



Listening to the Voice of the Participant: Modified for the Busy EE Program Administrator

LBNL – April 2011

Listening to the Voice of the Participant (VOP) Philosophy



- A qualitative method for collecting raw survey data, 'scrubbing' it for the most important characteristics, and turning it into information you can use to improve your program
 - Philosophy:
 - Self-education
 - Slow down / add structure to the process
 - Small numbers / high quality returns
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When is the VOP useful?



- This process can be used to summarize and capture comments from open-ended survey questions
 - Other uses:
 - Volunteer observations
 - Contractor surveys/observations
 - Program staff observations about process
 - Data needs to be recorded in a format that allows you to pull individual “voices” or observations
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Sources for this Process Summary



- Adapted from the materials put together by Kat Donnelly with the Neighbor to Neighbor Energy Challenge in Connecticut
 - Burchill, Gary and Christina Brodie. Voices into Choices: Acting on the Voice of the Customer.
 - Drazen Prelec, 15.821 MIT MBA Class: Listening to the Customer
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Process Overview



- Understand the Research ?'s & Priorities
 - Find the Voices in the Raw Data
 - Sort (“Scrub”) the Raw Data
 - Generalize the Data
 - Categorize the Data
 - Create the Output
 - Code the Data
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Understand your Research ?'s & Priorities



- Identify what research questions you want to answer through this process
 - For example:
 - What are the most effective ways to engage the target audience?
 - What are the biggest barriers to getting a homeowner to complete an assessment?
 - What are a homeowner's greatest concerns about participating in a financing program?
 - Select a single question to complete the VOP process
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Find the Voices in the Raw Data



- With your research question in mind, comb through the participant responses and copy exact phrases that relate to your question, these are your “voices.”
 - Each statement should be written down on a separate piece of paper or sticky note
 - Through this process you are seeking to identify:
 - Issues
 - Needs
 - Problems
 - Concerns
 - Images
 - Solutions
 - This can be streamlined by identifying the research question ahead of time and including it (or similar questions) on the homeowner survey
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Sort (“Scrub”) the Raw Data



- Once you’ve pulled all of the related “voices” from the homeowner surveys, the sorting process begins
 - Using a large table or wall, group the “voices” that seem to be saying the same thing
 - This can be completed in a group by dividing the responses among several people and having one person read through each of their “voices” with the others pulling similar statements from their own “voices” to group together in a pile
 - Repeat until all the “voices” have been assigned to a pile
 - Once all the “voices” have been sorted, put the statement that best represents the pile on top, these are your key “voices” going forward
 - If there are more than 30 piles, select the ones that seem most important until you have 15-25 statements
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Generalize the Data



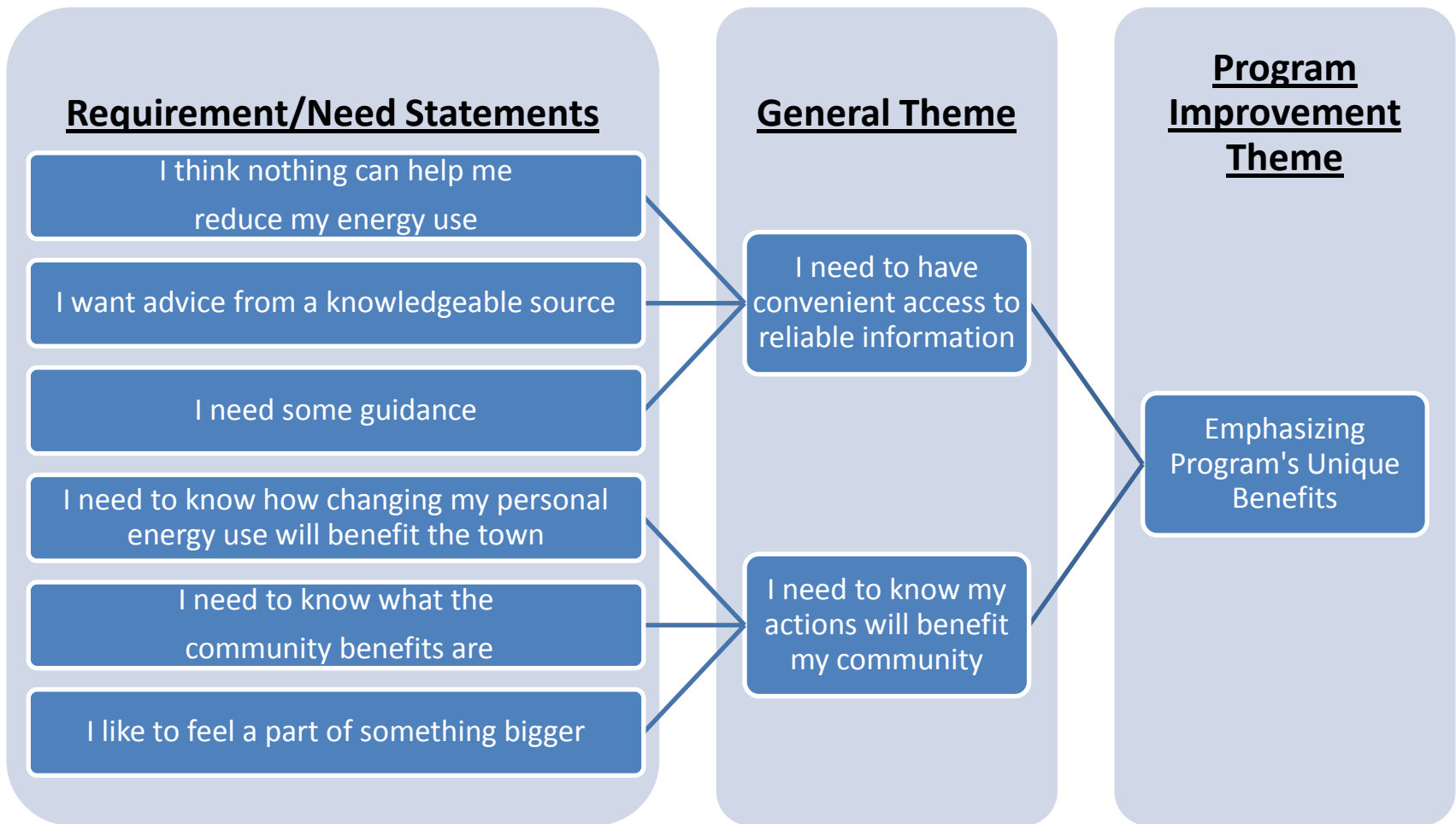
- For each of the key “voices,” identify a need or requirement statement
 - Identify a need that motivates the original voice
 - Avoid solutions
 - Be concrete and specific
 - Use positive, action-oriented language
 - Example:
 - Voice: “some feel like their home is too old to fix and don’t want to think about the changes it would require to retrofit”
 - Need/Requirement Statement: I need to understand what’s involved with an energy upgrade and the criteria for a home to qualify.
 - At this point, you may want to consider putting your key “voices” and the need statements into a spreadsheet to track your progress and preserve your results
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Categorize the Data



- The next step in the process is to categorize the requirements/needs statements to begin to identify general themes and areas for program improvement
 - Identify general themes by grouping similar needs statements and create piles with a common, yet fairly concrete, theme
 - Do not group in cause and effect: i.e., this statement caused that statement
 - Look for subtle distinctions between the groups
 - Nothing in this process is final, keep moving the needs statement until you think it's in the right place
 - Once the groups are settled, write a short general theme statement for each group
 - Create a broader program improvement theme by grouping the general theme statements
 - Try to keep themes at a higher level of abstraction
 - Create a very short title for this level
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Categorization Example



Create the Output



- Brainstorm some potential outputs (in real-time) informed by the process/results thus far
 - What product(s) will be most useful to your program?
 - Outputs can include:
 - Affinity Diagram (shown on the previous slide)
 - Debrief Document
 - Evaluation of Ideas and Recommended Actions
 - Action Plan for Implementation
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Code the Data



- If you would like to repeat this question for a different set of surveys, you can code the responses from this survey
 - This could help you track whether changes in the program were effective
 - To code the responses:
 - You have already grouped similar responses (“voices”) by developing the requirement/needs statement and grouped the requirements statements by general theme
 - That was the heavy lifting and all that’s left is to create a short code/descriptor for each group
 - Ex. “I need to know my actions will benefit my community”
 - Coding: Actions Benefiting the Community
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Coding Example



- Using the categorization from before, these are some possible sample codes
- Future survey responses could be coded based on this system and the number of responses that fit each code totaled
- The change in totals over time should be examined more closely to determine if program and/or implementation changes were effective
- Note: If your “Other” category gets too large, you may need to add additional categories/codes

Responses: Broad Category	Response: Specific Code
Convenient, Reliable Information	Understand/reduce energy use
	Knowledgeable source
	Seeking advice/guidance
Actions Benefiting the Community	Impact of my actions on town
	Community benefits
	Join in larger/bigger action
Other	All other Responses

Sources & Additional Resources



- Donnelly, Kat. *Listening to the Voice of the Consumer*. Neighbor to Neighbor Energy Challenge – Connecticut
 - Available on the BetterBuildings Google site
 - Donnelly, Kat. *Voice of the Consumer Process Debrief*. Neighbor to Neighbor Energy Challenge – Connecticut
 - Available on the BetterBuildings Google site
 - Burchill, Gary and Christina Brodie. *Voices into Choices: Acting on the Voice of the Customer*. Center for Quality of Management, 1997.
 - Available on Amazon [here](#).
 - Prelec, Drazen. 15.821 MIT MBA Class: Listening to the Customer
 - Course Overview [here](#)
 - Lecture Notes [here](#)
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