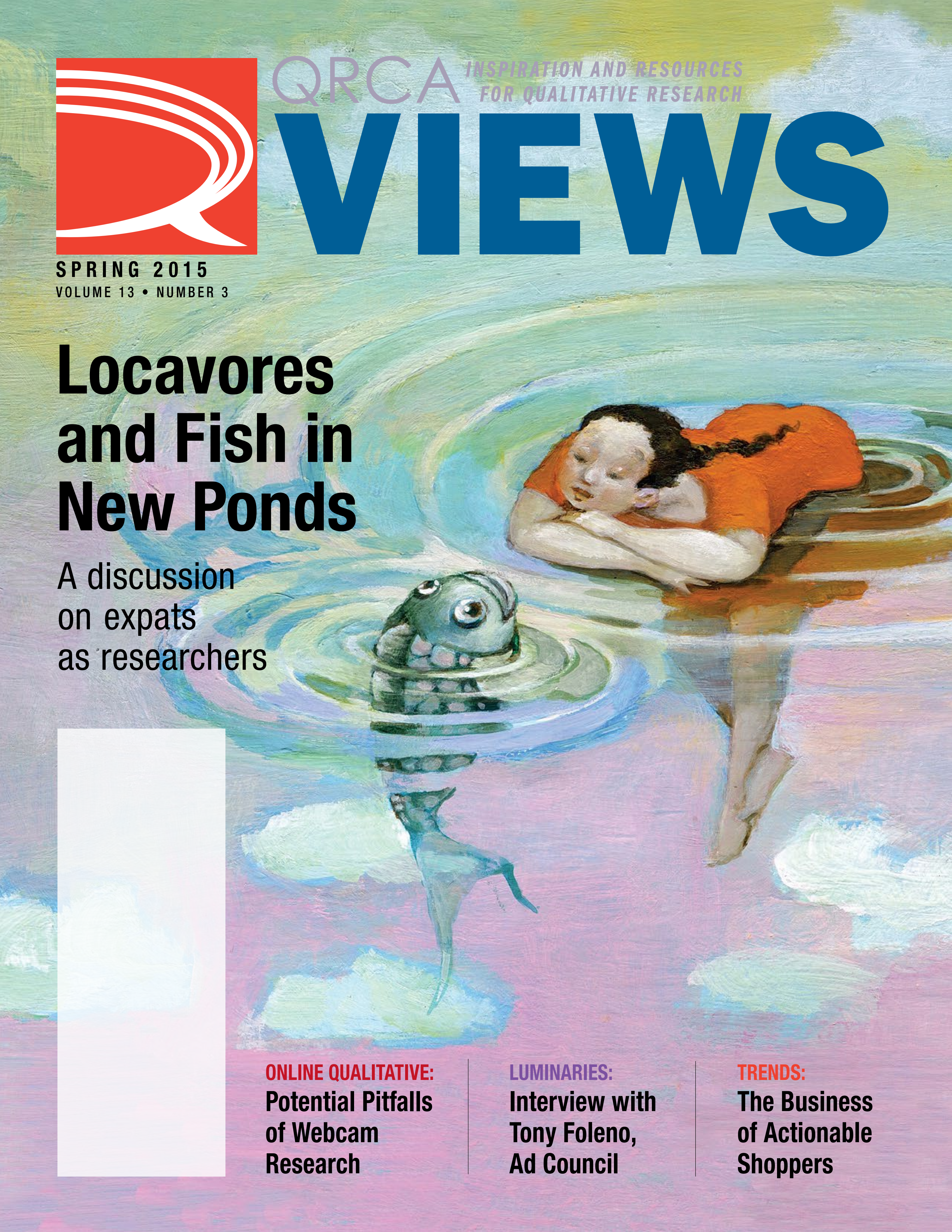

QRCA
INSPIRATION AND RESOURCES FOR QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

VIEWS

SPRING 2015
VOLUME 13 • NUMBER 3

Locavores and Fish in New Ponds

A discussion on expats as researchers

ONLINE QUALITATIVE:
Potential Pitfalls of Webcam Research

LUMINARIES:
Interview with Tony Foleno, Ad Council

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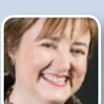
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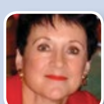
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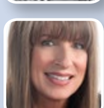
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We hope you find this issue chock-full of innovative ideas on methods, technology, and qualitative research in general. Our authors have been generous in sharing their approaches with enough detail to enable you to adopt and adapt them in your own work.

Here is a preview of some of the content – for Luminaries, Judy Langer interviews Tony Foleno, Senior Vice President of Research for the Ad Council, on its process for learning what the public actually thinks about issues. In the qualitative portions of the agency's work they favor loosely moderated groups of participants who share common characteristics. Rather than directing the group conversation with a fixed agenda, they guide it and pay attention because "there is no substitute for actually listening to people's stories."

In their Toolbox article, Beverly Freeman of Google and Mark Wehner of eBay describe how they use "Journey Lines" to collect customer-user stories, which they share with colleagues to collaboratively redesign services. In the "Hitchhiker's Guide to Narrative Galaxies," Jochum Stienstra describes his open-ended technique for collecting stories, collaboratively analyzing, rewriting, and using them as a basis for developing caricatures and customer archetypes.

This issue features several excellent articles that show how technology in our field has matured. Steve August, the creator of the Revelation platform, offers his ideas on how to blend online/offline, real-time/asynchronous, web/mobile capabilities to bring the most value to our clients. I was surprised to learn it is now possible to include facial recognition in webcam interviews. Karen Lynch has written an excellent piece on "clearing the hurdles of webcam interviews" through planning and practice, a useful checklist you can use to ensure success when you conduct this type of interview. And for a humorous look at the annoyances and snafus that can sometimes occur with online research, check out Andreiko Kerdemelidis's piece, "The Horrors of Online Qualitative Research."

For our Global section, "Locavores and Fish in New Ponds: a discussion on expats as researchers" by Nikki Lavoie weighs the pros and cons of being a qualitative researcher in a foreign culture, based on her experience as an American living and working in France. In this issue's Trends piece, Terrie Wendricks explains why it's important to distinguish between consumer insights and shopper insights. With consumer insights the goal is to learn who the customer is and how to reach them with the right product and message. The focus of shopper insights is learning the consumer's path-to-purchase so the shopping experience can be optimized.

Jeffrey Henning, President of Researchscape International, borrows a page from the manufacturing handbook in "Build a Blog Content Factory to Drive Leads" in the Business Matters section. His tips will help you generate, refine, and store ideas for your website.

Please check out podcast.qrca.org for two new excellent podcasts. Michael Carlon talks with Joe Indusi, founder of Research 2 Video, a company that works exclusively with researchers. Karen Lynch interviews Owen Shapiro, who co-wrote *Brand Shift: The Future of Brands and Marketing* on how cultural change and technology will affect brands and marketing in the future. George Sloan, VIEWS Book Reviews editor, critiques *Advancing Ethnography in Corporate Environments* by Brigitte Jordan and *Start with Why – How Great Leaders Inspire Action* by Simon Sinek.

As always, our gratitude goes out to these amazing and generous authors who share their expertise with us so that we can expand our learning and be more creative and successful as researchers. Thanks for reading VIEWS!

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Leveraging Qualitative Research Consultants for Strong Research Designs

I was recently on a domestic flight with a U.S.-based carrier. When the flight attendants served dinner to my fellow economy passengers and me, my immediate reaction was, "They don't understand their passengers at all!" What can I say? A Qualitative Research Consultant's (QRC) mind never stops – we just can't escape work!

Here is what I observed as the attendants served the three rows of passengers before mine.

• Flight attendants uniformly set down the food trays with the salad at the six o'clock position and the entrée at the noon position.

• Almost every passenger turned the tray completely around, then rotated the tray, putting the entrée on one side and then the other before turning it back to its original position – all before they started eating. That's odd, I thought… what the heck is going on?

• When I was served my tray (and yes, I was biased by then, but I understood why) I also tried turning my tray in all the different positions. The tray slid at the slightest touch because it did not rest flat upon the tray table and it did not feel stable enough to eat from.

Long story short, the trays had been designed to fit securely and compactly into the flight attendants' serving carts, but (subjectively) less thought seemed to have gone into the end users, experience when eating from a small, cramped table tray. I did laugh at myself shortly after this observation, realizing I seemed to be the only one paying attention to or caring about this issue. I even asked a flight attendant about the matter and he said no passengers had ever mentioned this to him.

This attentiveness toward and curiosity about our surroundings, and the need to know more, is what we QRCs share. It is a key attribute in making qualitative researchers' involvement in the research design process critical to a project's and, ultimately, the client's success.

Being an involved member of QRCA provides a chance to participate in the design process; we have the opportunity to learn about and be exposed to in-practice applications for new and emerging techniques, even when we've not yet had the privilege of putting them into practice ourselves. The increase in technology, coupled with the tried and true techniques that serve as the foundation of qualitative research, has provided qualitative researchers an opportunity to be more creative in designing projects to better meet clients' needs. The time has passed from approaching qualitative research as "let's do some groups" – what seemed to have been a catchall phrase for conducting qualitative research. Objective-driven methodology design is steering client successes, and mixes of old and new approaches deliver results.

So, what would I have recommended if this client had come to me? Well, it isn't fair to speculate, knowing multiple factors can be at play. But, one thing I would have asked the client is to have their team eat a meal with passengers in their economy class section and live in their customers' moment.

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LEADS
BLOG

Build a Blog Content Factory to Drive Leads

By Jeffrey Henning ■ Researchscape International ■ Norwell, MA ■ jhenning@researchscape.com

Customers in the market for research services these days most likely turn to Google or some other search engine to find a qualitative researcher. A website with appropriate key words will position a researcher at the top of the hit list. But to make the grade, a good SEO (Search Engine Optimization) strategy founded on an effective content-marketing plan is critical. While there are many tips for writing web content that will attract viewers, the Golden Rule is to write for people first. If you do, page views, social links, and Google search-bots will follow. So how do you make your website one of the top ranked? By writing interesting, relevant, and informative blog posts.

While a blog does not guarantee your site will leap to the front of the pack, many consultant websites that succeed do so because of a blog. If your site is "brochure-ware," listing the information that would have been part of print collateral material ten years ago, the only viewers you'll attract will be those with whom you already do business. But if your site offers great articles that speak to the industry, trends, and the qualitative craft, then people will want to read and share your wisdom with others in their networks.

GATHERING RAW MATERIAL

If you're like most qualitative researchers, the thought of starting with a blank page scares you. After all, when you're writing a report, you have a moderator's guide, transcripts, data, and numerous quotes to guide you. But when you're starting a blog, you need to generate your own ideas. Consider the process as if you are a factory owner.

You'll need to collect raw materials for blog posts, store them, refine them, and move them along an assembly line until they are finished and ready for publication.

To crank up your blogging machine, you have to start collecting ideas for blog posts. But where do those ideas come from? Why not apply some of your great projective research techniques on yourself?

My ideas for blog posts take all kinds of forms. Sometimes I have an idea for a title, e.g., "Why Qualitative Researchers Will Inherit the Earth – or at Least the MR Industry." Or just a subject, e.g., "talk up Chicago as a great place for focus groups." Or a link to an article that triggers a response, e.g., http://researchaccess.com/2014/10/selecting-markets-for-qualitative-research/. Or a favorite quote, e.g., "The future is here today. It's just not evenly distributed," from William Gibson. Ideas can take many forms from questions and charts, to slides and cartoons. Once you've brainstormed and primed the pump with a list of ideas, you'll find new ideas will come to you naturally. They might be quotes from prospects or customers, ideas from co-workers, social-media conversations, other people's blog posts, and so on.

STRUCTURE AND SUBASSEMBLIES

When it comes to structure, use categories that reflect the SEO keywords you are interested in, e.g., "Focus Group with Seniors," "Online Communities," "Working with Millennials," "Bulletin Board Focus Groups," etc.

To continue our factory metaphor, you will need some "subassemblies." These are what I call "proto-posts," i.e., notes that go into a little more detail on an idea. They can take the form of an outline or consist

> "You'll need to collect raw materials for blog posts, store them, refine them, and move them along an assembly line until they are finished and ready for publication."

of a few key sentences or perhaps the draft of the introductory or concluding paragraph. Sometimes they include excerpts from books or blogs, collections of related links, notes to yourself, or related ideas.

The great thing about your list of ideas and proto-posts is that they often suggest juxtapositions. You realize that bad experience you had with Siri is a good metaphor for an emerging industry trend you've been thinking about. Or the two unrelated ideas you picked up from conversations with prospects actually share a common theme.

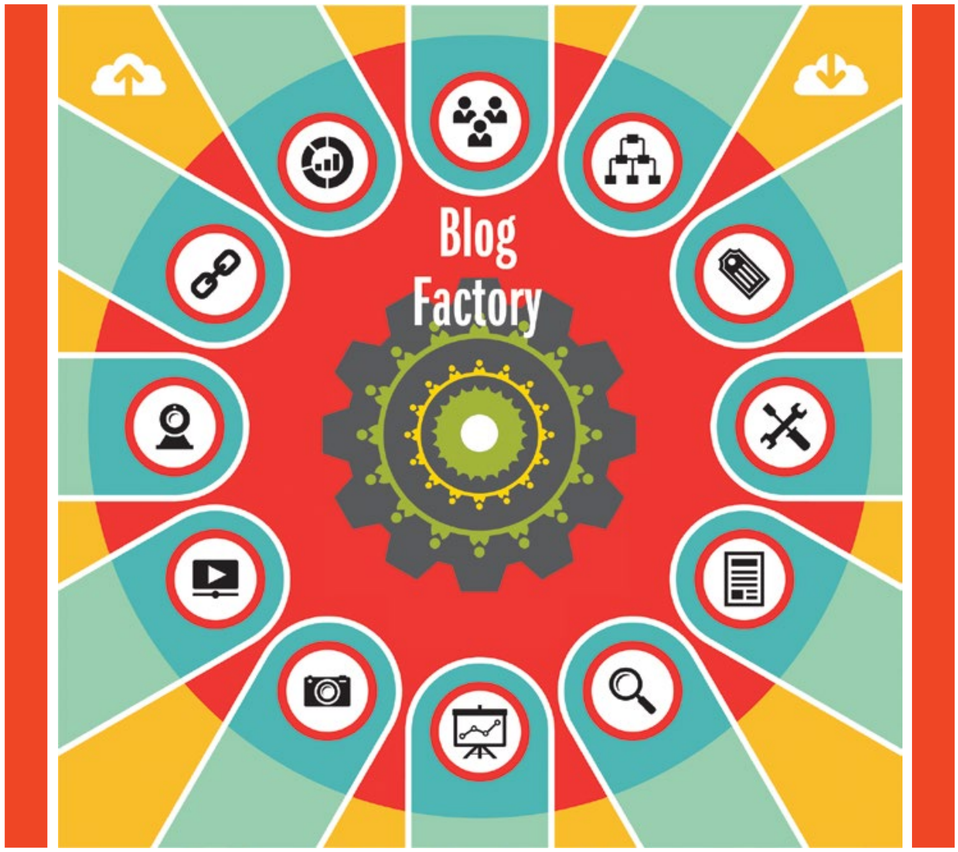
You'll find that blog posts themselves become a source of ideas for spin-off posts; phrases you used in one post might prompt another post to which readers can link. Or you'll realize a post you've written really needs a better introduction and that will trigger a separate post. Sometimes reader comments to past posts will inspire you.

Don't fall into the trap of turning a blog post into a series. Nothing causes readers to skip a post like seeing "Part 2 of 3." The same concept applies if you have a white paper you would divide into blog posts. Make every post stand alone, but link liberally to past posts. And wrap up with an overview article, such as an executive summary, that links to each individual post. You can reverse the process as well and assemble a white paper out of past blog posts you've written on a particular theme.

Set a blogging schedule and stick to it. You can start out slow, e.g., once a month, but you will need to blog weekly or multiple times a week to build out a content library. Blog even when you aren't in the mood to blog. Sometimes those dashed-off posts become some of your most popular ones.

STORING IDEAS

You will also need a raw materials warehouse for your blog content factory, an "idea management system" for storing ideas. If you're old school, you might use notecards. If you're new school, you can use the note app on your smartphone, a Word document, email folder, task-management system, Google Doc or SharePoint. The key is speed – you want a system that easily lets you add a new idea, from wherever you are, as soon as it comes to you.



If you are building your blog factory for the first time, you have a lot of choices when it comes to a blogging platform. Take a look at WordPress, TypePad, HubSpot, and SiteCatalyst. For A/B testing of offers, check out HubSpot and Optimizely. For email gathering, consider HubSpot, Constant Contact, Eloqua, Marketo, and the Devereux Group.

Some blogging platforms will provide guidance on fine-tuning a blog post for SEO. For instance, SEO add-ins on HubSpot and Wordpress will tell if you haven't used a search keyword enough or if you have omitted it from the title or meta-description. Some tools provide even more nuanced tips for maximizing the search appeal of your posts.

Properly done, a blog becomes a fantastic tool for lead generation. People who encounter the blog have multiple ways to become connected to you: they can subscribe to the blog by its RSS syndication feed, or by email, or follow you on social media. Make sure to offer content for which they will surrender their email address, such as notice of upcoming webinars, recorded webinars, ebooks to download, and white papers. For viewers who show more interest, you can offer customer case studies and a request option for instant contact through web chats, call requests, or phone calls.

A systematic, put-your-hard-hat-on mentality will help you start a blog and stick with it, which is much more rewarding than cold calling prospects. With a blog you are building a wonderful asset to showcase your craft and talents. And hopefully you'll have some fun in the process.

"Properly done, a blog becomes a fantastic tool for lead generation."

The HORRORS of Online Qualitative Research

By Andreiko Kerdemelidis ▪ Visionslive.com ▪ London, UK ▪ andreiko@visionslive.com

I've been in the market research industry for a few years now, but even so, the very thought of online qualitative research still sends shivers down my spine. Peering back a few years into the early days of online qualitative methodology (and by "early" I don't mean the Precambrian era of Internet Relay Chat; I mean around 2006 when it lost its tail and began walking on two legs), I had the pleasure of introducing a new prototype online qualitative platform we had developed. I was to demonstrate this amazing new tool to researchers and moderators from around the globe. The tool was built with the proviso: "If you have a computer you can watch YouTube on, then you can participate in an online focus group." However, not every computer could do this back then.

Emerging from the "Dark Ages"

Our tool was a live online focus groups platform and a bit "Frankenstein," to say the least, but I was excited to be able to help qualitative researchers come out of the Dark Ages and into the brave new world of online. No more would they need to jet-set first-class around the world to sunny climes and exotic places; no more would they have to stay in expensive hotels and eat fancy restaurant dinners; no need to wander aimlessly around city centers and spend money on shopping; nor was it necessary to meet up with the client for drinks afterwards! You could just stay home all day, every day, order takeout, and moderate focus groups on a beanbag from the comfort of your bedroom. Think of the savings.

In hindsight I now see the errors of my approach. Over the years I have had to adjust my pitch a bit to avoid being chased out of rooms full of raging quallies.

I'm sure that the vigorous objections of qualitative researchers came from a good place. How could anyone get answers to pressing business questions if respondents weren't sweating it out during an interrogation in a stuffy, windowless room with a one-way mirror? What about the lack of non-verbal cues? Or the fact that you can't give respondents something to hold in their hands? What about social interaction? Impression management? Symbolic phenomenology? What about that all-important atmosphere in the room?

I digress. The point is I'm still alive, online qualitative platforms are here to stay, and all that running away from moderators has kept me reasonably fit.

Let's fast-forward a few years when we were even closer to achieving the dream of online research. Everyone then had proper computers and was busy collecting followers, friends and exes on social networks and bragging about their lives online. In addition, even normal people like your grandmother the truck driver or your auntie the fire-eating contortionist had email. They could click on anything with a screen and join a focus group.

So what could possibly go wrong as we were nearing online qualitative utopia? What hideous demons would be unleashed upon the qualitative world as we knew it? Let's start with what could go wrong with the respondents.

The Eight Hellish Respondents

There are more than just eight of these people and not all are exclusive to online focus groups.

1. **The Mute:**
   Enters without saying a word. Exits without saying a word.
2. **The Faker:**
   A 13-year old finance director of a Fortune 500 company.
3. **The Lothario:**
   "Come here often? You're funny! Can I have your number?"
4. **The Wrong Country:**
   "Что нового"
5. **The One Word Grunt:**
   "Yes." "No." "Maybe."
6. **The English Schoolteacher:**
   "You missed an apostrophe."
7. **The Potty Mouth:**
   @$#&*^$!
8. **The One Finger Sensation:**
   The. Best. Respondent. In. The. Room. Types. At. Four. Words. Per. Minute…

"So what could possibly go wrong now that we were nearing online qualitative utopia? What hideous demons would be unleashed upon the qualitative research world as we knew it?"

Mind you, you can always sort these people out by kicking them back into the virtual waiting room with a click.

Of course, moderators are not themselves without sin.

The Seven Deadly Sins of Online Moderation

There are a multitude of sins; listing "Seven" has a nice ring to it.

1. Typing with one finger in a live group.
2. Not having a backup moderator just in case the dog chews the cable at your place. (Good excuse, though: "The Dog Ate My Focus Group.")
3. Moderating the wrong group and wondering why the respondents – or the client – haven't turned up yet.
4. Forgetting about time zones and turning up an hour late to speak with the one suspicious respondent who is still hanging around to get their incentive.
5. Turning on your webcam, but then moderating in the dark.
6. Moderating audio/visual (A/V) groups without a headset/microphone (unless you're after a "we're in a cave" effect).
7. Moderating while eating breakfast in your pajamas or your birthday suit – while the camera is on.

For better or worse, the online approach seems to alter behavior in obvious ways, which opens up a few opportunities. It's the moderator's responsibility to maintain order and avoid chaos; I have found that three virtues help you thrive while doing online qualitative research.

The Three Muses of Online Qualitative

INHIBITION:

I find that inhibition decreases when people are "behind the online veil," especially with chat groups or boards and might be even lower if they've logged in after downing a couple of glasses of pinot noir.

HONESTY:

Picture a bunch of insecure teens in a focus group talking about "icky" things. It's much easier to get them to be honest about difficult questions if they feel that their peers in the group don't have a way to judge them in person. The truth will out and it might be scary.

THOUGHT:

Online gives people more time to think without having voices in their ears while they are formulating their own responses. Or the moderator can control the pace of the group so that it's all top-of-mind. This is not much different from face-to-face methods, except that respondents could be engaged in other activities that distract from participating in their online focus group (e.g., watching TV, eating dinner, trimming their nails). Helpful hint: using webcams can give you an idea if respondents' attention is wandering.

Overcoming the fear

But seriously, what can the modern quallie do to avoid online purgatory the first time moderating an online focus group or board? For one, keep an eye out for what tools are available and practice. There are a lot of platforms, each one evolving and with its own set of strengths and weaknesses. Most vendors offer some kind of demo/practice account and training materials if you ask or sign up with them – make use of these, as there a lot of great ideas and approaches to running live groups and boards that you will discover by exploring a few different platforms.

Experienced qualitative researchers will discover there are a lot of transferable skills we can apply – and may even prompt new and effective approaches to our qualitative fieldwork – when using these platforms. And don't be afraid to reach out to your colleagues to ask what tools they use and what approaches they take.

Online focus groups are a methodology in their own right, not a replacement for face-to-face or facilities-based qualitative research, which will always be appropriate in relevant circumstances. In the modern world it is becoming more natural for people to speak through their keyboards and share media from the front line of their lives. With the proliferation of smartphones, which are – or can be – powerful tools for qualitative research, the possibilities are endless. There are exciting opportunities for deep ethnographic exploration. For the first time in human history, and without interfering, researchers can now go where no one has gone before, get even closer to the front line of people's lives than would be possible using purely traditional methods.

If we approach online qualitative methodologies with the right frame of mind and try to ignore any irrational fears and preconceptions, it's likely that most of us will find that when we stray into online territory it's not quite as full of horrors as we might have thought; in fact, it can be an incredible experience. At worst, the horrors are no different than what we're used to already in our line of work, and you'll find that you can usually dispatch them easily with just a few strokes of your keyboard.

"For better or worse, the online approach seems to alter behavior in obvious ways, which opens up a few opportunities."

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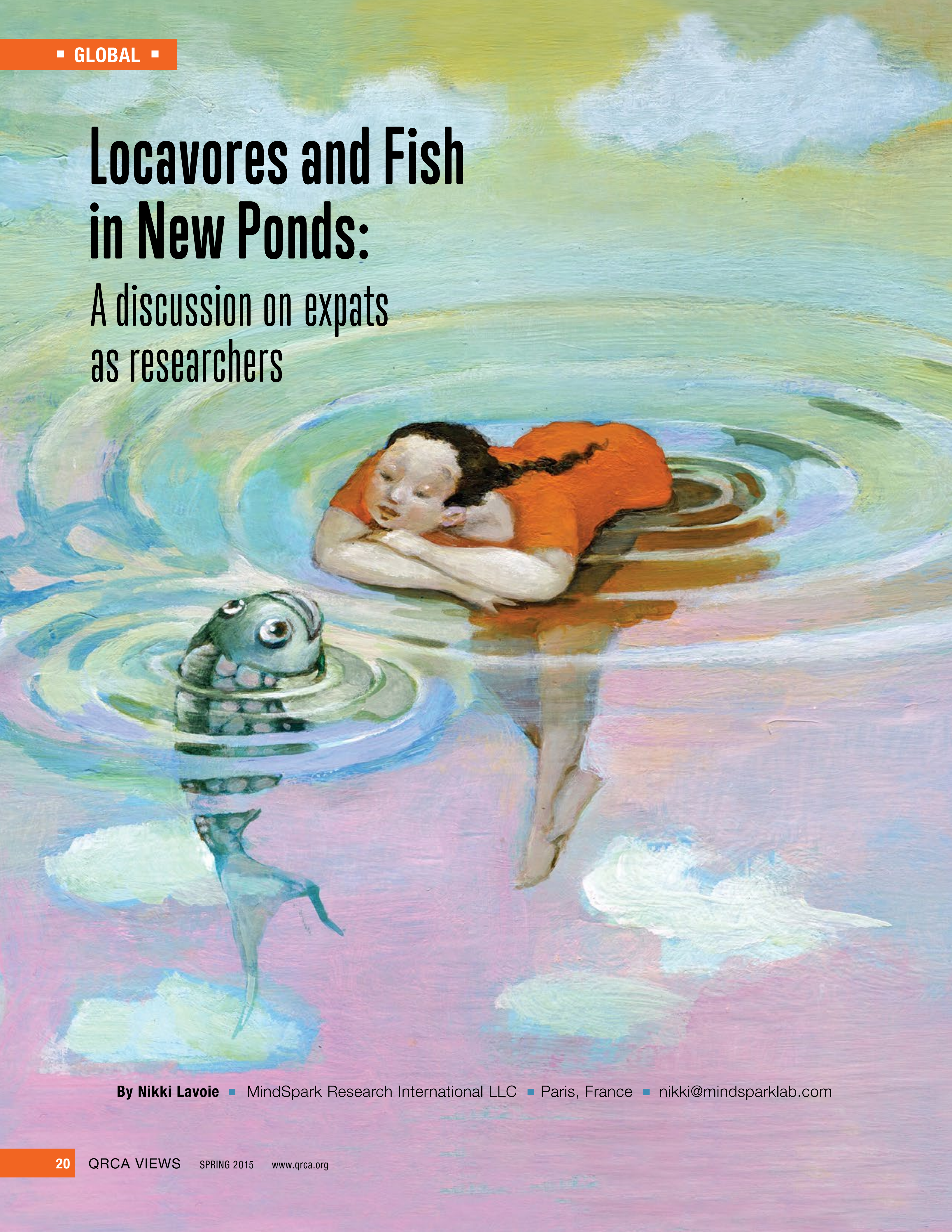
Locavores and Fish in New Ponds:

A discussion on expats as researchers



By Nikki Lavoie ▪ MindSpark Research International LLC ▪ Paris, France ▪ nikki@mindsparklab.com

One of today's biggest buzzwords emphasizes the importance of what lies in our back yard: local. Slogans such as, "Buy local. Shop local. Eat local," have become part of the lexicon. Consider the locavore, someone who eats only food grown or produced in close proximity to their home.

An admirable endeavor, for sure, aiming to minimize reliance on unnatural food sources, including preservatives, and energy intensive transportation methods, and one whose underpinnings convey a similar attitude and approach that many of us exercise in our qualitative studies.

Years ago, I was introduced to the locavore approach to qualitative research – an idealistic practice in its own right. The principal is simple: when doing research in countries or markets outside of your own, use only local resources. Though the context is different, the idea remains the same: the resources that come from local surroundings are more natural/knowledgeable, culturally relevant, and less costly than resources imported from elsewhere.

Today, however, I find myself questioning the locavore research approach. Several years after working within the United States and developing an understanding of my own local landscape, I was transplanted into a new one. I initially continued to operate as a locavore, considering myself only capable of personally conducting research and unearthing insight in the U.S. I had the privilege of watching experienced researchers from all countries and disciplines demonstrate mastery of their craft in maneuvering the cultural nuances I had just barely begun to recognize. Now, after nearly four years as an expat, I find myself wanting to open the discussion about what it means to be a local resource, and whether or not "eating local" is the only approach worth admiring in a global research context.

Swimming in a New Pond

It recently dawned on me that I have had the unique experience of living life not quite as a fish out of water, but as a fish that had been transferred into a new pond. What's more, this transplantation elicited a completely new way of interacting with the very water around me and the fabric of life that is culture. Everything about my new pond was different, and the most basic elements of life that I had come across at home now included a new level of complexity, all of it centering around some history, attitude, or philosophy that needed to be evaluated and understood.

Transplanting to a new pond is no easy task. Expatriation failure rates – typically defined as the expat's inability or unwillingness to continue living abroad after the first year – vary widely, some reaching as high as 80 percent. Those who do manage to survive such a challenging change in environment tend to hone a certain, necessary set of skills. They observe more keenly, and they place great emphasis on all of their interactions with others. Every encounter – for better or worse – is a learning experience.

Experiencing life as a transplanted fish changes the way we function, transforming us into more curious, more observant, more inquisitive beings. We are trained to look for cultural nuances and threads of commonality as a survival mechanism, and this heightened awareness of the water we swim in does not fade with time.

I eventually came to realize that being an expat had affected me personally and from a research perspective as well. Years of living by a different set of social rules, instead of just watching them play out from behind a figurative or literal glass, had magnified the desire for discovery in me, as well as a keen sense for when cultural or historical variables are at play versus personal or transitional ones.

I also discovered several key advantages to knowing the cultural fabric of a place while still being seen as a foreigner. Part of the initial philosophy I have always embraced about the benefit of using local resources centered around the idea that people don't open up to foreigners the way they do to one of "their own kind." There are several instances where I've seen this hold true, especially when the focus of the research specifically relates to cultural sensitivities or pride. But in other cases, I've discovered a type of evolution: in the age of social media and constant sharing, the world has become a more open place. Presenting myself as a researcher, exploring the cultural intricacies of someone else's pond while living as a transplant had given me access to peoples' lives I previously thought impossible. I am able to trigger a feeling of specialness in these participants, who are often honored by the fact that someone from elsewhere has such an interest in their lives and habits.

Trial and Error

Another advantage expat-hood has afforded me is the ability to "play dumb."

"…to be well traveled is one thing, but you don't really get the interplay of cultural intricacies until you've lived elsewhere."

Digging deeper into what may seem an obvious reference or comment has given me far greater insight than pulling the same card in the U.S. ever did. In a place where I'm clearly recognized as an outsider, thanks in no small part to my American accent, there is an understanding that further explanation is not only necessary, but also welcome. While any non-local could arguably use this technique, I've found that my personal experience of trial and error in understanding a new set of surroundings has required me to operate with a certain sensitivity; knowing when not to play dumb is equally important in many cases.

A common topic of discussion within expat communities is that of true matriculation. At what point do you feel like you belong in your new pond? Do you ever feel that way? Even if you start to assimilate some of your new culture's traits and habits, will you always be seen as a foreigner, or is it possible to become completely immersed in your new environment? Change expat communities to research ones, and we often ask ourselves the same types of questions. So I wondered at what point does an expat become a local resource in their new locale, or are they never considered as knowledgeable or valuable as a true local?

In speaking with former and current researchers who have taken the plunge and lived abroad, there is disagreement on this very topic. Pia Mollback-Verbic, a European expat now living in India, mentioned the power of expats to make cultural observations that locals may not be able to recognize. Her argument for the benefit of expat researchers was two-fold: not only are those who have lived in new cultural environments perhaps better equipped for examinations of culture in new areas and contexts, but they are able to see nuances and aspects of the norms, values, and ethos that are expressed in a comparative way. A local resource may be an expert in their own pond, but are they able to detect which aspects differ from those of other ponds without having lived in one?

In contrast, former researcher Hannah Baker Hitzhusen, an American who has lived in France and is now based in the Netherlands, disagrees that expats can offer insight that true locals cannot. While working as a quallie, she refused to do research in France – where she lived for many years and was fluent in the language – or even in the UK, citing an impossibility to truly pick up on nuances that existed beyond her own personal culture. "We don't know what we don't know," she said during a recent interview, explaining that expats run the risk of missing the importance some pillars of social norms may have during a qualitative discussion.

Appreciation and Insight

There is one point that those of us who have made the move to new ponds unanimously agree on: we certainly have greater appreciation for the rituals and habits of any pond – including whichever one we call home – after forcing ourselves to adjust to a new set of rules and customs, and this creates a constant feed of insight. But whether or not expats can be considered local resources or experts in their new surroundings seems to be a matter of personal preference.

To summarize a point both expats I spoke with conveyed: to be well traveled is one thing, but you don't really get the interplay of cultural intricacies until you've lived elsewhere. As such, I continue to evaluate my position as a fish in a new pond in a world of locavores and open the discussion to my fellow qualitative researchers. Can a transplant offer the same value as a local resource? Are local resources truly the golden standard for understanding in their respective markets? What is the best combination of local understanding and life experience abroad? The ultimate question on the topic might really be much simpler: is there only one right answer in terms of who can get at the insight we seek in a global context?

"A local resource may be an expert in their own pond, but are they able to detect which aspects differ from those of other ponds without having lived in one?"

The Hitchhiker's Guide to Narrative Galaxies

By Jochum Stienstra
- Director, Ferro Explore!
- Amsterdam, The Netherlands

In 1989, Hans Ruelle taught that while we do have to ask questions, this might be an inefficient way of getting information; our art is to learn to gain insight the proper way. In due time, I discovered that asking "Why?" will only give you the most directly accessible and socially acceptable answer. With this notion in mind, I worked on ways to minimize answers that were really rationalizations.

Eight years ago, I attended a workshop by Dave Snowden who promoted a narrative type of research that abandons almost all types of questions as well as our normal ways of analyzing and making sense of what research participants tell us. Instead, Snowden offers methods to co-create sense-making between client, researcher, and participants without relying on "rational" analytical thinking.

As I began to adopt Snowden's approach, I started to better understand how this method differed from traditional techniques. I have built a significant business with narrative projects that break with almost all market research paradigms. I call this narrative method "radically open." I hope this article inspires you to adopt some of the techniques and radically break with the bad habit of asking questions.

Collecting Stories

PHASE 1: A powerful narrative method incorporates three key principles: don't ask questions, don't analyze, and make sense of it all collaboratively.

To be honest, I do ask a few questions. However, narrative questions differ from those in regular qual research. In a traditional qual practice, I start by asking open-ended questions then narrow down to more explicit questioning. To be certain I've captured all possible motives, I break up the subject into sub-fields of interest.

In narrative projects, I start with unmonitored storytelling with 25 to 30 participants gathered in one large room and separated into homogenous subgroups of five. I hire a student for each table to help keep the process on track. My participants arrive already informed about the subject I want to share with them. I start the session by setting the context, explaining that I am not yet interested in understanding the group's motivations. I ask the group to come up with as many lively stories as possible. Each anecdote should contain something they've experienced about the subject or heard from others and need not be long or fantastic.

Each subgroup passes around "the talking stick" (a recording device). Anyone who feels like sharing a story does so, without discussion or interruption from the other participants. Inspired by the stories they've heard, participants come up with their own stories, while the student facilitator numbers and titles each one.

During the session, I use five to six prompts that set the context and elicit stories that inform our research objectives. For instance, in a project about drinking and driving, my first prompt was: "You are at a party and the talk turns to drinking and driving. What experiences or hear-say stories could you share if you wanted to express the sentiment: 'That was a close call'?" In this way, I typically gather 250 - 400 stories within 90 minutes. All the stories have titles, which might reveal more than the actual stories.

The narrative process can be used for any topic worth researching. In the beginning, it might be difficult to relinquish the sense of control that comes from asking specific questions and sub-questions, but the stories this process elicits are closer to the hearts of the target group than traditional focus group outcomes. By refusing to moderate or steer the consumer toward self-understanding, the participant feels freer to share.

Making Sense of Stories

PHASE 2: In this second workshop phase, we replace conscious, goal-directed action steps by a collaborative, associative process.

I typically host two separate four-hour workshops, one with the target group narrowed down to 15 participants separated into homogenous subgroups of five, and one with the client. Ideally the latter group comprises nine to 15 participants representing sales, business, research, marketing, etcetera. I select approximately 120 representative stories and tape them on the wall in random order. Each group is given 30 to 40 minutes to read all of the stories.

They need not remember anything special and may take notes if they wish. After this "narrative submersion," I start two parallel assignments. One follows an associative, seemingly unstructured way of thinking, where none of the participants can influence the outcome too much. The other is an explicit task; its main goal is to satisfy the conscious need for goal-directed action.

Conscious and Side Tasks

I follow the same process in both the participant and the client workshops, using any differences in outcomes as a helpful insight source. Generally, the average marketer and business developer share a rough idea of the challenges for consumers in their category. This conscious, subjective task yields findings comparable to the outcomes of traditional focus groups.

However, the archetypes reveal each group's less conscious thinking, the way they make sense of the world.

This process generates deep insights, not only about the consumer, but also about the client's view of the world and how this view connects or disconnects with their consumers' views. In my experience, this type of learning is much more profound than findings elicited from focus groups. In a narrative workshop, clients are confronted with shortcomings in their assumptions and beliefs about what concerns consumers. In a collaborative sensemaking process each participant receives the same contextual information and operates on a level playing field.

I always end with a final workshop to be certain my clients can convert the insights into concrete actions. Instead of offering my own recommendations at the end of the workshop, I collaborate with my clients in writing a report that analyzes the findings in a meaningful way.

Before using narratives in a profound way, you might utilize snippets of these techniques in a traditional setting, incorporating simple storytelling organized around themes. This approach may give you confidence to adopt the full narrative method, which has the power to transform both your business and your clients' businesses.

The following example demonstrates how I used the narrative method for a bank project about consumer loans. The bankers had heard in focus groups that interest rates were the most important factor in the process. However, in the 315 loan stories, only nine participants mentioned interest rates.

PRIMING THE CREATIVE MIND

The main task starts with a "narrative break-down" of the stories. Each subgroup makes a list of persons, actions and themes on separate Post-it® notes. The list should be as long as possible.

CONSCIOUS TASK

In the banking study, the groups were explicitly invited to come up with their ideal consumer-loan bank. Participants might start by collaging "the ideal loaning situation," then speak for the ideal brand by capturing what the bank should be offering and saying to consumers.

SIDE TASK

While workshop participants develop their ideal consumer loan bank, I ask some of them to work alone on subtasks or create newly combined subgroups. In the end, all of the participants work on parts of the side task. Participants collect the Post-its® into separate groups that can be more broadly characterized as persons, themes or actions. They assign stereotype labels to each of the groups and attribute characteristics, both positive and negative, to the stereotypes. Then I ask them to cluster by type of characteristic and to name those clusters. These represent what Snowden calls "contextual archetypes." Invariably, the result is between four and seven archetypes that represent "persons with a set of characteristics." By now, the ideal consumer-loan brand has been fleshed out by both subgroups.

ILLUSTRATING THE ARCHETYPES

An illustrator brings the archetypes to life, according to participants' instructions and without adding his own interpretation. Regarded as a whole, the illustrated set of archetypes gives a perfect view of consumers' less rational tendencies; the archetypes help us see how the target group makes sense of the stories and, therefore, make sense of the subject or category.

The illustration above represents an archetype constructed by a sub-group of non-borrowers they named "greedy." This archetype illustrated participants' feelings about people who borrow because they are incapable of postponing their needs.

Conscious Task

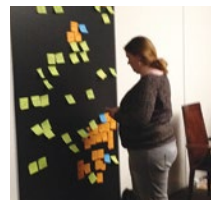
Explicit tasks are an engaging way to co-create ideas such as creating the ideal loaning situation

Start with picture picking and collage to enhance creative thinking

Then use consumers as 'experts'. What should this brand say,? what should it offer?

Useful output, to be compared with a normal creative group setting

Side Task



Starting to create a massive number of post-its with persons, themes and actions

Cluster the persons as 'metapersons' and giving those a name, and each person will get a set of positive and negative characteristics

Cluster the characteristics to a new person and give that a name (the archetype)

Illustrate the archetype by an artist at hand, per directions of the participants (representing the subconscious layers of thinking and feeling)

Quallies, Take Your Mark, Get Set, GO!

How to clear the hurdles of webcam interviews

By Karen Lynch ■ Karen Lynch & Associates ■ Fairfield, CT ■ Karen@KarenLynch.com

Imagine taking on your next qualitative research project fully prepared to manage the pressure, the pitfalls, and the problems you might encounter along the way. Now imagine that project involves remote webcam interviewing in the form of online focus groups or one-on-ones. Will you successfully make it to the finish line?

I know moderators who still don't like the idea of remote webcam research – they're used to reading body language and discovering the depth of experience they gain from face-to-face interaction. They are far more confident in their research skills than in their technical aptitude. Other moderators I know like the idea of remote webcam interviewing, but since they've not had ample experience with the technology, they lack confidence.

As with any methodology, we all know there are pitfalls on the road to success. I spoke with several technicians, the ones who provide assistance each time a moderator uses an online platform, about the problems they see most often. They shared first-hand the issues that arise during the course of webcam in-depth interviews (IDIs) or focus groups – because they are witness to them. Here are a few things I've learned and some tips for paving the way to your success.

These insights fall into two categories: the moderator's planning of the project and the recruiter's management of respondents' expectations.

"By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail." — Benjamin Franklin

Problems Arise when the Moderator Doesn't Plan Accordingly

Know how the technology works

• Problems surface when moderators don't know how to use the platform. Sometimes moderators haven't spent enough time with the technology to acquire proficiency. Maybe they're comfortable using Skype, Google Hangouts, WebEx, or GoToMeeting and they think they've got what it takes. But when someone hasn't experimented with the platform enough and the webcam interview goes live, pressure can get the best of them. The moderator becomes frazzled and distracted from the main objective of the research.

• Schedule demos and/or dry runs with the platform provider to guarantee your technical prowess (some vendors are happy to do this at no additional cost). You need to show your clients that you are knowledgeable and professional at all times – just as you would during in-person research.

Test stimuli ahead of time

• Stress occurs when uploaded stimuli don't load properly. Sometimes an uploaded document opens without error on one computer, but doesn't on another. It is important to test all stimuli and test it as early as possible in the process to make sure no glitches occur.

• Give clients a deadline for finalizing stimuli and work this into the project's planning. You need to prove to yourself that you are in control of the process and are ready to run with confidence.

Allow enough time between groups/IDIs for breaks and client interactions

• Pressure mounts when the groups or interviews are scheduled back to back. Nothing is more distracting than being unable to meet physical needs like wetting a dry throat with a glass of water, using the rest room, or blowing your nose. You also have mental needs, such as consulting with clients between groups, jotting down a few quick notes and/or making revisions to your guide, and checking with your recruiter to make sure the respondents have "arrived" ready to work. What you do in between in-person focus groups is not always part of your plan when remote interviewing.

• Establish a schedule that allows for breaks to meet physical and mental needs. You need to manage the day-of logistics, just as you would at a facility.

Allow time during the interviews for participants' technical challenges

• Tension grows when a respondent, no matter how savvy and carefully recruited, encounters technical problems on their end of the screen. Spotty Internet, a loose computer connection, or a dropped call from a cellular line all make for real-time frustrations that can't be anticipated and thus prevented.

• Build time into your discussion guide to account for technical contingencies. That'll allow you to remain calm and patient as a participant works with technicians to solve the problem. You'll need to manage the remote rapport in the interim, so allot a few extra minutes in your guide to do so.

"When people know the reason things are happening, even if it's bad news, they can adjust their expectations and react accordingly." — Simon Sinek

"By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail."

— Benjamin Franklin

Challenges Occur when Recruiter(s) Don't Effectively Manage the Process.

Tell participants it's a video interview

• Show rates tank when participants aren't clearly informed that a project requires the use of a webcam (not just the possession of one). Recruiters are often so focused on finding people who meet target specifications that they overlook the need to clearly discuss the technology requirements for online interviews.

• Craft a screener that clearly states the recruitment objective upfront (e.g., "We are looking for people to take part in a one-hour webcam interview.") and follow it up with a question regarding their comfort with webcam technology (e.g., "Do you have a computer with a webcam you are comfortable using for a one-hour, uninterrupted interview?"). After the demographic/psychographic screening questions, wrap up with a webcam interview closing, terminating any respondents who don't have a webcam hooked up to their computer, who haven't used their webcam in the past month, or lack confidence using their webcam for research purposes.

Explain to participants that they might be "paid and sent"

• Over-recruiting is common and helps mitigate the risk of a poor show rate and allows for the intended "sample size" to be achieved. With webcam research, there isn't a waiting room with a hostess to explain to participants that they aren't needed for a project, even though they might be prepared. Subsequently, when they worry about getting paid, they start to question the technician at a critical time in the research process – at the start of the discussion!

• Design a talking piece for potential participants that explains the reason for over-recruiting and the process for receiving an honorarium in the event they are not needed for a project at the last minute. Or, have an alternate/junior moderator standing by so that they can jump onto the platform and conduct a smaller session with "secondary" participants (for a minimal additional cost), giving additional insight and experience to a moderator-in-training.

Verify that participants will be joining at a quiet time and space

• Nobody – a moderator, clients, or other participants – can easily focus on the content when someone joins a webcam conversation in a distracting environment. Kids interrupting, dogs barking, a participant constantly getting up to do something are all disruptions to the research akin to a participant's phone ringing in the middle of an in-person focus group.

• Prepare a plan to minimize real time disturbances. Clearly articulate in the recruitment and/or confirmation process the need for a distraction-free environment. Select a day prior to the research to test participants' webcam environment and see if it meets the "distraction-free" requirement. You might need to offer more incentive to a particular participant if they need to seek an alternative environment the day of the groups.

Don't let yourself trip over the hurdles in webcam interviewing. With proper planning, and well-managed expectations in the field, you'll not only gain momentum with your online research effort, but will also persevere to the finish line.

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2014 winners, Misha Mathew from India and Andrea Greca Krueger from Brazil, at the New Orleans conference

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USING JOURNEY LINES FOR INSIGHT AND IDEATION

By Beverly Freeman
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Real-life stories are perhaps a qualitative researcher's best friend. They foster empathy, reframe problems, and inspire action. In this case study, we share how we used the journey line technique during a two-part research and brainstorm project to put stories at the center of understanding customers and designing a better future for them.

Background

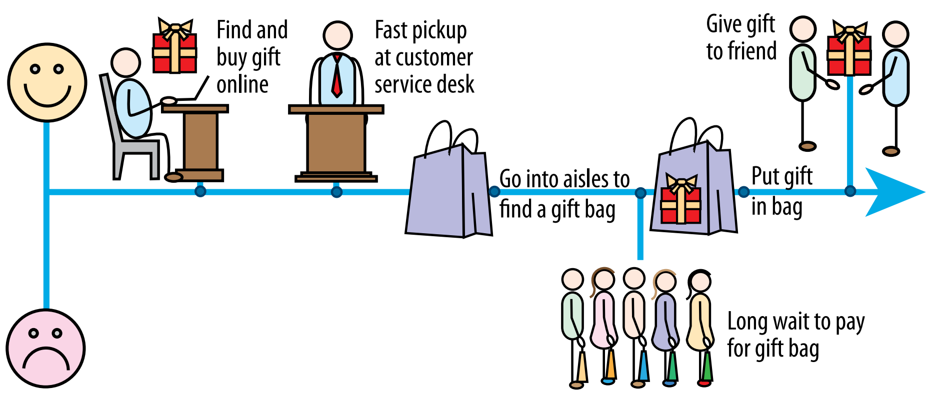
In the spring of 2014, eBay introduced in-store pickup (ISPU) as a delivery option for certain retailers who sold on eBay.com. Consumers would make a purchase on the eBay site, select a local store for pick up, and then visit that store later that day to collect their items.

To gain insight into what ISPU could be, we decided to seek a deeper understanding of real-life ISPU experiences. What were the contexts in which people were using ISPU? What were they hoping to gain and in what ways were these hopes fulfilled or disappointed? We could only obtain answers by talking to real consumers.

Collecting stories

We conducted in-depth, one-on-one interviews with consumers who had recently used in-store pickup. Using a journey line template (with a horizontal timeline and a vertical line representing an emotional continuum), interviewees recounted their ISPU experiences from start to end and indicated how happy or unhappy they were at each step **(see diagram below)**. The open-ended nature of the interviews encouraged interviewees to share what was significant to them, rather than imposing a predefined framework. Understanding real-life situations, such as rushing to find a last-

In-store pickup for last-minute birthday gift



"The journey lines also enabled the team to effectively disseminate the stories internally."

"Having the journey mapped out helped the researcher and interviewee develop a shared understanding of the story."

minute birthday gift and urgently replacing a dying laptop, helped the team expand their view of how ISPU might help consumers. Seeing ISPU through interviewees' eyes allowed us to be surprised and identify unanticipated areas of opportunity.

The journey lines served two important purposes. First, having the journey mapped out on paper helped the researcher and interviewee develop a shared understanding of the story (both what happened and how the interviewee felt about it). The researcher could then point to peaks and valleys on the journey line in order to probe further. The visual map made it easy to navigate from one part of the story to another and to zoom in and out as the conversation evolved.

Second, the journey lines enabled the team to effectively disseminate the stories internally. It can be a challenge for qualitative researchers to convey to others the rich learnings from in-depth interviews. With the visual aid of the journey line, however, team members could refresh their memories and easily communicate the highs and lows of a story with others. Stories were thus no longer locked in the researchers' brains, but could be easily and accurately distributed.

Rewriting Stories

After collecting people's stories, we decided that a brainstorming activity could help the team further digest the insights and generate ideas for how to act on them. We were inspired by a brainstorming technique called Brainsketching (http://uxpamagazine.org/brainsketching/), due to its use of rapid sketching and the fact that brainstorming participants build on each other's ideas. Because ISPU is a service that transpires both online and offline, we modified the method so team members wouldn't focus on just the design of the website and app. We also wanted to ground the brainstorm in the real-life stories we'd collected.

We returned to the stories we'd collected as the catalyst for the brainstorm activity. Brainstorm participants were grouped into pairs and given a paper copy of a completed journey line and its key themes. We then challenged each pair to rewrite that story. How might the story of the single mom or the grad student unfold with fewer lows and higher highs if eBay were the service provider? Using blank journey line templates, participants created new versions of the stories using sketches, words, or diagrams. An unfortunate reality of brainstorming is that people often allow their creativity to be hampered by concerns (e.g., financial, technical, or operational) associated with specific ideas. We attempted to mitigate this by encouraging participants to focus on what the consumer would experience (i.e. the high-level plot of the story), rather than specifically what eBay would build to make it a reality.

To maintain the collaborative nature of Brainsketching, we had each pair swap stories with another pair. In Round 1, pairs were instructed to build stories based on capabilities available to eBay

"We witnessed the power of stories in helping people understand a problem, conceive solutions, and communicate those solutions."

one year in the future (i.e. "the gold experience"). In Round 2, they were to take the other pair's story to "the next level," assuming capabilities available to eBay five years in the future (i.e. "the platinum experience"). Using this approach, we were able to gather a range of short- and long-term ideas. After Round 2, each pair had the opportunity to share their stories with the entire team.

Lessons Learned

We learned valuable lessons in our first attempt to use journey lines for both data collection and brainstorming. First, we gained insight into the power of visual communication. The journey line format enabled both consumers' stories and team members' ideas to be easily distributed and understood. They preserved context and transitions in a way that words on a sticky note cannot. We noticed that the journey lines that incorporated simple sketches (e.g., a mobile phone, a house, a store, and a person) were especially easy to understand. Looking back, we wish we'd encouraged participants to focus more on sketches and less on wordy descriptions. Though we didn't want to cause discomfort to those who lacked confidence in their artistic abilities, we saw that within the context of storytelling even the simplest of sketches can have a big impact.

Second, we learned a lesson about time management in brainstorm facilitation. We designed the brainstorm session to take just one hour to make it a manageable time commitment for busy team members. However, we forgot that storytelling can be a passionate and, therefore, time-consuming activity. Though we finished within an hour, it was clear that participants wished they had more time to discuss the stories of that they were so proud of. If time is a scarce commodity for your team, we recommend holding multiple sessions with smaller groups.

Finally, we were reminded of the importance of fun in collaborative storytelling. Swapping stories in order to take them to the next level yielded a healthy balance of cooperation and competition. The atmosphere was spirited and positive because Round 2 involved building on others' ideas for a less constrained future. There was a sense of anticipation and fun, both in creating stories and in seeing how others would develop them.

From this experience, we witnessed the power of stories in helping people understand a problem, conceive solutions, and communicate those solutions. We hope that other researchers learn from and build on our approach to using the simple but mighty journey line tool for uncovering insights and guiding ideation.

ALL TOGETHER NOW:

Tested strategies for blending in-person and digital research for maximum impact

By Steve August
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When exciting new research technologies arrive on the scene, there is often a tendency to think of them as stand-alone replacements for what has come before. Over the past two years there has been increasing excitement about the possibilities of mobile, online, and facial coding. Despite the hype, it's not simply a matter of choosing between digital and traditional research options. New technologies do not automatically invalidate old ways of doing things; they just add new tools to help researchers fulfill our mission of understanding people to answer business questions. It's up to us to maximize the array of tools we have in developing insights. The key is to leverage each tool to support the other and help find the answers you are looking for. To do that, it is helpful to step back and understand the different strengths and weaknesses of each research approach.

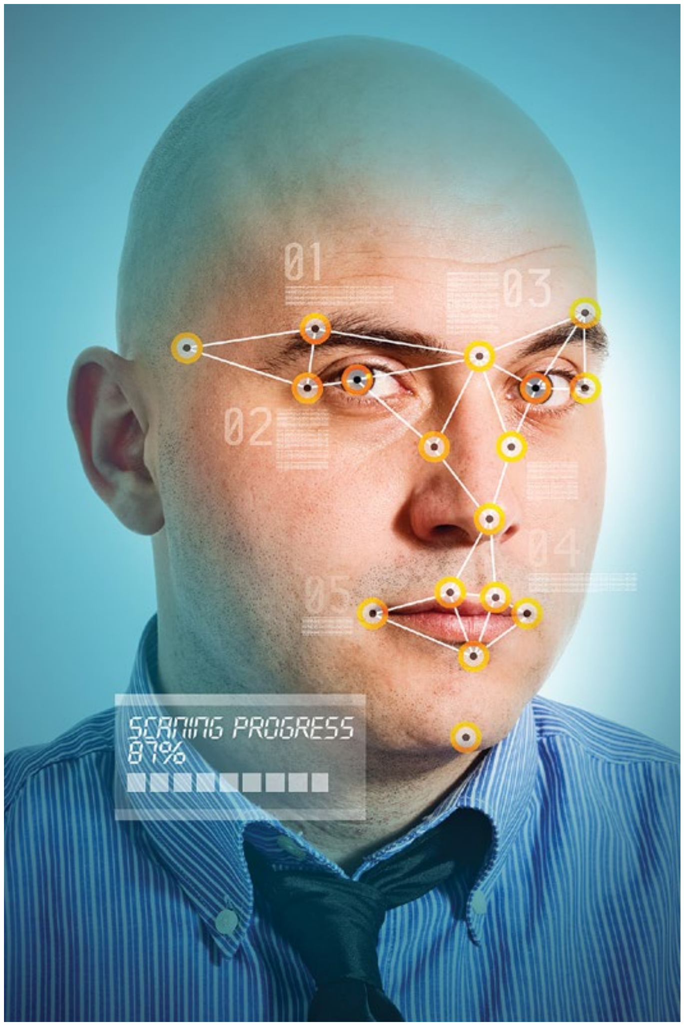
Technology-based Research Methods

Whether in the form of groups, depth interviews, or observation, **in-person research** is still the gold standard in many ways. Its strengths come from the ability to observe and interact with people and groups and gather cultural and social cues, such as voice, intonation, and body language. However, in-person research challenges the ability to sustain engagement with consumers over time. On-site interviews and observations often require pulling people out of their natural environments, making it more difficult to capture in-the-moment experiences and behaviors. Also, because recruiting and logistics focus on a specific geographical area, in-person research tends to happen near major population centers, skewing the research sample.

Web and mobile based research comes in two forms: **synchronous real-time** and **asynchronous over time**. Synchronous real-time online video interviewing via webcam or mobile phone is the most common. This format increases geographical reach, decreases travel and logistics, and enhances the ability to work in IDI or groups. Synchronous research preserves the ability to see facial cues and body language. Groups are generally best limited to six to eight participants because of bandwidth required for real-time video and managing the dynamics of the interview. Like in-person, it is restricted to specific durations and is not a sustained window of engagement to capture in-the-moment experiences. However, with mobile video streaming, we can use in-home interviews to interact with participants in their natural environments.

Bulletin boards, online immersive studies, insight communities, and mobile diaries are all **asynchronous over time**

"New technologies do not automatically invalidate old ways of doing things; they just add new tools to help researchers fulfill our mission of understanding people to answer business questions."



techniques. The strength of these approaches is the ability to sustain engagement and capture in-the-moment behaviors and experiences. As with real-time online research, geographical reach is greatly expanded. You also have the ability to go from one-on-one to group interactions within the same study and can manage the flow of the activities. For participants, the ability to join in on their own schedule and forego travel to a facility is a huge benefit. While you can lose non-verbal cues when activities are designed and executed remotely, web and mobile can be a tremendous engagement and confessional medium.

Finally, one of the newer techniques is facial coding technology. This technology draws on algorithms that decode what are considered "universal facial expressions" in reaction to stimuli. Participants use their webcams and the software records and codes their facial reactions. Based on the facial expressions of the participants, the reaction is scored as positive or negative and also captures a variety of emotions. It is generally limited to dynamic stimuli like television ads or movie trailers. While not an interviewing technique per se, facial coding does apply some very interesting technology to evaluative research exercises.

Integrating Traditional and Newer Techniques

While each of these approaches has its strengths, the key question is how to leverage them to support our research. The following examples demonstrate how these approaches have been successfully combined.

Pre-tasks and Auditions

Asynchronous mobile and web-based qual is a great way to engage participants and welcome them before an in-person exercise, whether a group or in-home study. For example, you can ask people to keep a diary to capture events over time when you're not present, send them on a retail adventure, or ask them to explain a process to you. These tasks can inform the way you then approach the in-person discussion.

A variation on the pre-task is the audition. Using digital means to figure out who should participate in an in-person study can reduce the risk of "dud" interviews, especially when recruiting for in-home research or ethnography. Over-recruit and assign the candidates some tasks. Ask them to introduce themselves; as moderator, you can comment and probe for more information. You could ask them to produce an inventory (e.g., what's in your fridge?) to give more context of their lives. This information can help determine who to invite to the in-person session.

Extending Usability Research

One of our early studies was a hybrid, beginning with a day of usability interviews on a new consumer device. The interviews evaluated the initial experience and real-time interactions with participants to understand how the interface was working. At the end of each interview the participants were given a device to take home and asked to complete a usage diary over the course of a week and answer some questions on their overall experience with the product. This enabled the research team to see how the device interface was working and also how the new device would operate in the context of people's daily lives and usage patterns.

Decoding Facial Coding

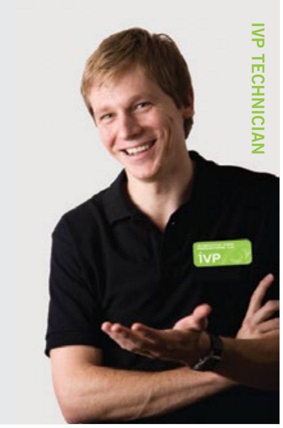
In a recent study, web cam interviewing and facial coding were used together to understand the real reaction to a proposed television ad. The participants were shown ads while the facial coding system recorded and coded their facial expressions via their webcams. The moderator conducted a webcam interview with the participants to discuss the facial coding scores. This turned out to be critical in at least one instance when the facial coding software scored a particular participant's reaction to a specific moment of the ad as very negative. However, during the interview the participant revealed that he was very angry at that moment; the ad was very emotional, and he was irritated with himself for letting an ad "get to him." Basically, the negative facial coding meant that the ad was very effective in engaging the participant's emotions.

The options for qualitative researchers have never been more varied and exciting. Matching the right tools to the needs of different jobs means we can all take advantage of the fantastic range of new research methods and deliver insights more effectively.

EYE TRACKING

HAND-HELD DEVICE USABILITY

WEB USABILITY



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Fieldwork Atlanta
Focus Pointe Global (Buckhead, Clairmont)
Murray Hill National
Plaza Research
Schlesinger Associates
Superior Research

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AIM
Baltimore Research (Towson, MD)

BOSTON
Copley Focus
Fieldwork Boston (Waltham)
Focus Pointe Global
Murray Hill National
Performance Plus (Downtown, Framingham)
Schlesinger Associates

CHICAGO
AIM (Schaumburg)
Adler Weiner (Downtown, Lincolnwood)
Chicago Focus
Fieldwork Chicago (Downtown, North, O'Hare, Schaumburg)
Focus Pointe Global (Downtown, Oak Brook)
Focuscope (Downtown, Oak Brook, Oak Park)
Murray Hill National
Plaza Research
Schlesinger Associates (Downtown, O'Hare)
Smith Research (Downtown, Deerfield, Oakbrook)
Survey Center
The Energy Annex

CONNECTICUT
MarketView (Danbury)
Murray Hill National (Hartford)
New England Marketing Research (Norwalk)
Performance Plus (Enfield)
Razor Focus (Stamford)

DENVER
Fieldwork Denver
Plaza Research

FLORIDA
Concepts in Focus (Jacksonville)
L&E Research (Tampa)
MARS Research (Ft. Lauderdale)
National Opinion Research (Miami)
Plaza Research (Ft. Lauderdale, Tampa)
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Adler Weiner (Downtown, Irvine)
Advanced Marketing Perspectives
Fieldwork LA (Irvine)
Focus & Testing
Focus Pointe Global
House of Marketing Research (Pasadena)
Meczka Marketing Research
Murray Hill National
Plaza Research
Q-Insights
Schlesinger Associates

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Ascendancy Research (Minneapolis)
Fieldwork Minneapolis (Edina)
Focus Market Research (Edina, Minneapolis)
Focus Pointe Global (Minneapolis)
FRS Research Group (St. Paul)

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Focus Point Global (Kansas City, St. Louis)
Hatch Research (St. Louis)
L&E Research (St. Louis)
Peters Marketing Research (St. Louis)
Schlesinger Associates (St. Louis)

NEW YORK
Fieldwork New York (Westchester)
Focus Pointe Global
Focus Suites
Fusion Focus
Innovative Concepts (Long Island)
JRA (White Plains)
MarketView (Tarrytown)
Murray Hill National
New York Consumer Center
Schlesinger Associates
The Focus Room (NYC, Westchester)

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NORTH CAROLINA
L&E Research (Charlotte, Raleigh)

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PHILADELPHIA
Focus Pointe Global (Center City, Bala Cynwyd)
Focus Suites (Bala Cynwyd)
JRA
Schlesinger Associates (Center City, Bala Cynwyd

PHOENIX
Fieldwork Phoenix (Scottsdale, South Mountain)
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RESEARCH TECHNOLOGY SUPPORT ANYWHERE, ANYTIME

The Business of Actionable Shopper Insights

By Terrie Wendricks
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- Chicago, IL
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As volatility in the marketplace has become the new normal, retailers and manufacturers in the United States are making efforts to tighten their relationships. These joint efforts are becoming an integral component of their partnerships and goals to remain relevant, as:

- A polarized and more demanding shopper base has grown increasingly aware of prices and competitive offers;
- Diversified, specified, and more capable competition has developed in almost every trading area and category;
- The digital ecosystem is not only reshaping how and where shoppers buy, but also illuminating their path-to-purchase, irrespective of where the sales happen.

More and more, companies are seeking a roadmap of action from researchers, supported not only by consumer insights but also by shopper insights as a critical foundation for their business practices.

The following are some critical starting points in identifying the power of shopper insights vs. consumer insights, in our current retail landscape:

1. It's important to make a distinction between consumer and shopper insights.

It is true that in a lot of categories, the individuals doing the consuming are also doing the shopping. Nevertheless, when it comes to collecting data as well as the ultimate uses of such research, it is important to distinguish between consumer insights and shopper insights, based on the questions asked and the resulting actions. These can differ, depending on whether these companies are seeking intelligence to better understand consumers' needs or shoppers' needs at a given moment.

Indeed, qualitative and quantitative market research, can be conducted among consumers to learn about how, how often, when, and why consumers use a product or service, and/or to ask about their perceptions about brands – their attitudes, needs, and problems they have that a product or service in the category can address. Research provides guidance on marketing and communications issues and may even lend insights into related concepts or new product development.

Similarly, companies are also opting to conduct more targeted research on shoppers to learn more about how, when, where, why they shop/buy in the category, and what drives them into the store. This type of research focuses around shoppers' attitudes about the in-the-moment shopping experience – the path-to-purchase – to understand what fosters loyalty to the brand as shoppers purchase from a channel. The result of this research provides better guidance for companies on the best target for programming in a particular channel or retailer, and the best messaging and tactics to use to drive traffic and sales in-store.

2. Great insight can come from relating consumer and shopper insights.

Actionable insights come from the intersection of understanding consumer motivations and exploring shopper behavior as it relates to the category and brands. Great shopper insight is not developed in isolation. The more input that goes into insights development, the richer and more actionable the outcome will be. It is very important to understand what inspires or is a barrier to shoppers' actions.

One example comes from the cookies category. We found the likelihood of cookies going in the shopping cart, or even drawing the shopper into the aisle, was lower if other indulgent snack categories were stocked in the same aisle. Shoppers vacillate when they approach the aisle, viewing the products as indulgent purchases. This "wall of guilt" stops shoppers in their tracks, or certainly makes them think twice about buying anything in this aisle. Our shopper insights challenge was to eliminate that barrier and switch the programming back into cookie-consideration mode. Cookies markedly displayed away from other sugary treats stand a better chance of garnering shoppers' discovery and delight than those located in the expected aisle.

The intersection of consumer and shopper insights can help guide a variety of marketing areas. For example, by understanding the reasons for purchasing a product or service in the category, companies can do a better job of informing various levels of product/service development, communications planning, and in-store programming with more holistic considerations.

3. Set-up a shopper insights framework to ensure strategic focus and actionability.

Developing a good insights-based path-to-purchase framework can be helpful to structure a shopper insights learning plan.

A well-known example of an insights framework is Procter & Gamble's (P&G)

> "Great shopper insight is not developed in isolation... It is very important to understand what inspires or is a barrier to shoppers' actions."

Consumer vs. Shopper Insights

	Consumer	Shopper
Target	Who she is	How she shops
Purpose	Get in her mind	Get in her cart
Story	Reason to buy	Reasons to buy right now
Focus	How, when, why consumers use/consume the category	How, when, why, consumers shop/buy the category
Primary Research User	Consumer Insights, Brand Marketing Team	Shopper Insights, Shopper Marketing Team, Sales/Account Team, Retailer
Key End Uses	Marketing communications, Innovation	In-Store Path-to-Purchase Influencers/Tactics

"store back/store first" approach. It establishes the focused way that P&G thinks about and applies insights. Starting at the shelf and working backwards, this insights framework aligns all their shopper initiatives around a common goal of impacting the end-point of the shopper decision process at the shelf. It informs both what Procter & Gamble wants to learn about their shopper and how they are going to apply it.

A good shopper insights framework:

- Informs the scope and scale of shopper research that needs to be gathered or invested in.
- Is structured and organized so the insights drive action by identifying decision-making at each stage of the shopping journey. It explores how the role of different contact points also impacts the purchase.

4. Cross-functional and retailer-manufacturer engagement is essential for in-market success.

Shopper strategy and insights has the potential to source from and impact multiple facets of the business – marketing, sales, supply chain, category management, consumer insights, retail buyer, retail merchandiser, etc. Active engagement in designing the research and generating the solution, as well as in the execution, is critical to create strong in-market results.

The earlier example of linking the shopping trip with the cookie-shopper (and ultimately, the cookie-consumer needs) demonstrates the importance of collaboration between the shopper insights and consumer insights functions within an organization.

In another example, we identified the importance of providing easy meal solutions at an accessible price point for low-income shoppers. Through research, we found that consumers need easy meal solutions that require five ingredients or fewer to make the dinner. In further discussions with the retail store operators, we discovered there might only be two clerks in the store (one manning the register, the other in the back room), along with additional limits around the types of programming acceptable in these types of stores. To mitigate these format-specific issues, we chose to execute end-aisle meal solutions that need only three ingredients, thus reducing the potential for out-of-stocks or taxing the shoppers' and employees' time and resulting in more viable and successful meal solutions sold at dollar stores.

Motivate shoppers before they purchase

There was a time when in-store B2C or B2B interviewing, intercepts, and observation were the most reliable ways to explore shopper insights. Some of the most effective research techniques for exploring the path-to-purchase have been elevated, thanks to increased mobile research and geo-location capabilities that allow us to implement more seamless research experiences and passively collect shoppers' location data, instead of check-ins that rely on active and on-going participation. Shoppers can capture pictures and take short videos for in-store and competitive intelligence with their smartphones. Thus, today's qualitative and quantitative researchers have powerful methods at their fingertips to capture what's meaningful and motivating to shoppers before they even arrive at the store. All of this helps us better understand the consumers' mindset and motivations before they purchase and use particular categories of products or services. These insights will make you think twice the next time you see a seemingly out-of-place product display in stores.

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TONY FOLENO, Senior Vice President for Research, Ad Council

By Judy Langer
President ■ Langer Qualitative ■ New York City, NY ■ judy@langerqual.com

I recently had the opportunity to talk with Tony Foleno, Senior Vice President for Research at the Ad Council, about the way the organization uses qualitative research for its public service advertising. Here are some excerpts from our conversation.

Judy: *To start, please tell us how you initially got involved in public opinion market research.*

Tony: I was always interested in social sciences, learning about people, and what makes them tick. My first real research job was at Public Agenda, a non-partisan policy and polling shop. The Ad Council was a client. Since most of my background was in market research, I knew the basics and methodology and didn't think the job would be difficult. Then I found out, wow, it really is hard!

Judy: *You've been at the Ad Council for 12 years and SVP for six years. How would describe your role there?*

Tony: I help oversee our campaign planning and evaluation process and conduct cross-campaign analyses of programs. On the planning side, we work hand-in-hand with advertising agency planning teams to develop strategies. My team of six oversees all the campaign evaluations, develops plans to measure impact, and reports back. We run about 40 different public service campaigns at any given time, addressing a host of issues and target audiences – health and safety, education, environmental and community stewardship issues.

Judy: *Could give us an overview of the research process you use?*

Tony: It's different for every campaign, depending on what the objectives are and who the audience is. You're constantly learning about new methodologies, new trends in the media, and learning from lots of different kinds of people.

People are surprised by how much homework we do and how research-based we are for a small, non-profit organization. We start off interviewing issue experts and people in the field, conduct a landscape review of past efforts on the issue, and do a lot of desktop research. Then we go into primary research and work closely with our pro bono advertising agency. We use all kinds of online and in-person qualitative research approaches – focus groups, in-home ethnographies, one-on-ones, social listening to see what the online chatter is. Then we develop a strategy and a creative brief. We go back into qualitative with ad concepts in rough form to make sure they're clear and have the potential to motivate. Then we develop and launch the campaign. And we do post-research to figure out if we're making a difference.

Judy: *Does the post-research include qualitative?*

Tony: Yes, though most of it is quantitative. We do a lot of tracking surveys, big data analyses, and digital analytics. We look at engagement with our campaign and what the numbers are in awareness and behavioral changes over time. Qualitative is immensely helpful when things are not working. The numbers don't always tell you the why behind that. Qualitative provides context for the whys pegged from the numbers.

Judy: *The Ad Council has done a number of famous campaigns. Can you tell us how qualitative research was used for some of them?*

Tony: I'll give you the iconic ones first that really speak to our legacy. One is "Friends don't let friends drive drunk." We also work in wildfire prevention. We're the lead on Smokey Bear, who still enjoys 95 percent public recognition. Currently, we have a lot of campaigns where we've seen the needle move from autism awareness to bullying prevention to hunger prevention.

One of the most inspiring campaigns I've worked on tries to spark people's

Continued on Page 46

Continued from Page 44

interest in adopting an older child out of foster care, a really heartbreaking issue. The campaign took an original approach that was driven by some provocative research and recommendations. We've helped spur more than 19,000 adoptions.

Judy: *What kind of qualitative research did you use for that campaign?*

Tony: An almost counter-intuitive insight we uncovered through qualitative drove the campaign's creative, which in turn drove enormous success on a very difficult social issue. There are more than 100,000 children in foster care. They're not cute and cuddly babies, mostly older kids ready for adoption. The outcomes for those kids if they don't get placed in a permanent home are often troubling. Can you imagine any sort of marketing campaign with a call to action more daunting than, "Take a child into your home permanently"? We did a lot of research, looked at a lot of different campaigns, and decided we wanted to do something different.

The campaign was mostly based on conversations our agency team at KBS arranged between prospects who had thought about adopting from foster care, and those who'd been through the adoption process. The discussions were lightly moderated because we were mostly interested in hearing the conversations they had with each other.

Prospects were fearful they would fail kids that had already been failed. That insight drove the creative strategy: "You don't have to be perfect to be a perfect parent."

Judy: *In general, how do you decide which qualitative methodology to use?*

Tony: I like in-home qualitative and ethnographies. As an example, we did research with our agency, Grey, on children's oral health. The real eye-opener was just to hang out with parents in their homes across the country, observing their evening routine with their kids. A lot of battling goes on before kids go to bed, including around toothbrushing, which parents might downplay in a more typical research setting.

Judy: *What was the strategy that came out of that research?*

Tony: Take a little time to make sure that [kids] brush their teeth for two minutes twice a day and it will prevent them from having long-term problems later on.

Judy: *How do you decide whether to use individual or group methodology?*

Tony: If something's highly sensitive or a personal topic, we try to do one-on-one interviews or have family members or buddies talk about it.

A great example [of a group setting] is safe gun storage. The Ad Council doesn't take a position on gun legislation, but we do take the position that if you're a gun owner you should make sure it doesn't get into the wrong hands and you should store it safely. We conducted in-home interviews of friends who were all gun owners, who hunted or went shooting together. The group setting was terrific in this case because it allowed for more candor among friends.

Judy: *What are the major similarities and differences between the Ad Council's research and what commercial marketers do?*

Tony: We're not touchy-feely do-gooders but act as hard-nosed marketers. It's not unlike working with a P&G or a Nike in the rigor with which we approach our campaigns.

We work with a lot of people in sciences, with environmental, and with education advocates who live and breathe their issues every day; they're eager to get more people aware and engaged with their cause. The need for advertising to be single-minded is probably most difficult to convey to our clients – they often want to say everything in a single piece of messaging. They're not unlike many commercial clients in that respect.

Judy: *How has the type of qualitative you use changed?*

Tony: There are more and more opportunities and methodologies on the qualitative side of things. Our options on the quantitative side in survey quality and what's being offered are, in some ways, shrinking. In qualitative, I was at first highly resistant to doing online bulletin boards, journaling, anything that relied on typing rather than in-person talking. That's changed. Particularly when we want to get geographic dispersion, we definitely consider online qual now. When social listening platforms first came out, I was a bit skeptical because the samples in online social media space were not representative of anybody but those who had strong feelings on a topic one way or another. But I find that tapping into these conversations has been enormously helpful in understanding who really can help your cause and what they think.

There are times when I insist the research has to happen in person, preferably in somebody's home in a comfortable environment. You can feel and listen to somebody's story, have empathy and tap into body language. I used to say that for every campaign in every case, but I'm far from saying that now.

Judy: *Any thoughts on the future of qualitative?*

Tony: I think that qualitative's future is quite bright. The multiplicity of methods to choose from is heartening and I think it's going to continue. There's more and more hunger from the corporate side as well as from the non-profit side for new consumer insights, particularly in the media-fragmented world. I think qualitative in some ways can fuel better creative ideas than just a quick quantitative study. It used to be that you would have to do a representative survey with weighted data that was telling you what the different segments are thinking or feeling about a particular message framing. Companies and organizations are more open now to a variety of different qualitative methodologies as a way not just to fill in just the information gap but also the inspiration gap.

We should be methodology-agnostic. When I'm talking to folks who are offering up a variety of methodologies and pathways to get to the information and the insights we need, that's always a plus. I'm not against a traditional focus group facility, but I'm much more interested in getting outside of that in other settings and other methodologies than I had been.

Check Out Our Newest Podcast with JOE INDUSI, RESEARCH2VIDEO

QRCA continues to conduct and record interviews with thought leaders in the qualitative research industry. These podcasts shed light on subjects of great interest to those whose work involves qualitative research. Podcasts of these interviews are available at the QRCA website (www.qrca.org) under the Publications link as streaming audio and can also be downloaded to your laptop or portable listening device as an MP3 file.

Before Joe Indusi was a name in qualitative research, he was a "Hollywood" guy. A filmmaker by trade, he earned a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from the film school at Purchase College where his fellow classmates included Wesley Snipes and Edie Falco (who, we are told, loved his mother's lasagna). His company, Research2Video, is a unique multimedia/video production company that exclusively services the needs of the research industry. Two words summarize Joe's capabilities: capture and share. Research2Video handles and coordinates entire research projects, including the capture and post sharing elements needed for data analysis, research evaluation, and final presentation.

Listen up as QRCA VIEWS Podcast Editor Michael Carlon and Joe discuss his first career and how he applied his experiences making TV shows and movies to creating a very successful qualitative research-focused business. We recommend you sit down with some buttered popcorn and a soft drink of your choice, as this podcast will not only be very informative but also highly entertaining.

If you would like to hear an interview with an interesting person in the field of qualitative research, please contact Mike Carlon at mjcarlon@mac.com

Check Out Another Great Podcast with OWEN SHAPIRO, SHAPIRO+RAJ

QRCA continues to conduct and record interviews with thought leaders in the qualitative research industry. These podcasts shed light on subjects of great interest to those whose work involves qualitative research. Podcasts of these interviews are available at the QRCA website (www.qrca.org) under the Publications link as streaming audio and can also be downloaded to your laptop or portable listening device as an MP3 file.

Owen Shapiro, market researcher, strategist, speaker, and President of Shapiro+Raj, a Chicago-based strategic research firm, recently sat down with Karen Lynch, QRCA VIEWS Online Qual/Tech Talk editor, to discuss his new book.

Shapiro, who earned both an MBA with a concentration in Behavioral Sciences, and a Master's in Social Science from the University of Chicago, and a Bachelor's degree in Political Science from Reed College, co-authored *Brand Shift: the Future of Brands and Marketing* with futurist David Houle. The book begins with a history of brands and branding, then moves into an explanation of the forces at play in today's rapidly changing environment, an age Houle first labeled the "Shift Age." The book ends with trends that will impact brands and provides strategies to effectively navigate the changed landscape of the future.

While Houle and Shapiro state, "*Brand Shift: the Future of Brands and Marketing* does not seek to be an authoritative or academic textbook on marketing," the dog-eared, flagged and notes-logged pages of the review copy we received tells a different story. We invite you to tune in to this interesting and enlightening conversation.

If you would like to hear an interview with an interesting person in the field of qualitative research, please contact Mike Carlon at mjcarlon@mac.com

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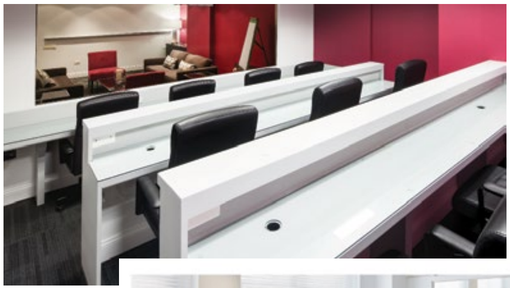

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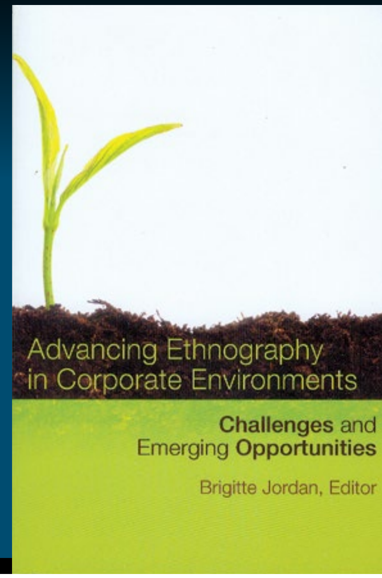
▪ **BOOK** REVIEWS ▪

Advancing Ethnography in Corporate Environments

Challenges and Emerging Opportunities

Brigitte Jordan, 2013, Left Coast Press, Inc.



Reviewed by George Sloan
▪ Customer Strategy International ▪ Los Angeles, CA
▪ gdsloan@yourcustomer.com

Advancing Ethnography in Corporate Environments – Challenges and Emerging Opportunities is a collection of essays compiled from a panel discussion at the 2011 meeting of the Society for Applied Anthropology.

Brigitte Jordan, the editor of *Advancing Ethnography in Corporate Environments – Challenges and Emerging Opportunities*, was concerned that professional conferences were highly monotonous and without engagement. Consequently, she assembled a group of colleagues to develop "a panel that would induce an atmosphere of playful co-thinking, an offering of multiple perspectives and different ideas, nourished by the expertise and experience we would each bring from our different intellectual homes." The concept behind the panel was to present two different points of view on six different topics and have discussions from the audience after each presentation. The original intent was for the presenters not to use prepared manuscripts or PowerPoint slides, and the presentations would be a one-time occurrence. However, the meeting was so stimulating that the presenters decided the panel should not end with the meeting; the result is this book.

The authors of the twelve essays in the book come from corporate environments and are consultants and academicians who are passionate about the emerging field of corporate ethnography. Even though the book primarily discusses the use of ethnography in the corporate environment, the essays also provide consumer product examples throughout the book.

The first pair of essays compares the Power of Conventional Ethnographic Methods against the Power of Technology-based Methods. The argument for traditional methods is a strong one, but the authors recommend including modern digital methods to create a hybrid.

The second pair of essays discusses ethnography related to systems development and product design. The two sides of the argument focus on corporations adopting ethnography to "understand the human element of their business," and the product ethnographer using ethnography to try and understand the future.

The third pair of essays evaluates the speed of ethnography in the corporate world. The first of the two essays talks about how projects often need to be turned around quickly; the second of these essays examines the limits of speed in ethnography and how taking time allows for understanding of the subject's world. The general outcome is that speed of results drives many ethnographic projects.

The fourth pair of essays discusses the two dimensions of a need for more theory in ethnography and for more practicality. The authors argue that there is a balance between theory and practicality, and in the end corporate needs for a project lead the way.

In the fifth pair of essays, the authors discuss conducting corporate ethnography as an insider or employee and as an outsider or consultant. Insiders have complete access to the various areas inside a corporation. One take-away I had from the essay on doing work as an outsider is that you are far more likely to be successful in your project if you have the support of someone on the inside.

The sixth and final pair of essays looks at the influence of big data on the field of ethnography and why pattern recognition in human evolution matters in ethnography and anthropology. The authors' main argument is that big data can interpret a consumer's habits better than an ethnographer. The basic fact is we are being wrapped by more and more data, and analytical pattern recognition is trying to interpret it for us.

In summary, there are some practical insights included here with stories of success and failure among this excellent collection of essays, but *Advancing Ethnography in Corporate Environments* is probably of more interest to those who enjoy keeping up with the academic side of ethnography.

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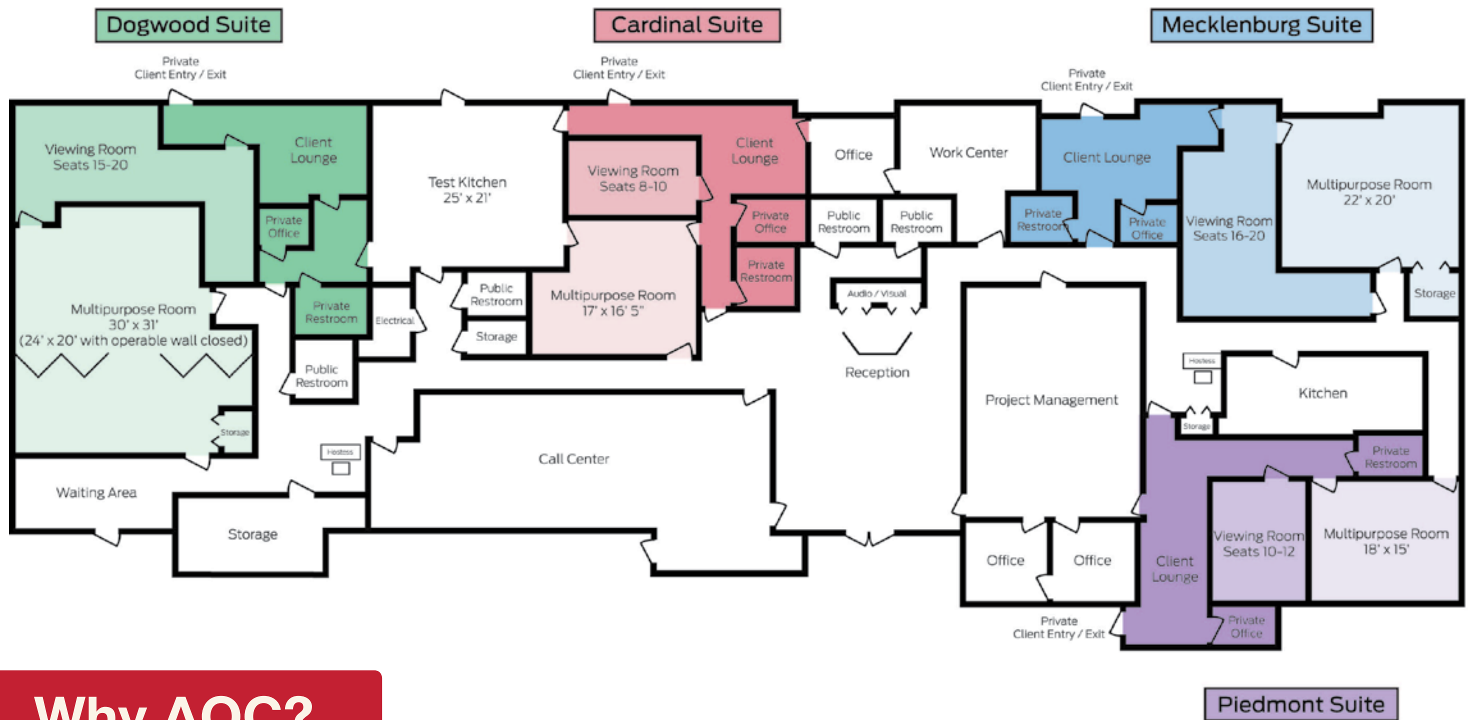

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Start with Why

How Great Leaders Inspire Action

Simon Sinek, 2011, Portfolio/Penguin

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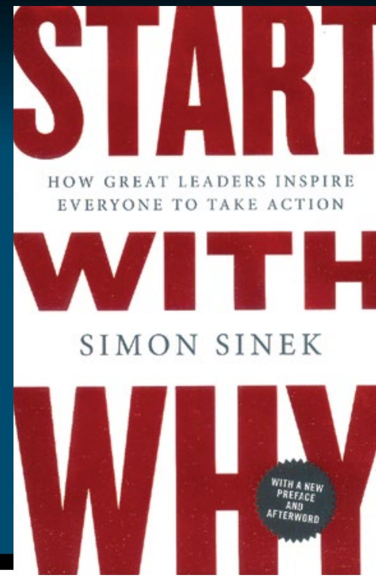

I recently watched a TED Talk by Simon Sinek about his Golden Circle theory of WHY, HOW, WHAT, and I wanted to learn more. Sinek's book, *Start with Why – How Great Leaders Inspire Action*, goes into the concept in-depth.

Sinek's theory is that companies lose track of their WHY. He does an excellent job of using examples to explain his theory, and cites how most companies have lost leadership because they lost sight of their WHY. Companies are excellent at explaining WHAT they do, some are good at explaining HOW they do it, but very few know the reason WHY they do what they do. Even though Microsoft did not manufacture computers, founder Bill Gates wanted a computer in every home and on every desk. That was his WHY. The WHY for Steve Jobs and Steve Wosniak was to challenge the status quo. The WHY for Wal-Mart was "to serve the average-Joe," a focus that was lost when Sam Walton passed away.

Some companies manage to keep the original WHY intact. Sinek often quotes Southwest Airlines whose WHY was to be the Champion for the Common Man – "cheap, fun and simple" – in a time when air travel was viewed as elitist and expensive. Sinek points out that Southwest leadership's "ability to find people who embody their cause makes it much easier for them to provide great service." Herb Kelleher, Southwest co-founder and former CEO, said, "You don't hire for skills, you hire for attitude. You can always teach skills."

Sinek compares his principle of The Golden Circle of WHY, HOW and WHAT to biology and the evolution of human behavior. He believes the levels of The Golden Circle correspond to the human brain; the neocortex corresponds to the WHAT level, generating rational and analytical thought and language; the HOW and WHY levels correspond to the limbic brain, generating feelings rather than language. Sinek theorizes that companies that fail to explain their WHY force consumers to make decisions based only on empirical evidence.

In Chapter 7, "How a Tipping Point Tips," Sinek explains that when a company loses sight of its WHY, it is very easy for them to end up in a price and features cycle. This cycle drags a company into a commodity status – a definite exclusion from a leadership position.

Although Sinek quotes an interesting anthropological study (that discovered consumers smell their clothes when pulling them out of the washer, rather than holding them up to see how white or clean they are), he does not exactly praise market research. Why a company does what it does is the focus of Sinek's theory, which is something a consumer cannot guide. He believes the reason is out of the hands of market research. Only a company's leadership can guide the WHY.

"The WHY for Wal-Mart was "to serve the average-Joe," a focus that was lost when Sam Walton passed away."