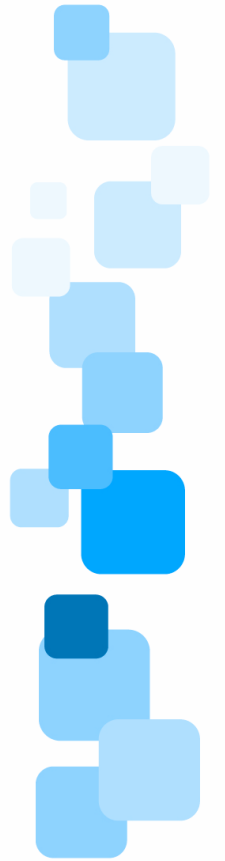


Reducing the High Cost of Focus Groups and IDIs with Technology, Option 2

White Paper No. 2009-12



Reducing the High Cost of Focus Groups and IDIs with Technology, Option 2

Abstract: This White Paper compares and contrasts the cost differences between two categories of qualitative research studies: those conducted in-person (e.g. Focus Group and IDIs) and those conducted online utilizing bulletin board technology.

The Problem: For years, in-person interviewing - in the form of Focus Groups, small groups (dyads and triads) and IDIs - has been a mainstay of qualitative researchers worldwide.

However, in-person studies have some inherent inflexibility:

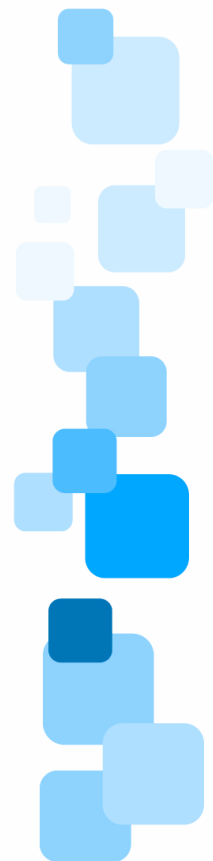
- Studies are limited to a 1½-2 hour timeframe; there often isn't enough time to dig deep into a particular subject
- Participants, the moderator and client personnel need to be at a common location at a given time
- Highly-qualified participants are often eliminated from consideration because they are unavailable at the time of the study
- Participant 'no shows' are a real issue – caught in traffic, family emergencies, stuck at work, bad winter weather or simply forgetting about the study

Finally, the logistical aspects of in-person research (for both the researchers and their clients) – facility rental, air travel, ground travel, hotels, meals, etc. – can often be as expensive (or more expensive) than the cost of the research itself.

The Proposed Solution: QualBoard™, a web-based platform for asynchronous, text-based discussions, was first launched by 20/20 Research in 2001 and has been proven in thousands of studies. QualBoard™ utilizes bulletin board technology and provides text-based dialogue and simple uploading of multimedia stimuli.

Rather than participating around a table, the moderator and participants each sit at their own computer – anywhere in the world - and participate by logging in to a website and responding to questions posted by the moderator, as well as to comments posted by other participants. Moderators probe as they would in person. Clients, too, can log in and view the discussion at their convenience. Typical studies usually involve 15-25 participants and last 3-5 days, but can last for weeks or months.

Because QualBoard™ is asynchronous (not real-time), participants do not have to log on at the same time. In fact, they log in to QualBoard™ when it is convenient for them, even if that is at 3AM. “No shows” are virtually eliminated. Participants can even go back to answer questions from a previous day. The entire discussion – all text and images – is available as a downloaded transcript immediately at the close of the study.



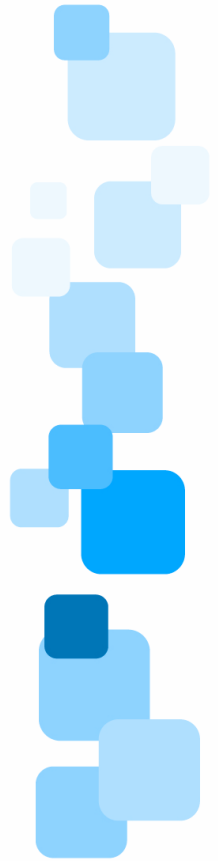
Results: Following are the costs associated with a typical Focus Group study compared to the costs from a similar study conducted in QualBoard™. Note: while the costs below are estimates and actual costs will vary somewhat from city—to-city, they are, nonetheless, very much in line with nationally-accepted fees.

The Focus Group comparison

In-person assumptions: 8 2-hour groups (2 in each of 4 cities, 3 client personnel travel with the moderator)

QualBoard™ assumptions: 3 3-day discussions, each with 22 participants

	In-person Focus Groups		Using QualBoard™	
	<u>Each</u>	<u>Project</u>	<u>Each</u>	<u>Project</u>
Facility Rental	\$550	\$4,400		
Software Rental			\$1,300*	\$3,900
FG Recruiting (10 for 8)	\$120	\$9,600		
QB Recruiting (25 for 22)			\$120	\$9,000
Incentives	\$75	\$6,000	\$75	\$5,625
DVD Recording	\$125	\$1,000		
Transcription	\$200	\$1,600		
Participant Food	\$125	\$1,000		
Client Food	\$25	\$600		
Moderator travel**	\$1,000	\$4,000		
Client travel**	\$1,000	\$12,000		
<u>Moderator fee (est.)</u>	<u>\$2,500</u>	<u>\$20,000</u>	<u>\$7,500</u>	<u>\$22,500</u>
PROJECT TOTAL		\$60,200		\$41,025



The IDI comparison

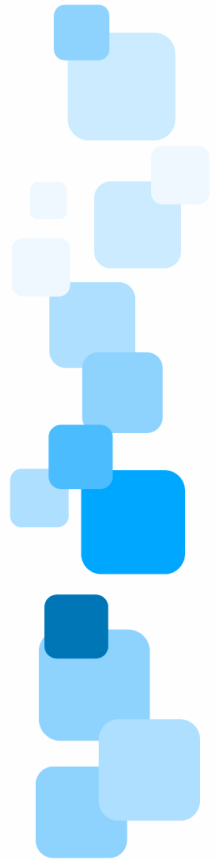
In-person assumptions: 24 1-hour interviews (6 in each of 4 cities, 3 client personnel travel with the moderator – for in-person studies)

QualBoard™ assumptions: 1 3-day discussion with 24 participants, all ‘masked’ from one another (i.e. participants believe they are participating in an IDI, not knowing they are on the same QualBoard™ with 23 others)

	In-person IDIs		Using QualBoard™	
	<u>Each</u>	<u>Project</u>	<u>Each</u>	<u>Project</u>
Facility Rental	\$1,500	\$6,000		
Software Rental			\$1,300*	\$1,300
Recruiting (28 for 24)	\$120	\$3,360	\$120	\$3,360
Incentives	\$75	\$1,800	\$75	\$1,800
DVD Recording	\$375	\$1,500		
Transcription	\$100	\$2,400		
Client Food	\$25	\$300		
Moderator travel**	\$1,000	\$4,000		
Client travel**	\$1,000	\$12,000		
<u>Moderator fee (est.)</u>	\$3,000	<u>\$12,000</u>	\$7,500	<u>\$7,500</u>
PROJECT TOTAL		\$43,360		\$13,960

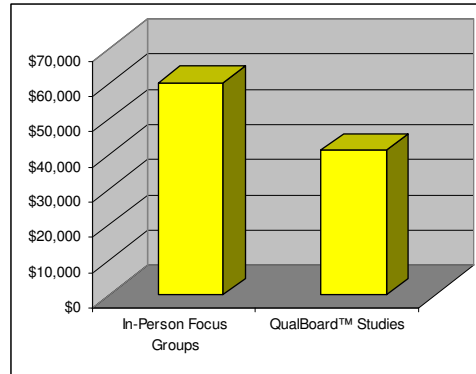
* The fee for a one-time QualBoard™ rental is \$1,300. Subscriptions are also available which dramatically reduce the per-project cost of the software.

** Includes air travel, ground travel, lodging, meals, etc.

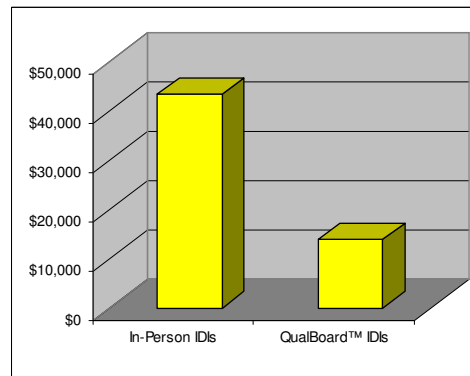


Conclusions:

1. Using **QualBoard™** as a replacement for in-person Focus Groups on an “average” project can result in a 31.9% decrease in costs - a savings of \$19,175.



2. Using **QualBoard™** as a replacement for in-person IDIs on an “average” project can result in a 67.8% decrease in costs – a savings of \$29,400.



3. What cannot be calculated here is the “lost opportunity” because of travel. How much productivity is lost (by the moderator and the clients) because of all the time spent on planes, in cabs and rental cars going to and from airports, time just sitting and waiting before, between and after the interviews take place and so on?



4. **QualBoard™** provides a cost-effective, valid alternative to in-person qualitative research for three primary reasons:
 - a. QualBoard™ is a flexible platform that allows for text-based dialogue and easy uploading of stimuli (images, videos, websites, documents) by both the moderator and participants.
 - b. The web-based, asynchronous nature virtually eliminates ‘no-shows,’ maximizes convenience for all involved and provides numerous creative options for designing the structure of a study.
 - c. QualBoard™ can save thousands of dollars per project when compared to in-person studies.

