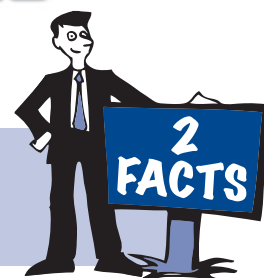


# INVOLVED EMPLOYEES ARE HAPPY EMPLOYEES



1. Happy employees increase productivity.
2. It is only possible to operate a long term top 10% agency if the employees enjoy going to work.

## ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT

An agency's employees are unlikely to be happy unless they are actively involved in the business's growth and development. Each person must be given the opportunity to contribute their thoughts, comments and suggestions on the agency's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

## AGENCY PERSONNEL FOCUS GROUP

Many best practice agencies conduct an annual personnel focus group, the aim of which is to enable each employee to contribute to the business's future direction.

The focus group will commence with one or more of the agency owners producing a brief (maximum 10 minutes) outline of the business's history, results, market conditions and plans for the future.

The balance of the time will be taken up with an external expert facilitator conducting a focus group (see [Sample A](#)) which investigates the team's ideas regarding the agency's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats. It is often advisable for the agency owners to absent themselves from this activity as some employees may be reluctant to offer constructive criticism in their presence.

### Best Practice Focus Group Guidelines

- 1. Select The Subject**  
Before doing anything else, determine the subjects to be researched e.g. "Is our website user-friendly?" or "How do you select a listing agent in your area?" or "What services should a property manager provide to an investor?" or "Will our proposed corporate image impress local home sellers?"
- 2. Plan For 10-15 Persons**  
If attendees number more than fifteen, the event becomes more like a seminar, people are less likely to contribute and the group is harder to control. If you have less than ten, one or two people can dominate.
- 3. Two Per Group**  
Don't have more than two people from the same family, background or company. They may form a clique and take control of the discussion.
- 4. Experienced Attendees**  
Ensure that those you invite have recent experience and are qualified in the subject being researched e.g. invite only landlords when researching investors, invite only local home owners when researching the needs of sellers.
- 5. Duration 90 Minutes**  
Plan for twenty minutes welcome tea/coffee/biscuits (no alcohol), sixty minutes research period, ten minutes farewell.
- 6. Three-Step Invitation**  
Firstly, invite each person by telephone two to three weeks before the event date. Secondly, confirm their agreement to attend in writing. Thirdly, make a reminder phone call on the morning of the focus group.
- 7. Materials**  
Provide all participants with a lapel name tag, pen and notepad.
- 8. Seating**  
A semicircle or horse-shoe configuration works best. Each participant needs to be able to see every other participant.
- 9. Welcome**  
After the initial tea/coffee, ask everyone to be seated. Provide some brief background of your agency, then explain the aim of the focus group e.g. "To help us to continue to improve the level of service we provide our clients".
- 10. Moderator**  
The customer service manager usually acts as the focus group moderator and takes the group through the points for discussion. Every person should be encouraged to make a comment on every point e.g. "Jane, how do you feel about that?" or "John, do you have any suggestions?"
- 11. Rating**  
At the conclusion of each point of discussion, ask each person to rate their opinion on a score of 1 to 10, where 1 is NOT IMPORTANT and 10 is VERY IMPORTANT. Obtain the information confidentially by providing each person with a score sheet. Their score is not an area for discussion.
- 12. Finish On Time**  
Always finish on time. Participants will have arranged baby sitters, dinner appointments etc.
- 13. Thank You Gift**  
Upon conclusion of the focus group, thank everyone and provide them with a small gift e.g. bottle of wine.
- 14. Thank You Note**  
Send every participant a written thank you note within twenty four hours.
- 15. Collate Results**  
Collate the results of the score sheets and present them to the agency owner / general manager within forty eight hours.
- 16. Act**  
Vary your agency's policies, activities and systems to reflect the results of the focus group. This may require training of office personnel.

## WRITTEN REPORT AND FEEDBACK

The facilitator will provide the agency owners and all employees with a written report of the group's findings. This report will be analysed and appropriate actions and strategies will be developed and implemented. It is essential that the exercise be concluded with the agency owners providing every team member with a periodic report of results.