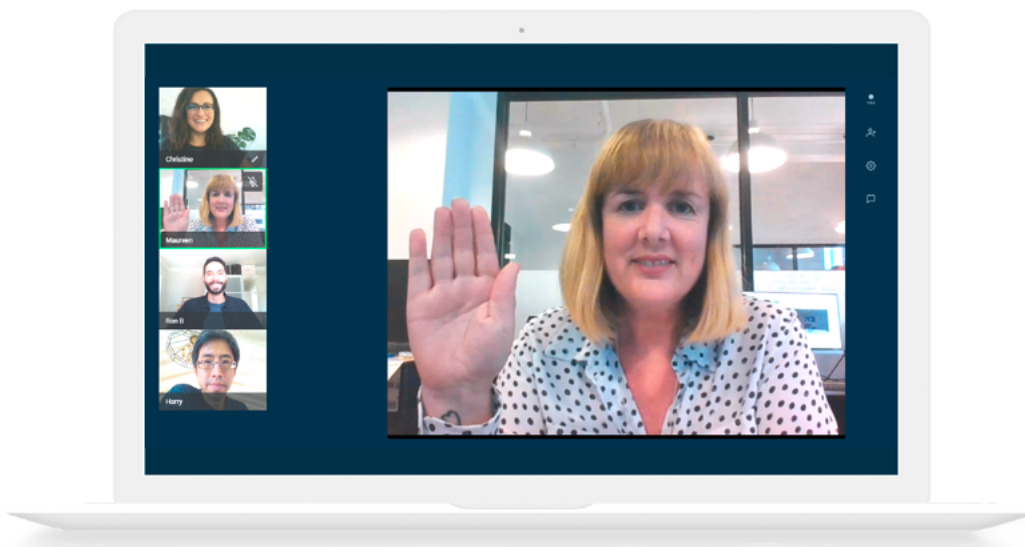


Make The Most of Every Discussion

Eight tips for managing the discussion

In many ways, leading a focus group discussion virtually is quite similar to an in-person exercise. You still want to keep people engaged and connected, as you work to capture the best insights. When using a virtual platform, however, a few extra steps can ensure success. Keep the following tips in mind:



1

Take time to build rapport at the outset

Group warm-up is even more important online as people aren't physically present. Engage in a topic or activity that will connect all participants within the group. This could be a simple ice-breaker on a subject related to the project at hand.

2

Guide people through the conversation

Let participants know what will be covered during the session, state your "rules of engagement" and reference the outline at different points in the conversation.

3

Use your screenshare as a visual aid

Screenshare can be used in multiple ways to provide visual aids for participants. For example, show the conversation outline on screen as you talk through the discussion flow, or display the current discussion topic or question. Screenshare can also be used for something more visual, such as a diagram, or an image of a scene or product.

4

Raise hands

Ask people to physically raise a hand or wave when they have a comment they'd like to contribute. Not everyone is comfortable with interjecting, and without a full view of body language, cues that someone is ready to speak may be limited. State this as one of your "rules of engagement" at the start of the session.

5

Turn-taking

A turn-by-turn approach works particularly well in virtual sessions. It provides everyone the opportunity to have a say, helps minimize people talking over one another, and keeps people from not contributing because they didn't sense an opportunity. Be sure to vary the order in which participants provide their thoughts on a topic, and allow for spontaneity; i.e. raising hands as in Tip Four.

6

Don't forget to probe

Probing is essential to digging deeper to find true meaning. This might include playing back what you've heard from an individual or the group, and inviting feedback. It also helps to ask for more: more specifics, more on how they felt, more on what they meant.

7

Use intentional silence

There's no need to fill every moment. Give participants (and yourself) a moment to reflect, pause for any additional thought, or transition from one topic to the next.

8

One more thing

Always offer an opportunity for others to add comments once everyone else has had their say. This allows people to digest and comment upon what has been discussed.

Incorporate these tips into your next virtual focus group project. Doing so will help to ensure that you and your participants have the best possible experience.