



# The Context Group

*For Clients Who Value Results... More Than Advice*

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*"Leadership is getting someone else to do something you want done because [s/]he wants to do it."*

*Dwight D. Eisenhower*

## **The Context Group**

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## Focusing On Focus Groups

While most of us have heard of focus groups, there may be some confusion about what they are and what they are not. Ideally, a focus group is a small group (4-8 individuals) assembled to discuss a topic of interest (e.g., benefits, morale issues, process improvement, or training needs). They are a sample of the population you are interested in (e.g., customers, employees, or managers). If used appropriately, focus groups can be a rich and powerful source of information. If mishandled, they can create suspicion and animosity. Here are some do's and don'ts of running a focus group:

- Have a clear purpose and communicate it to your participants.
- Stay focused. Don't try to cover too many topics or the information will be diluted.
- Allow and encourage everyone to participate. Don't let a few members monopolize the conversation and skew the final results.
- Take notes for everyone to see (on an easel or whiteboard).
  - During brainstorming, capture all ideas. Do not pre-judge or get into debates about the pros and cons of the ideas.

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- Minimize paraphrasing unless you verify that your “abbreviated” version captures the participant’s view. In many cases, the exact words the participants choose are important to them and they will feel slighted if you re-word their thoughts.
- Ask open-ended questions to elicit both sides of the story (the positives and negatives) rather than coming in with a pre-conceived conclusion.

The value of focus groups is the synergy created by putting people in a room to discuss their ideas or opinions. Oftentimes, one participant has an idea that sparks a different idea in someone else. As such, more ideas surface than would be possible by discussing the topic with each person individually. We rely on focus groups for many of our interventions ([training needs analysis](#), [employee or customer surveys](#), [job analysis](#), and [change management](#)) and offer training on how to facilitate team meetings and conduct focus groups.

If you want to learn more about facilitating focus groups in your organization, please contact [Kammy Haynes](#).

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## Current Project: When Should You Update Selection Systems?

Few things in a changing organization keep their value forever and this includes the systems you use for selecting employees. But does this mean that current systems aren’t valid anymore just because they are old? Not necessarily. However, you should consider re-evaluating a selection system if:

- The skills and abilities required to do the job well have changed due to the addition of technology or introduction of new work processes.
- You have changed the critical performance metrics (e.g., moved the focus from productivity to quality).
- There is reason to believe the existing process has been compromised (questions or correct answers to an interview are known).

We are currently helping a client re-evaluate their selection processes to ensure that they are as valid now as they were when implemented. To learn more about this, please contact [Warren Bobrow](#).