



Tom Romito

FACILITATOR

FACILITATION AND FOCUS GROUPS

I'm Tom Romito. I'm a facilitator and I work with organizations that want to improve themselves. This short paper is about how organizations can create strategies for achieving their goals by using focus groups with the help of a facilitator.

Organizations that want to grow need to know how the outside world perceives them. This knowledge will help them devise strategies to survive and thrive. If you want your organization to grow, here's an effective way to gain this knowledge. It called focus groups. To conduct a focus group, four things are necessary. Here they are:

- Five to ten people who know about your organization, but are not in it. They could be customers, donors, public officials, investors, or some other kind of stakeholders. They must be willing to attend a meeting and willing to tell you what they think of your organization.
- A two-hour block of time.
- A place to hold the meeting.
- A skilled facilitator.

As a facilitator, I like to ask five questions to solicit input from the people in the meeting. Here's what I ask them:

- What do you know about the organization?
- What should the organization do for you?
- How can you and the organization work together?
- How can the organization help you to participate in its future?
- What should be the organization's highest priority for improving itself?

I like to conduct at least two focus groups with different people in order to gain different insights about the organization. Following both meetings, I placed the comments I've gained into four

categories: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats. In a subsequent workshop, I lead a planning team from the organization through a process to devise three to five core strategies that will guide the organization through the next three years.

In summary, focus groups can help your organization develop core strategies to focus your efforts and save time achieving your goal.