habits and practices

- Video logs, in which individuals are given video cameras or still cameras to record their environment and daily activities

Because the methods for focus groups and in-depth individual interviews are similar, they will be discussed together in this section, using instructions for focus groups as a guide.

Focus Groups

In a focus group, a skilled moderator uses a discussion guide to facilitate a one- to two-hour discussion among five to 10 participants. Typically the session is conducted in person. If that isn't possible because of distance or other factors, another option is to conduct the session by telephone or computer. The moderator keeps the session on track while participants talk freely. As new topics related to the material emerge, the moderator asks additional questions.

Focus groups are commonly used to accomplish the following purposes:

- Develop a communication strategy by:
 - Learning about feelings, motivators, and experiences related to a health topic
 - Exploring the feasibility of potential actions from the audience's viewpoint
 - Identifying barriers to those actions
 - Exploring which benefits the audience finds most compelling and believes can result from taking a particular action

- Learning about the audience's use of settings, channels, and activities
- Capturing the language the audience uses to discuss a health issue
- Identifying cultural differences that may affect message delivery

- Explore reactions to message concepts (concept testing) by:
 - Identifying concepts that do or don't resonate and learning why
 - Triggering the creative thinking of communication professionals
 - Showing others what audience members think and how they talk about a health issue
- Develop hypotheses (broad questions) for quantitative research, and identify the range of responses that should be included in closed-ended questionnaires
- Provide insights into the results of quantitative research by obtaining in-depth information from audience members
- Brainstorm for possible program improvements

Pros:

- Group interaction can elicit in-depth thought and discussion.
- Group interaction can encourage brainstorming, because respondents can build on each other's ideas.

- Moderators have considerable opportunities to probe responses.
- Focus groups provide richer data about the complexities of the audience's thoughts and behaviors than surveys do.
- Groups provide feedback from a number of individuals in a relatively short time.
- Each person is limited to about 10 to 15 minutes of talk time.
- The moderator might ask leading questions of the group or might neglect to probe for critical insights.

Cons:

- Findings can't be projected to the target audience as a whole.
- Focus groups can be labor intensive and expensive, especially when they're conducted in multiple locations.
- Group responses don't necessarily reflect individuals' opinions, because some individuals might dominate the discussion, influence others' opinions, or both. In addition, the facilitator might not be able to get everyone's reactions to every question.

Individual In-Depth Interviews

The process, uses, benefits, and drawbacks of individual in-depth interviews are similar to those of focus groups, except that the interviewer speaks with one person at a time. In-person interviews can take place at a central facility or at the participant's home or place of business. As with focus groups, when individual interviews can't be conducted in person, they can be conducted by phone or computer. Although the interviews take more total time, responses usually are less biased, because each participant is interviewed alone and isn't influenced by others' responses.

Insights From Focus Groups

In a series of 24 focus groups conducted in four U.S. cities by CDC and three state tobacco control programs, youth were exposed to 10 antitobacco ads developed for youth audiences. Participants were asked to rate the ads on the basis of how likely the ads were to make them "stop and think about not using tobacco." The four ads consistently rated highest had a strong message about the negative health consequences of tobacco. Three of the four ads used real stories in a testimonial format to share the risks of using tobacco.

An important insight gleaned from the research was that youth seemed to be more affected by the thought of living with the negative consequences of tobacco use than dying from them (Teenage Research Unlimited 1999).

An Experience With One-on-One Interviews

A television and movie actor who had lost several family members to tobacco offered his time for a tobacco control ad. An advertising concept and script were developed to encourage smokers to consider quitting by having them think about how their own death from tobacco use would affect their loved ones.

Before producing the ads, the sponsoring organization conducted one-on-one interviews with adult smokers to ensure that the script and visual presentations would clearly and persuasively communicate the intended message. The smokers were shown the ad concept and asked their reactions to it through a variety of questions. Individual interviews were used instead of focus groups, because it was important for the smokers to be honest and vulnerable. The sponsoring organization was concerned that if smokers were in a focus group together, they might become defensive about the ad's message that their tobacco use could ultimately hurt their loved ones.

The approach worked. The one-on-one interviews elicited honest, heartfelt responses from the smokers. The interviews also revealed that many respondents didn't recognize the actor. As a result, the decision was made to identify him on screen at the beginning of the ad. In addition, the original script included a line noting how the actor's grandfather couldn't stop smoking even though he knew it was making him sick. Respondents didn't find that line credible. They believed the grandfather should have—and would have—quit if he knew smoking was making him sick. These respondents said they would stop as soon as they found out their smoking was causing them serious harm. Whether or not that perception was realistic, the script was changed to focus on the grandfather's suffering, which research respondents sympathized with, rather than focusing on his failure in quitting.

Designing and Conducting Focus Groups or Individual In-Depth Interviews

Here are seven major steps for conducting focus groups and individual in-depth interviews:

1. Plan the research.
2. Choose the location and format for focus groups or interviews.
3. Draft a recruitment screener.
4. Recruit participants.
5. Develop a moderator's guide.
6. Conduct the focus groups or interviews.
7. Analyze and use results.

Step 1: Plan the research.

Determine the following information:

- **What you want to learn.** Decide how you'll use the results from the focus group discussion or individual interview before you conduct the research. Prepare the questions you want answered, then make sure the moderator and interviewer guide will provide the answers. (See Step 5 for more information on developing a moderator's guide.) You'll use these questions to analyze the results of the discussions and to organize the report on the focus group discussion or individual interview.
- **When you need to have that information.** Your timing needs will

determine the way you'll need to recruit and, to some extent, your costs.

- **How you'll apply what you learn.** Make sure the information you'll gain will be actionable.
- **Your budget.** The size of your budget will dictate how many groups or interviews you can conduct, in how many locations, and how much of the work you will be able to delegate to contractors.
- **Your criteria for participants.** Use the following suggestions to help you select participants.
 - Choose people who are typical of your audience. Participants should have the same behavioral, demographic, and psychographic characteristics as your audience. (Psychographics are a set of variables that describes an individual in terms of overall approach to life, including personality traits, values, beliefs, preferences, habits, and behaviors.) You may want to conduct separate groups with “doers,” who already engage in the desired behavior, and “nondoers,” who don't engage in the desired behavior. This strategy will help to identify what actions the doers take and why. Those actions then can be explored with the nondoers.
 - Do not select experts. Exclude market researchers and advertising professionals, because of their familiarity with the methods, and exclude those who have, or might be perceived by other group members as having, expertise in the subject matter. For example, exclude health professionals from focus groups when the topic is related to health. In addition, anyone involved in the production, distribution, or marketing of tobacco products should be excluded from focus groups related to tobacco control.
 - Match participants by gender, race, age, level of formal education, or other characteristic(s) within each group. Participants with matched characteristics are more likely to express themselves freely. If your target audience includes people with different demographic traits, consider whether you need to conduct separate sessions for each audience segment to determine whether differences between the groups are significant.
 - Select people who are relatively inexperienced with interviews. Participants' reactions should be spontaneous. This consideration will help you to avoid questioning “professional” respondents who have participated in many focus groups or individual interviews and thus may lead or monopolize the discussion. Recruitment screeners typically exclude people who have participated in qualitative research in the past six months. (See Step 3 later in this section, for further discussion of recruitment screeners.)

- **The number of focus group discussions or interviews you'll conduct.** If you're using focus groups, conduct at least two groups with each audience segment. For example, if you're conducting separate groups with men and women, you'll need at least four groups: two with men and two with women. If you're using individual interviews, conduct about 10 interviews per audience segment.

If audience perceptions vary or the audience feedback is unclear, you may want to conduct additional groups or interviews, especially if you revise the moderator/interviewer guide to further explore unresolved issues.

Step 2: Choose the location and format for focus groups or interviews.

You can conduct focus groups or interviews in several ways:

- Commercial focus group facilities can recruit participants. These facilities offer audio recording equipment, video recording equipment, or both and one-way mirrors with observation rooms. However, commercial facilities are often expensive and may not be available in small towns.
- Teleconference services can set up telephone focus groups. Most teleconference services allow observers to listen without being heard. Some have the capability to allow the moderator to see a list of participants (with a symbol next to the one currently

speaking) or to see notes sent by a technician from observers listening to the call. Some teleconference services also can recruit participants.

- You can conduct focus groups or interviews in meeting rooms at office buildings, schools, places of worship, homes, or other locations. If an observation room with a one-way mirror isn't available, allow staff to listen by hooking up speakers or closed-circuit TV in a nearby room or by audio recording the session, video recording the session, or both. In some cases, you may have one or two quiet observers taking notes in the room.

Step 3: Draft a recruitment screener.

A recruitment screener is a short questionnaire that is administered to potential participants, typically by telephone, to ensure that they meet the criteria you developed in Step 1. Your contractor, if you have one, will administer this questionnaire. The screener should help you to exclude people who know one another or have expertise in the subject of the sessions. Potential participants can be told the general subject area (e.g., "a health topic"), but they shouldn't be told the specific subject. If participants know the subject in advance, they may formulate ideas or study to become more knowledgeable about the subject. Furthermore, if participants know one another, they may speak less freely. For similar reasons, they also shouldn't be told who the sponsor is.

Table 3.1: Pros and Cons of Formats for Focus Groups and Individual Interviews

Format	Pros	Cons
Face to Face		
Moderator/interviewer and participants are in one room, usually around a table; observers (members of the research team) are behind a one-way mirror.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Body language can be assessed. • Observers can be present without distracting participants. • If the session is videotaped, it can be shared with others who couldn't attend. • Participants give undivided attention. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responders lose anonymity. • The session has higher travel expenses because of multiple locales. • The session may be a logistical challenge in rural areas or small towns.
Telephone		
Moderator/interviewer and participants are on a conference call; observers listen.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The session is more convenient for participants and observers. • Participants can easily include people in rural areas or small towns, as well as the home-bound. • Relative anonymity may result in more frank discussion of sensitive issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nonverbal reactions can't be assessed. • It's more difficult to get reactions to visuals. (They can be sent ahead of time, but you still have less control over exposure.) • Participants can be distracted by their surroundings. • There may be noise interference from callers' environments.
Internet Chat Sessions		
Moderator and participants "chat" while observers read.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A complete record of session is instantly available. • Relative anonymity may result in more frank discussion of sensitive issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The session is useful only for participants comfortable with this mode of communication. • The relatively slow pace limits topics that can be covered. • There's no way to assess whether participants meet recruitment criteria. • Body language or tone of voice can't be assessed. • It's more difficult to get reactions to visual presentations. (They can be sent ahead of time, but you still have less control over exposure.) • Participants can be distracted by their surroundings.

Contracting With Commercial Facilities

One way to conduct face-to-face focus groups or individual interviews is to contract with a company that specializes in this service. Before you contract with a commercial facility, prepare a specification sheet detailing all the services you need, and if you will be asking the facility to recruit participants, prepare a profile of your audience. Vendors will use this information to estimate the project's cost and to develop bids.

Use this checklist to decide which vendors to consider. Each vendor should provide these items:

- Descriptions of past projects
- Descriptions of or a list of clients (If you are unfamiliar with the vendor, check the company's references.)
- Location of the facility (Is it conveniently located? Accessible by public transportation? If not, does the vendor provide transportation assistance, such as taxi money or van service? What does this add to the cost?)
- Size of the interview room(s)
- Diagram of the table/seating arrangements (What shape is the table? How big is the table? Where does the moderator sit?)
- Size and features of the observation room(s)
- Details about audio recording and video recording arrangements and costs
- Details about food arrangements for participants and observers, including staff from your organization and ad agency
- Description of the vendor's moderator services
- Description of the vendor's method of recruitment, including the database used and the geographic area the company covers
- Recommendations for participant incentives
- Reasonable rates for vendor services (Ask for nonprofit rates.)
- Examples of focus group summaries/reports, moderator notes, screeners (short questionnaires used to recruit potential participants), and other documents produced by the vendor for other clients if you're going to ask the vendor to provide these services

The screener should guarantee the approximate mix of respondents for a group that isn't separated by certain characteristics, such as a balance of men and women in a mixed-gender group. (See Appendices 3.1 and 3.2 for sample screeners.)

Step 4: Recruit participants.

Choose appropriate participants for the focus groups or interviews, so your research is more reliable. Even if a contractor does the recruiting, make sure the screener is followed carefully so that only those who qualify will be included in the research.

Participants should be recruited by telephone one to three weeks before the sessions. How you identify potential participants depends on the type of people they are and the resources you have. Focus group facilities typically identify members of the audience through their own databases. If you do the recruiting, you might need to run an ad in a local publication, work with community organizations, purchase lists of phone numbers of individuals with certain characteristics, or identify professionals through a relevant association or mailing list service. Here are some ways to recruit:

- Hire a focus group facility or independent recruiter. Two directories of facilities are the American Marketing Association's *GreenBook: Worldwide Directory of Focus Group Companies and Services* (2003) and the Marketing Research Association's *Blue Book* (2003).
- If you have many facilities and recruiters to choose from, consider getting recommendations from local companies or organizations that conduct qualitative research.
- Enlist help from students in a university marketing research or advertising class if they are knowledgeable and experienced in focus group research.
- Work through gatekeepers such as teachers (for students); instructors for courses of English as a second language (for recent immigrants); health care systems (for patients, physicians, or nurses); and religious institutions or community organizations whose members meet your audience criteria. (A small donation may encourage an organization to recruit for you.)

Getting People to Show Up

To ensure that enough people show up, offer an incentive (usually money) and recruit more people than you need. If everyone shows up, select those who best fit your screening criteria, thank the extra participants, give them the agreed-on incentive, and ask them to leave. You also can make sure you have enough people by:

- Scheduling sessions at times convenient for your potential participants (e.g., during lunchtime or after work)
- Choosing a safe and convenient site

- Providing transportation or reimbursing participants for agreed-on transportation costs
- Arranging for child care
- Letting participants know you'll provide snacks or refreshments

Recruiting for Telephone Interviews

If you're recruiting for telephone interviews, create a spreadsheet with spaces for the following information about each potential participant: the time zone in which the person is located; the date, time, and number at which they should be called; and the result of each call (e.g., scheduled an interview, no answer, busy, or refused). This type of spreadsheet also can be helpful in planning in-person interviews and using other research methods.

Step 5: Develop a moderator's guide.

The quality of the moderator's guide is critical to the success of focus groups. The guide tells the moderator or interviewer what information you want from the sessions and helps him or her keep the discussion on track and on time. Your contractor will draft the guide for you if you need this service. Before it is drafted, you'll need to determine the following information:

- What you want to learn from the focus group or interview
- How to apply what you learn
- What tools (e.g., descriptive information, message concepts, or other draft

creative work) you'll need to provide for the sessions

You should write questions for the guide that relate to the purposes you've identified. Most questions should be open-ended, so participants can provide more in-depth responses than just "yes" or "no." Also, make sure the questions aren't worded in a way that will prompt a particular response. For example, don't ask, "What problems are you having with quitting smoking?" Instead, you could phrase the question more neutrally by asking, "What problems do smokers have with quitting?" Participants will then be more likely to offer honest responses, rather than the answers they think you want. The time and depth of exploration given to each issue should reflect the issue's importance to your purposes. (See Appendices 3.3 and 3.4 for examples of moderator's guides.)

In the focus groups, don't include questions for group discussion if you need individual responses. However, you can have the moderator give each participant a self-administered questionnaire to complete *before* the session. Participants also can be asked to individually rank certain items (e.g., potential actions, benefits, or message concepts) on paper during a session to combine individual and group reactions.

Step 6: Conduct the focus groups or interviews.

Focus groups and interviews typically begin with the moderator welcoming participants and briefing them on the process (e.g., that

Working With Community Organizations (Partners) To Conduct Focus Groups

You'll need a formal or informal agreement to conduct focus groups with your partner. Working with your contact at the partner organization, develop an agreement that includes the following elements:

- A description of your organization
- A description of the material/topic to be discussed and its purpose
- Details about participants to be recruited
- An outline of activities involved
- The incentives you are offering the partner organization and/or the participants
- A detailed explanation of why the partner should *not* reveal details about the topic to participants in advance
- How you will protect participants' confidentiality
- If and how you will share the information learned

Once you have an agreement, decide how you will recruit participants. One idea is to conduct your research as part of one of the partner organization's regular meetings. Here are the pros and cons of this approach:

Pros:

- Little extra effort is required to recruit participants.
- Minimal or no incentives may be involved.
- Your partner's regular, convenient, and familiar meeting place can be used.

Cons:

- You have little control over the number of people who will come or the composition of the focus group. Respondents are likely to know one another, which will affect the focus group's dynamics and make results less reliable.
- Because a focus group may last one or two hours, it is difficult to place it on the agenda of a regular meeting.
- Scheduling the focus group for the near future may be difficult, because many organizations set their calendars months in advance.

Continues

Working With Community Organizations (Partners) To Conduct Focus Groups (cont.)

An alternative is to recruit your partner's members/constituents to come to a special meeting. This approach offers the ability to screen participants. In addition, participants may be less distracted in a meeting solely devoted to your research than in a focus group conducted as part of a regular meeting.

Scheduling the focus group immediately before or after the regular meeting may make it more convenient for participants. A person with the organization—or you, on behalf of the organization—can ask members/constituents to participate. Also, if you're providing refreshments or incentives, let participants know in advance to encourage them to attend and to stay through the entire meeting.

If you do the recruiting, you'll have more control over what people are told about the focus group and you'll be able to screen potential participants. However, recruiting takes a significant amount of time, and organization members/constituents may be more likely to participate if they are asked by someone they know.

If the member organization recruits participants, you need to provide the recruiter with detailed instructions. These instructions must include (1) a written description of the general (not specific) topic, which should be read to potential participants verbatim, and (2) a questionnaire to screen participants.

there are no right or wrong answers, that it's important to speak one at a time and maintain confidentiality, that observers will be present, and that the session will be recorded).³ In focus groups, participants introduce themselves to the group, noting information relevant to the discussion (e.g., number of attempts to quit smoking and number of cigarettes smoked each day). Next, the moderator asks a few simple “icebreaker” questions to help participants get used to the process and reduce their anxiety. This step also helps the moderator develop a rapport with the participants. Again, to reduce the risk of introducing bias, the sponsor of the research should not be revealed.

The session then shifts to an in-depth investigation of participants' perspectives and issues. Following the moderator's guide, the moderator manages the session and ensures that all topics are covered without overtly directing the discussion. Participants are encouraged to express their views and even disagree with one another. The moderator doesn't simply accept what participants say but probes to learn about thoughts and attitudes. The moderator also seeks opinions from *all* participants, so everyone has a chance to speak, rather than letting a vocal few dominate the discussion.

³ If the group is conducted in a language that observers don't understand, provide a translator in the observation room.

The Moderator's Role

The moderator or interviewer doesn't need to be an expert on your topic, but he or she should be briefed well enough to ask appropriate questions and must have experience in facilitating group discussions. Rehearse with the moderator any topics or concerns you want emphasized or discussed in depth. The moderator's guide is just that, a guide. Experienced moderators flow with the conversation, ask questions that are not leading or closed ended, and sequence to the next topic when appropriate or deviate from it to avoid awkward transitions or unnecessary banter between topics.

A good moderator has the following characteristics:

- The moderator understands what information you're seeking, how you need to use it, and how to probe and guide the discussion to get the information. He or she makes sure all agreed-on topics are covered sufficiently.
- The moderator builds rapport and trust, and probes without reacting to or influencing participants' opinions. He or she emphasizes to participants that there are no right or wrong answers.
- The moderator understands the process of eliciting comments, keeps the discussion on track, and finds other ways to approach a topic if necessary.
- He or she leads the discussion and isn't led by the group.

Use local advertising agencies, the American Marketing Association's *GreenBook: Worldwide Directory of Focus Group Companies and Services* (2003), or the Qualitative Research Consultants Association to find a good moderator. If your organization plans to conduct focus groups regularly by using your internal staff, consider hiring a skilled, experienced moderator to train your staff to moderate focus groups.

Near the end of a focus group, the moderator may give participants an activity or simply check with the observers to find out if they have additional questions. Notes can be discreetly given to the moderator throughout the session if the observers want other questions asked or changes made.

One advantage of the focus group/interview method is that the moderator's guide and any materials presented can be revised between sessions.

Step 7: Analyze and use results.

In many analyses of focus groups or interviews, the goal is to look for general trends and agreement on issues while noting differing opinions. In some instances, the goal is to capture a range of opinions. Keep an eye out for individual comments that raise interesting ideas or important concerns, such as lack of cultural sensitivity or difficulty in comprehension.

Reviewing transcripts is the easiest and most thorough way to analyze the sessions,

although the sessions can be analyzed less thoroughly by reviewing notes taken during the discussion. Avoid counting or quantifying types of responses (e.g., “75 percent of participants preferred concept A”). Because this is qualitative research, you can’t quantify the results or suggest that they represent the opinions of the audience as a whole.

Results are worthless if they aren’t used. Use them to answer the questions you drafted to guide the research design—to shape the campaign strategy, message, and materials design. Also, your results help you “sell” your program as “researched and tested.” Share your findings with partners and others who might benefit.

Estimated Costs of Focus Groups and Interviews

The cost estimates in Table 3.2 can help you budget for pretesting if you’re using commercial research firms. *Your actual costs will vary* depending on your location, the target audience being recruited, and the amount of time contributed by staff, contractors, and participants. For example, if your staff includes a focus group expert who can analyze the results, you won’t have to pay a contractor for that task. However, don’t jeopardize the quality of your results with a budget that’s too small.

The estimates for focus groups assume that you conduct two groups, each with 10 mem-

Table 3.2: Estimated Costs of Two Focus Groups and 10 Individual In-Depth Interviews Conducted With Participants From the General Population

Item	Costs of Two Focus Groups	Costs of 10 Individual In-Depth Interviews
Develop screener*	\$800–\$1,000	\$800–\$1,200
Develop discussion guide*	\$800–\$1,200	\$800–\$1,600
Recruit participants	\$1,500–\$2,000	\$750–\$1,500
Rent facility	\$700–\$1,000	\$1,000–\$2,000
Provide respondent incentives/refreshments	\$600–\$1,500	\$0–\$500
Hire moderator or interviewer	\$1,500–\$2,100	\$500–\$1,000
Audiotape and videotape sessions		
Transcribe audiotapes	\$500–\$800	\$300–\$400
Analyze research findings and write report*	\$1,600–\$2,400	\$1,600–\$2,400
Total	\$8,000–\$12,000	\$5,750–\$10,600

*One-time costs that will not be incurred for each group.

bers of the general population. This size is for cost estimates only. Most program managers prefer groups of five to eight, because doing so more easily engages all group members in conversation, but others prefer groups of eight to 12. In either case, larger numbers frequently are recruited to allow for some “no-shows.” However, if more people show up than you need, you must still give them any promised incentive. Also, recruiting specific, hard-to-find target audiences may be more expensive than selecting a group from the general population.

The cost estimates also assume that each session is two hours long, conducted in English, and audiotaped. Staff travel, food for participants, and videotaping, which is useful when some of your program team can't directly observe the session, are not included.

The interview estimate shown in Table 3.2 assumes 10 half-hour interviews that are conducted in English and audiotaped.

Quasi-Quantitative Research

Quasi-quantitative tools are used most often to pretest messages and materials, as noted earlier. These tools include central location intercept interviews and theater-style pretests. If you pretest many ads using the same methodology and the same questions, you can develop a database of results that allows you to assess the relative strengths of various ads.

Central Location Intercept Interviews

In central location intercept interviews, interviewers go to a place frequented by members of the target audience and ask them to participate in a study. If they agree, they're

asked specific screening questions to determine whether they fit the recruitment criteria. If they do, the interviewers take them to the interviewing station (a quiet spot at a shopping mall or other site), show them the pretest materials, and then administer the pretest questionnaire. The interview should last no longer than 15 to 20 minutes.

For intercept interviews to be effective, you must obtain results from at least 100 of each type of respondent or more if you want to break out specific subgroups (e.g., males vs. females or age groups) (NCI 2002).

Pros:

- You increase your chances of finding the right participants if you choose the right location.
- You can connect with harder-to-reach respondents and present them with a stimulus (an ad, graphics, messages, or a brochure).
- The interviews can be conducted quickly.
- The interviews are a cost-effective way to gather data in a relatively short time.

Cons:

- You must train interviewers.
- Your results aren't representative and can't be generalized.
- Intercept interviews aren't appropriate for sensitive issues or potentially threatening questions.
- Intercept interviews aren't appropriate for in-depth questions, and they don't

allow you to probe for additional information easily.

- Respondents might not want to be interviewed on the spot. Although setting up prearranged appointments is time consuming and more expensive, ultimately it may save time if respondents won't cooperate in a central location.

Developing the Questionnaire

Unlike focus groups or individual interviews, the questionnaire used in central location intercept interviews is highly structured and contains primarily multiple-choice or closed-ended questions to permit quick responses. Open-ended questions, which allow free-flowing answers, should be kept to a minimum, because they take too much time for the respondent to answer and for the interviewer to record. Questions that assess the audience's comprehension and perceptions of the pretest materials form the core of the questionnaire. The interview may also include a few questions tailored to the specific item(s) being pretested (e.g., "Do you prefer this picture or this one?"). As with any research instrument, the questionnaire should be pilot tested before it's used in the field. (See Appendix 3.6 for a Sample Intercept Interview Questionnaire.)

Setting Up Interviews

A number of market research companies throughout the country conduct central location intercept interviews in shopping malls. You can also conduct these interviews in clinic waiting rooms, religious institutions,

Table 3.3: Estimated Costs for Central Location Intercept Interviews Conducted With 100 Participants From the General Population

Item	Costs
Develop questionnaire	\$750–\$3,500
Print questionnaire Schedule facility and phones	\$400–\$600
Screen and conduct interviews	\$2,000–\$3,500
Provide respondent incentives	\$600–\$750
Code, enter data, and tabulate	\$850–\$1,300
Analyze research findings and write report	\$1,500–\$3,500
Total	\$6,100–\$13,150

Social Security offices, schools, work sites, train stations, and other locations frequented by audience members. You must obtain permission from the site well before you want to set up interviewing stations.

If you're using a market research company to conduct the interviews, provide the company with the screening criteria and the pretest materials in appropriate formats and quantities. Some companies have offices in shopping malls, and some offices have one-way mirrors that allow you to watch the interviews.

University and college departments of marketing, communication, or health education might be able to provide interviewer training, trained student interviewers, or both. Pretesting is an excellent real-world project for a faculty member to adopt as a class project or for a

master's degree student to use as a thesis project. However, this approach may mean you don't get your results as quickly, and you may compromise the quality of the research if the individuals lack the appropriate experience.

Recruiting Participants

If your organization is recruiting the participants, you'll need to develop screening criteria, a script, and training for approaching audience members. The interviewer should be familiar with the screening criteria and approach only those people who appear to fit the criteria. Whenever the people approached don't qualify, the interviewer should thank them for their time and willingness to participate. If they do qualify, the interviewer can bring them to a designated location and proceed with the interview.

Table 3.3 shows estimated costs for central location intercept interviews. These costs are based on questioning 100 respondents from the general population for 15 to 20 minutes each.

Central location intercept interviews might not be feasible if your audience is geographically dispersed or does not have easy access to a central facility. In those cases, you can use telephone interviews and send materials to participants in advance. This type of pretest typically resembles an individual interviewing project in cost and number of interviews, but more closed-ended questions may be used and the question sequence may be followed more closely.

Theater-Style Pretests

Theater-style pretests are most commonly used to assess the effectiveness of TV ads.

Animated video storyboards are used to select

Use of Theater-Style Pretesting To Compare Ad Formats

Theater-style pretesting was used with youth and adults to compare the effectiveness of two Massachusetts ads, "Cowboy" and "Models." This method was chosen because norms had been established over time, and results of the two ad pretests could be compared with those of previous pretests. In "Cowboy," a man tells the story of his brother, a former actor in Marlboro ads who died from lung cancer at a young age. In "Models," the U.S. women's soccer team discusses the negative impact of smoking on sports performance. Both ads also include a message about how the tobacco industry manipulates and influences people. Both are black-and-white ads featuring people talking to the camera.

"Cowboy" scored better than "Models" on several key measures, including recall of the main message and how convincing and engaging it was. "Cowboy" also scored better than most ads previously pretested with the same method. The respondents' verbatim comments helped explain why. The respondents were very moved by the real story of the man losing his brother because he smoked cigarettes. They vividly recalled many more details about "Cowboy" than about "Models," and male and female respondents alike said the ad was realistic and made them cry. They also frequently commented on an image in which the former Marlboro man is in a hospital bed attached to numerous tubes.

the best concept, or a rough-cut (near-finished) ad is pretested as a “disaster check.” Participants are invited to a central location to watch a pilot for a new TV program. During the program, they’re exposed to several ads, including the pretest ad. After the show, participants complete a questionnaire. They first respond to questions about the show and then answer questions about the pretest materials, to determine how effectively the message was communicated and what their overall reactions were. For theater-style pretests to be effective, you must obtain results from at least 100 respondents of each type (NCI 2002).

Pros:

- You can obtain responses from a large number of respondents at the same time.
- Running the ad as part of TV programming allows you to more closely replicate participants’ experiences of watching TV at home.

Con:

- Your results aren’t representative and can’t be generalized.

During theater-style pretests, participants are invited to a conveniently located meeting room or auditorium that is set up for screening a TV program. Participants should be told only that their reactions to a TV program are being sought, not the real purpose of the gathering.

The program can be any entertaining, non-health-related video presentation that is 15 to 30 minutes long. About halfway through the program, some commercials are shown, and your message is among them.

Table 3.4: Estimated Costs of a Theater-Style Pretest Conducted With 100 Participants From the General Population

Item	Costs
Develop questionnaire	\$400–\$2,400
Produce questionnaire	\$400–\$600
Recruit participants	\$4,500–\$6,000
Rent facility	\$0–\$\$\$*
Rent audiovisual equipment	\$0–\$2,000
Conduct theater-style pretest	\$0–\$800
Provide respondent incentives	\$3,000–\$5,000
Code, enter data, and tabulate	\$800–\$3,200
Analyze research findings and write report	\$1,600–\$3,200
Total	\$10,700–\$23,200+

*The cost of large facilities (e.g., hotel ballrooms) varies widely by geographic region. Check with local facilities for approximate costs.

After the program, participants receive a questionnaire designed to gauge their reactions to the program. Then they complete a section of questions focusing on the ad.

In some cases, one-half of the audience is sent home and the rest are asked to stay. The remaining group watches your ad again and answers several additional questions. The participants who were sent home are called back two to three days later and asked questions about the ad, to determine how well they recalled the ad and its main message.

In more sophisticated theater-style pretests, participants answer questions by using automated audience-response systems. They are given a small device with response keys that they push when a question is asked. The data are automatically tabulated, giving you instant access to the numbers. Questions can be instantly added or deleted from the questionnaire on the basis of the previous responses. However, an automated system is much more costly to use than a standard paper-and-pencil questionnaire.

Table 3.4 shows the estimated costs of a theater-style pretest conducted with 100 participants.

Pretesting Other Media

Theater-style pretesting also can be used to assess video presentations, such as a 10- to

15-minute video on smoking cessation that will be shown in a clinic. You should have participants view a series of videos that includes yours. Participants evaluate the videos the same way they evaluate ads, but these sessions last longer than ad pretests.

If you're using print ads, try a variation of the theater-style pretest. In this method, several ads, including yours, are inserted into a magazine. Participants are asked to read an article with the ads interspersed and are given enough time to finish the article. Then they complete a questionnaire designed to gauge their reactions to the article and ads, as well as a section containing questions focusing on the ads. Finally, your ad is displayed alone, and participants respond to several more questions.

Using a Mix of Research Methods

The World Health Organization and CDC worked with an agency to develop several advertising concepts to encourage smokers to try to quit with help. The likelihood of successful smoking cessation increases greatly if the smoker takes advantage of help (e.g., counseling, a “quitline,” written materials, physician’s advice, and pharmacological products). The concepts were shared with smokers in one-on-one interviews, and one ad concept was selected for production. The ad was produced, but before it was recommended to countries to air, it was pretested through a central location intercept method.

This research showed that the number of respondents who preferred calling a quitline was nearly equal to the number who preferred visiting a Web site for help in quitting. It was decided that when possible, both a toll-free phone number and a Web site should be provided on the tag at the end of the ad.

In addition, although smokers understood the message well, they didn’t believe it was forceful enough. Because the audio presentation was a “voiceover” and the wording could be changed inexpensively before finishing the ad, the agency made the wording more direct and also selected a different actor who had a more confident voice.

Designing and Conducting a Theater-Style Pretest

There are six steps for designing and conducting theater-style pretests, but many ideas, particularly those in Step 2, also are useful for central location intercept interviews. The six steps are as follows:

1. Plan the pretest.
2. Develop the questionnaire.
3. Recruit participants.
4. Prepare for the pretest.
5. Conduct the pretest.
6. Analyze the pretest.

Step 1: Plan the pretest.

Determine your requirements for the following information:

- What you want to learn
- When you need the results
- What your budget is
- Which contractors are qualified to do this work
- What criteria participants should be required to meet (Your contractor can help you to determine these criteria.)
- Which facility you'll use (Your contractor will make this decision.)

The facility must be large enough to accommodate all your participants simultaneously. Several video monitors may be needed for all participants to see the program well.

You can also rent space, such as a hotel ballroom, if you want to pretest materials among a large number of people. Hotels often have audiovisual equipment available for rent. You must reserve facilities and equipment well in advance of your pretest.

Some market research companies conduct theater-style pretesting. They can provide details about the process they follow in conducting this pretesting.

Step 2: Develop the questionnaire.

Work with your contractor to carefully construct the questionnaire. At a minimum, it should contain three parts:

- Recall and communication of the main idea of pretest materials
- Audience reaction to pretest materials
- Demographic characteristics of the participants

Recall and Communication of the Main Idea

The standard questions on recall and communication of the main idea are critical to the pretest. They address some of the most important measures of a message's potential effectiveness:

- Whether it attracts the audience's attention (recall)
- Whether it communicates your main point (main idea)
- What respondents thought and how they felt when they viewed the ad (e.g., potential persuasiveness and believability)

See main idea questions in Appendix 3.6: Sample Intercept Interview Questionnaire. Keep in mind that the sample questionnaire was designed for research in which the ad was shown among a group of ads, not within a pilot TV program.

Audience Reaction

Include several standard questions on audience reaction that address your specific concerns about your message. Suppose your message asks viewers to call a toll-free number for more information. You may want to ask, “What action, if any, does the message ask you to take?” or “Did the telephone number appear on the screen long enough for you to remember it?”

If possible, develop one or more questions addressing each characteristic of your message. Use the following list of characteristics commonly found in messages to determine which ones apply to your message, and develop questions that focus on these characteristics:

- Use of music (with or without lyrics)
- Use of a famous spokesperson
- Use of telephone numbers
- Use of mailing addresses
- Request for a particular action
- Instructions for performing a specific health behavior

- Presentation of technical or medical information
- Presentation of new information
- Promotion of a sponsoring organization or event
- Representation of characters intended to be typical of the target audience
- Use of a voiceover announcer
- Presentation of controversial or unpleasant information

Some theater-style pretests don’t ask specific questions about characteristics of each ad; instead, they rely on the respondents to volunteer reactions about the ads. When compiled, the responses often suggest patterns indicating perceptions about elements of the ad (e.g., confusing, polarizing, persuasive, or credible). See Appendix 3.6, Sample Intercept Interview Questionnaire, for examples of open-ended questions to gauge respondents’ reactions, and closed-ended questions to assess respondents’ perceptions about the pretest ad. Remember that the objective of pretesting is to uncover any problems with your ad before final production or airing.

Demographics

Questions about demographics record the participants’ characteristics (e.g., sex, age, level of education, and health status). This information will help you later if you need to separate and analyze the data by subgroups.

Step 3: Recruit participants.

Your contractor will recruit participants for a recruiting fee. You'll also pay an incentive to participants. (See section on Focus Groups, earlier in this chapter, for information on recruiting participants.)

Step 4: Prepare for the pretest.

Before the pretest session, your contractor should make sure that all arrangements are made. This checklist may be helpful:

- Has participant recruitment taken place as scheduled? Were participants reminded to attend? Do they have transportation and correct directions?
- Have the moderators or interviewers rehearsed?
- Is the meeting room or other facility reserved for you? Is it set up? Are enough chairs available? Are extra chairs available in case more people show up than you expect? Is the heating or air conditioning working properly? Do you know where the light switches are? If a microphone is needed, is it set up and functioning properly?
- Is the pretesting videotape ready? Are the video and audio portions of the tape clear?
- Are the videocassette recorder (VCR) and TV monitors working properly? Do you need another monitor so that everyone will be able to see the program?

- Are enough copies of the pretest questionnaire on hand? Is each questionnaire complete (no pages missing)? Are there enough pencils for participants? Will they need clipboards or pads?

Step 5: Conduct the pretest.

The following checklist is useful for conducting the pretest:

- Have everything organized and working before the session.
- Conduct a dry run to check on equipment and timing.
- Be friendly and courteous to participants from the moment they arrive until they leave. (Remember to thank them.)
- Have a backup plan in case "surprises" occur (e.g., a large number of no-shows, too many participants, equipment failure, or a disruptive individual).

The session should take no more than one hour and 15 minutes if you're organized and well prepared.

Step 6: Analyze the pretest.

Analyze the questionnaires in two steps. First, tabulate or count how many participants gave each possible response to each question, and look for patterns in the responses to both closed-ended and open-ended questions. The patterns will help you to draw conclusions about the effectiveness of your message.

Then look at the overall results, and answer these questions to determine whether your message is both effective and appropriate or whether you need to revise your message before implementation:

- What did you learn from the pretest?
- Did your message receive a favorable audience reaction?
- Did your message fulfill its communication objectives?
- What are your message's strengths? Weaknesses?
- Did answers to any particular question stand out?
- Should you revise your message? If so, how?

Quantitative Research

Quantitative research is used to:

- Determine the percentage of your target audience that has certain behaviors, behavioral intentions, attitudes, and knowledge of your subject
- Monitor the audience's use of materials and awareness of your communication program and its tactics
- Measure progress toward the program's objectives, such as changes in beliefs, knowledge, attitudes, and behavior (See Chapter 5: Evaluating the Success of Your Counter-Marketing Program for more information.)

Surveys are a primary tool in quantitative research. They're used in a program's planning and assessment stages to obtain baseline and tracking information. They also can be useful in gaining insights into a target audience and gauging reactions to potential core messages. Surveys generally involve large numbers of respondents (300 or more) and questionnaires with predominantly closed-ended questions.

Pros:

- Random sampling can be used in surveys to obtain results that can be generalized to the target population, providing better direction for planning programs and messages.
- Participants can be anonymous, which is beneficial for sensitive topics.
- Surveys can include visual material and can be used to pretest items such as prototypes.

Cons:

- Surveys limit the ability to probe answers.
- There's a risk that the people who are more willing to respond may share characteristics that don't apply to the audience as a whole, creating a potential bias in the research.
- Surveys can be costly and time consuming.
- Response rates are declining, especially for telephone and Internet surveys (Singer, et al. 2000).

Most surveys are customized to answer a specific set of research questions. Some surveys are omnibus studies, in which you add questions about your topic to an existing survey. A number of national and local public opinion polls offer this option.

Table 3.5 displays the pros and cons of different survey formats.

Designing and Conducting a Survey

To design and conduct a survey, follow the same basic steps used for the other types of research outlined earlier in this chapter:

1. Plan the research.
2. Decide how the survey participants will be selected and contacted.
3. Develop and pretest the questionnaire.
4. Collect the data.
5. Analyze the results.

Quantitative surveys involve complex topics—such as sampling size and composition, questionnaire design, and analysis of quantitative data—that are beyond the scope of this chapter. (See Chapter 5: *Evaluating the Success of Your Counter-Marketing Program* for more information on planning a survey.)

Other Market Research Tools

Other tools can help you gain insights into your target audience and develop effective messages and materials. These tools include diaries and activity logs, gatekeeper reviews, and readability pretesting.

Diaries and Activity Logs

Diaries and activity logs are written records of what occurred each day, week, or other time period during a program's planning or execution. These records are kept and updated by people from whom you want input and feedback about the program. They're commonly used to:

- Track program implementation
- Assess the effectiveness of program implementation
- Pilot test an intervention
- Monitor whether planned activities are on schedule and within budget
- Learn what questions program participants asked
- Determine what technical assistance program staff needed
- Track the audience's exposure to program components
- Gain insights about the audience's relevant day-to-day experiences (e.g., smokers can record each time they smoked a cigarette, and how they felt before, during, and after smoking the cigarette, providing insights into how smokers feel about smoking and how you might be able to help them quit)

If you plan to use diaries or activity logs to gauge the quality of program planning or execution, be sure the diaries and logs are started as soon as you begin program planning. Have program managers or participants

Table 3.5: Pros and Cons of Survey Formats

Format	Pros	Cons
Mail		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mail can be a cost-effective way to access hard-to-reach populations (e.g., the homebound or rural residents). • Respondents can answer questions when it's most convenient for them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mail is not appropriate for respondents with limited literacy skills. • Low response rate diminishes the value of results. • Expensive follow-up by mail or telephone may be necessary to increase the response rate. • Respondents may return incomplete questionnaires. • Responses can be difficult to read. • Receiving enough responses may take a long time. • Postage may be expensive if the sample is large or the questionnaire is long.
Telephone		
With interviewer using paper-and-pencil questionnaires.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telephone is appropriate for those with limited literacy skills. • Questionnaires can be more complete. • The sequence of questions can be controlled. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential respondents without telephones can't participate. • Respondents may hang up if they believe the survey is part of a solicitation call or if they don't want to take the time to participate. • Response rates are declining, especially for telephone and Internet surveys (Singer, et al. 2000).
With interviewer using computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Skip patterns" can be included, which is useful for complex questionnaires. • The need for data entry is eliminated. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CATI software and computers are required. • Extensive interviewer training is needed. • Time is required to program questionnaire into CATI. <p style="text-align: right;"><i>Continues</i></p>

Table 3.5: Pros and Cons of Survey Formats (cont.)

Format	Pros	Cons
In Person		
<p>Administered by interviewer.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face-to-face persuasion tactics can be used to increase response rates. • Participants with limited literacy skills can use this method. • The method is useful with hard-to-reach populations (e.g., homeless or with low literacy) or when the intended audience can't be surveyed by using other data-collection methods. • Interviewer can clarify questions for respondents. • More questionnaires are completed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administration is more expensive than self-administered surveys or telephone data collection. • This method may not be appropriate for sensitive issues because respondents may not answer as truthfully in person.
<p>Self-administered: Respondents asked to complete survey at a location frequented by the target population (e.g., during a conference, in a classroom, or after viewing an exhibit at a health fair).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Harder-to-reach respondents can be contacted in locations convenient and comfortable for them. • The survey can be conducted quickly. • Data can be gathered cost-effectively in a relatively short time. • Selecting an appropriate location can result in an increased number of respondents from intended population. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The ability to reach respondents in person at a central location or gathering is required. • Respondents must have complex, mature literacy skills.
<p>Self-administered on computer: Questionnaire is displayed on a computer screen and respondents key in answers.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Skip patterns” can be included, which is useful for complex questionnaires. • The sequence of questions can be controlled. • Need for data entry is eliminated, and quick summary and analysis of results are provided. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use is not appropriate for audiences with limited literacy skills or those uncomfortable with computers. • Expensive technical equipment is required that may not be readily available or may be cumbersome in many settings. • Respondents must have access to programmed computers and be comfortable using computers.

Table 3.5: Pros and Cons of Survey Formats (cont.)

Format	Pros	Cons
Internet		
Self-administered on computer: Questionnaire displayed on respondent's computer screen through a Web site.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Skip patterns” can be included, which is useful for complex questionnaires. • The sequence of questions can be controlled. • The need for data entry is eliminated, and quick summary and analysis of results are provided. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use is not appropriate for audiences with limited literacy skills or those uncomfortable with computers. • Respondents must have Internet access and be comfortable using computers. • There's no way to confirm the validity of identifying information provided by respondents. • Response rates are declining, especially for telephone and Internet surveys (Singer, et al. 2000). • Samples are not representative.

put the diary or log information into a specific format. This information may cover issues such as the quality of program components or how your audience uses the components. (See Chapter 5: Evaluating the Success of Your Counter-Marketing Program for guidance on planning and conducting program evaluation.)

Pros:

- Diaries and logs give respondents flexibility in their answers.
- These records enable researchers to observe behavior over time, rather than only once.

Cons:

- Diaries and logs require considerable effort by respondents and may not be filled out in a timely or thorough manner. For this reason, offering

incentives for completing the diaries or logs is important.

- The data may be voluminous and challenging to code and compare.
- These records can be hard to read and are thus not appropriate for respondents with low literacy or poor writing skills or penmanship. Here are the five major steps for diary or activity log research:
 1. Plan the research.
 2. Identify who will complete the diaries or activity logs.
 3. Develop and pretest the form for collecting information.
 4. Collect the data.
 5. Analyze the results.

Step 1: Plan the research.

Determine the following information:

- What you want to learn
- How much information you need
- When you need the information
- How you'll apply what you learn
- What your budget is
- What your criteria are for participants

Step 2: Identify who will complete the diaries or activity logs.

The participants you select depend on the goals of your research. If you're focusing on your audience's day-to-day experiences in relation to some aspect of tobacco use, you'll want audience members to complete the diaries. For example, if you want teenagers to keep diaries documenting when they encountered tobacco among friends, family members, and others in their lives and how those encounters made them feel, recruit teenagers willing to participate. (When recruiting youth respondents, you may need parental permission.)

If you're focusing on participants' experience with a program as a pilot test, you'll want the participants to keep the diaries. You're likely to recruit participants on site. You'll probably need to provide an incentive (e.g., a gift certificate once the completed diary is received), and you also may need to remind participants to return the diaries at the end of the research period.

Step 3: Develop and pretest the form for collecting information.

Here's how to create a user-friendly document to collect the data:

- Write questions that are specific to your objectives. For example, for a pilot test of a health education program, provide a description of the module(s) used each day and include entries such as the following:
 - Date
 - Title of module used
 - Description of activities completed
 - Record of how long activities took to complete
 - Response to whether the respondent would participate in these activities again
 - Reasons the respondent would or would not participate again
- Include examples of participant feedback.
- For a log related to smoking behavior, you might include entries such as the following:
 - When the first cigarette of the day was smoked
 - What the person was doing when smoking each cigarette
 - Whom the person was with when smoking each cigarette
 - How the person was feeling when he or she most wanted a cigarette

- Pretest the draft diary or log with members of your audience.
- Revise questions people found confusing during the pretest. If a question was confusing to only one person, use your judgment about whether to change the question. If you make substantial changes to the diary or log, conduct another pretest before finalizing the form.

Step 4: Collect the data.

Produce enough diaries or logs so that each respondent has several extra forms in case they are needed. Attach detailed written instructions to each form. Deliver the diaries or logs to respondents before training, as necessary or at least one week before the research begins. If you're asking program participants to complete diaries or logs, you'll have to distribute the materials on site. Give respondents a fixed time frame to complete these records (e.g., one week or six months), and provide a way to return the data to you (e.g., an envelope and postage). If your research period is longer than one or two weeks, you may want to ask respondents to send the first week of data, so you can review the logs for accuracy and completeness and even begin to tally information. Collect the logs at several points during the research period, to ensure that participants are filling them out regularly; otherwise they may fill them out all at once at the end of the period.

Step 5: Analyze the results.

In the planning phase, you determined what you wanted to learn from the research. Now you can look through the diaries or logs to answer those questions. Diaries generally contain qualitative information. Activity logs may contain both quantitative information you can tabulate easily (e.g., how many people called a hotline each day) and qualitative information (e.g., reasons people liked or participated in an activity). Here are some suggestions for analyzing both types of information:

- To analyze qualitative information, search the data for similarities and differences among diaries or logs, for all the questions. Look for general themes or patterns. The best way to analyze these themes is to develop categories for the responses. For example, if you want to know why teachers thought their students liked or disliked a certain educational module in your program, you might group responses into categories such as “challenging,” “fun,” “too much work,” and “boring.” You may add or combine categories as you go along. You can make inferences about the diary information (e.g., “most teachers liked the module because...”), but resist the temptation to quantify this information.
- To analyze quantitative responses, create a coding sheet for each quantitative

question, writing the question at the top and creating columns for each possible response. For example, for a question in an activity log about how many people picked up particular brochures, you could create these columns: 0, 1–5, 6–10, 11–15, 16–20, and >20. Then record the response from each log by making a check mark in the appropriate column. Tally the check marks in each column, and calculate the percentage of participants who gave each type of response.

Gatekeeper Reviews

Educational materials for the public and for patients often are routed to their intended audiences through health professionals or other individuals or organizations that can communicate for you. These intermediaries act as gatekeepers, controlling the distribution channels that reach your audiences. Their approval or disapproval of your materials can be a critical factor in your program's success. If they don't like a poster or don't believe it's credible or scientifically accurate, it may never reach your audience.

Gatekeeper review of rough materials should be considered part of the pretesting process, although it's no substitute for pretesting materials with audience members. It's also no substitute for obtaining clearances or expert review for technical accuracy; that should be done before pretesting. Sometimes telling the

gatekeeper that technical experts have reviewed the material for accuracy will reassure them and may speed approval of your message.

How you obtain gatekeeper reviews depends on your resources, including time and budget. Two methods are common:

1. **Self-administered questionnaires.**
Gatekeepers are sent the materials and the questionnaire at the same time. (See Appendix 3.5 for an example.)
2. **Interviewer-administered questionnaires.**
Typically, an appointment for the interview is scheduled with the gatekeeper, and the materials are sent for review in advance.

Questionnaires should be written to ask about overall reactions to the materials, including an assessment of whether the information is appropriate and useful.

In some cases, a formal questionnaire might not be feasible, especially if you don't think the gatekeeper will take the time to fill it out. Arrange a telephone or personal conversation or a meeting to review the materials. Consider in advance which questions you want to ask, and bring a list of these questions with you. One advantage of this approach is that you can use the discussion with gatekeepers to introduce them to your program and to ask if they want to become involved.

Readability Pretesting

Readability formulas often are used to assess the reading level of materials. Reading level refers to the number of years of education required for a reader to understand a written passage. Some experts suggest aiming for a level that is two to five grades lower than the average grade your audience has achieved, to account for a probable decline in reading skills over time. Others say a third- to fifth-grade level is frequently appropriate for readers with low literacy.

When the target audience is the general population, keep publications as simple as possible to increase reader comprehension. However, if publications are meant for a more educated, professional audience, simple materials might be considered insulting.

You'll need to decide which reading level is appropriate for your materials. Then use one or more readability formulas to determine whether your text is written at that level. Fry, Flesch, FOG, and SMOG are among the most commonly used readability formulas (NCI 2002). Applying these formulas is a simple process that can be done manually or with a computer program in only a few minutes. (See

the National Cancer Institute's *Making Health Communication Programs Work: A Planner's Guide* [2002] for more information on readability formulas.)

Typically, readability formulas measure the difficulty of the vocabulary used and the average sentence length. Readability software such as RightWriter and Grammatik analyze a document's grammar, style, word usage, and punctuation and then assign a reading level. Some popular software programs such as Microsoft Word include a readability-testing function. However, these formulas don't measure the reader's level of comprehension. Researchers in one study suggest three principles for the use of readability formulas (NCI 1994):

1. Use readability formulas only in concert with other means of assessing the effectiveness of the material.
2. Use a formula only when the readers for whom a text is intended are similar to those on whom the formula was validated.
3. Do not write a text with readability formulas in mind.

Points To Remember

- Gaining insights about the target audience is central to developing effective counter-marketing strategies, tactics, and messages.
- Market research should be an integral part of your counter-marketing program.
- Market research isn't a do-it-yourself effort. Not only do you need to be knowledgeable, but you also need to seek the appropriate resources to ensure that your research is successfully designed and conducted.
- Many tobacco control program staff have used market research and are good sources of advice on design, instruments, analysis, and findings.
- Market research findings must be used to be worthwhile. Before you conduct research, decide how you'll use the results to plan, alter, justify, support, and/or promote aspects of your program.

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