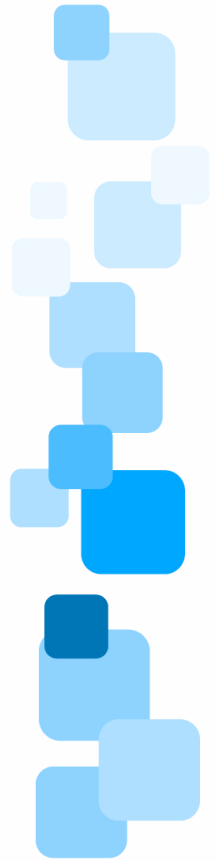


# **Utilizing Technology to Reduce the Timeframe Associated with Qualitative Research Projects**

**White Paper No. 2009-21**



## Utilizing Technology to Reduce the Timeframe Associated with Qualitative Research Projects

**Abstract:** This White Paper compares and contrasts the difference in the time required to complete a typical qualitative research study – in one instance conducted in-person, and in the other, conducted online utilizing bulletin board focus group (BBFG) technology.

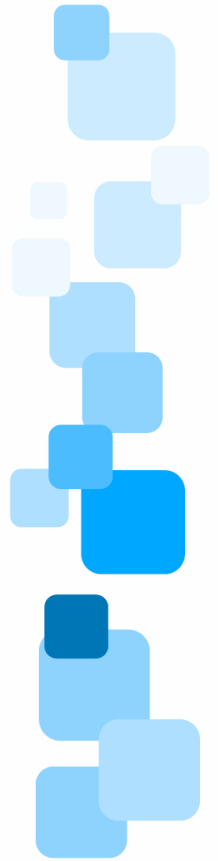
**The Problem:** Endemic to our industry is the [not so] tacit requirement that qualitative research projects be conducted quickly... and the quicker the better. In difficult economic times, those requirements are further exacerbated.

However, traditional qualitative research projects utilizing in-person interviewing come with inherent time frames built in... time frames that are virtually unchangeable because of physical-world considerations like facility availability, travel and the time required to conduct and analyze the research.

**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 in a Focus Group facility, 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 timeframes associated with a typical Focus Group study compared to the timeframes from a similar study conducted in QualBoard™.

The Focus Group comparison

In-person assumptions: Eight 2-hour groups (2 in each of 4 cities)

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

	In-person Focus Groups <u>Time Required</u>	Using QualBoard™ <u>Time Required</u>
Finding Available Facilities	2 Days	n/a
Project Bidding	1 Day	1 Day
QualBoard project prep	n/a	1 Day
Recruiting	2 Weeks	2 Weeks
Project Occurs	2 Weeks	1 Week*
Transcription	4 Days	Immediate
<u>Analysis &amp; Reporting</u>	<u>1 Week</u>	<u>1 Week</u>
<b>PROJECT TOTAL</b>	<b>6 Weeks, 2 Days</b>	<b>4 Weeks, 2 Days</b>

\* QualBoards can be managed and moderated simultaneously.

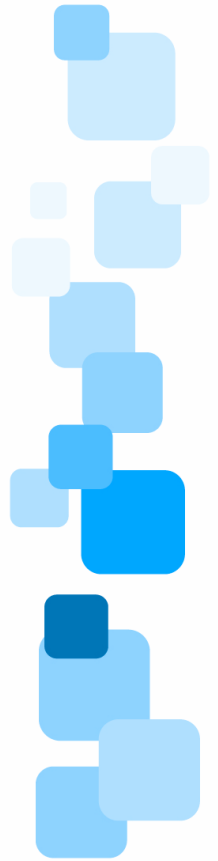
The IDI comparison

In-person assumptions: 24 1-hour interviews (6 in each of 4 cities)

QualBoard™ assumptions: One 3-day discussion with 24 participants

	In-person IDIs <u>Time Required</u>	Using QualBoard™ <u>Time Required</u>
Finding Available Facilities	2 Days	n/a
Project Bidding	1 Day	1 Day
QualBoard project prep	n/a	1 Day
Recruiting	2 Weeks	2 Weeks
Project Occurs	2 Weeks	3 Days*
Transcription	4 Days	Immediate
<u>Analysis &amp; Reporting</u>	<u>1 Week</u>	<u>1 Week</u>
<b>PROJECT TOTAL</b>	<b>6 Weeks, 2 Days</b>	<b>4 Weeks</b>

\* QualBoard participants can all be ‘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)



## Conclusions:

1. Using **QualBoard™** as a replacement for in-person Focus Groups on a typical project can result in a project timeframe that is shortened by approximately two (2) full weeks.
2. Using **QualBoard™** as a replacement for in-person IDIs on a typical project can result in a project timeframe that is shortened by more than two (2) full weeks.
3. What cannot be calculated here is the “management time” lost due to the day-to-day interaction with fieldwork firms. E.g. on a focus group project, the researcher communicates daily with different contacts at four facilities, reads through four different recruiting updates, deals with the payment of four invoices, etc. On a **QualBoard™** project, all project communication is through one vendor and one contact.
4. Summary: In addition to providing dramatic cost savings, the use of **QualBoard™** as an alternative to in-person qualitative research can shave 2-3 weeks off of a typical project. The ability to deliver project turnaround that is considerably faster than with traditional methods can provide researchers using online platforms with a significant competitive advantage.

