Customer Service

Handout 3

Techniques for Gathering Information

Depth Interviews

- Interview is conducted one-on-one, and lasts between 30 and 60 minutes.
- Best method for in-depth probing of personal opinions, beliefs, and values.
- Very rich depth of information.
- Very flexible.
- Probing is very useful at uncovering hidden issues.
- They are unstructured (or loosely structured)- this differentiates them from survey interviews in which the same questions are asked to all respondents.
- Can be time consuming and responses can be difficult to interpret.
- Requires skilled interviewers - expensive - interviewer bias can easily be introduced.
- There is no social pressure on respondents to conform and no group dynamics.
- Start with general questions and rapport establishing questions, then proceed to more purposive questions.
- **Laddering** is a technique used by depth interviewers in which you start with questions about external objects and external social phenomena, then proceed to internal attitudes and feelings
- **Hidden issue questioning** is a technique used by depth interviewers in which they concentrate on deeply felt personal concerns and pet peeves.
- **Symbolic analysis** is a technique used by depth interviewers in which deeper symbolic meanings are probed by asking questions about their opposites.

Projective Techniques

- These are unstructured prompts or stimulus that encourage the respondent to project their underlying motivations, beliefs, attitudes, or feelings onto an ambiguous situation.
- They are all indirect techniques that attempt to disguise the purpose of the research.
- Examples of projective techniques include:
  - Word association - say the first word that comes to mind after hearing a word - only some of the words in the list are test words that the researcher is interested in, the rest are fillers - is useful in testing brand names - variants include chain word association and controlled word association.
  - Sentence completion - respondents are given incomplete sentences and asked to complete them.
  - Story completion - respondents are given part of a story and are asked to complete it.

- Cartoon tests - pictures of cartoon characters are shown in a specific situation and with dialogue balloons - one of the dialogue balloons is empty and the respondent is asked to fill it in.
- Thematic apperception tests - respondents are shown a picture (or series of pictures) and asked to make up a story about the picture(s).
- Role playing - respondents are asked to play the role of someone else - researchers assume that subjects will project their own feelings or behaviours into the role.
- Third-person technique - a verbal or visual representation of an individual and his/her situation is presented to the respondent - the respondent is asked to relate the attitudes or feelings of that person - researchers assume that talking in the third person will minimise the social pressure to give standard or politically correct responses.