



QRCA

IDEAS & TOOLS
FOR QUALITATIVE RESEARCH

VIEWS

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COMMUNICATING in the
**“COMFORT
ZONE”**

**ICONIC
MODERATORS**
LEAVE A LEGACY FOR ALL

**THE POWER OF
PARTICIPANT PREP**

**RIGHT PLACE,
RIGHT TIME...**
*USING VOICE MESSAGING
TO BE “IN THE MOMENT”*





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You know you are a qualitative researcher when you could be mistaken for a private investigator, with pockets full of recording gadgets.

YOU KNOW YOU'RE A QUALITATIVE RESEARCHER IF...

Some might say that qualitative researchers are all very similar. We tend to be personable, inquisitive, attentive, organized, creative and good listeners. However, after attending the QRCA Symposium in Chicago, you might argue that we are very different. Each of us has our own personality, our own approach to working with clients, our own specialty areas and our own techniques for conducting research. No matter whether you feel we are very similar or very different, you will have to agree that you know you are a qualitative researcher when...

...You start a conversation with an open-ended question and respond to the reply with, "Why is that?" No matter whether you moderate traditional in-person focus groups or online bulletin-board discussions, conduct shop-alongs or manage internal clients, qualitative researchers are expert investigators. We all love to ask questions, and we are experts at uncovering what people are really saying.

...You have QRCA VIEWS magazines in several places throughout your home and office. If you are like me, you have a stack of issues, with the latest on top, in an "easy access" pile next to your desk. Perhaps the copy you are reading now is on loan from another research colleague. VIEWS is a wonderful resource for the latest in qualitative research and a must-have resource in the office of any qualitative researcher. If you would enjoy your own copy of VIEWS, just send us an email at [monica@zresearchservices.com] or use the sign-up form on our website (www.qrca.org), and we will be happy to get you your own free subscription.

...You have belonged to the QRCA LinkedIn Group long enough to see it start to look like Facebook. No matter how many times LinkedIn's programmers change the look of the QRCA Qualitative Research Discussion on LinkedIn, they cannot change the wealth of information that can be found there. It is amazing what is being discussed among nearly 1,600 qualitative researchers from all over the world — everything from "effective qualitative reporting techniques" to "recommendations for moderators in Germany." This global community of researchers is a great place to ask questions and get answers about qualitative research topics.

...You just roll your eyes rather than giggle and point when you see a respondent primping in the mirror. Qualitative researchers are always ready to deal with anything because we never know what a research participant is going to do. The stories are endless. A participant threatens to sue the client because he had to shave his head due to the dandruff shampoo he just tested. A woman lifts her shirt up to show you the features of her favorite bra. A 17-year-old boy has an attitude so negative that the hostess will not even let him in the room.

...You have to strategize with your colleagues on how to avoid bed bugs when conducting research on the road. One of the latest challenges facing qualitative researchers is not from the research participants or our clients. Unfortunately, the proliferation of bed bugs in hotels, especially on the east coast of the United States, has become a real issue. I am happy to pass on the top tips I have learned from other qualitative researchers regarding finding and dealing with bed bugs: "Pull back the bedding, and check the mattress for little rust-colored marks," and "Some experts say to always put your luggage on a luggage rack (not on the floor or bed)."

...You have not yet seen the freshly updated QRCA Breakthroughs website, but you can't wait to visit. Found at <http://qrcabreakthroughs.com>, this website is a great

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place to see what your qualitative research colleagues are up to. QRCA members share tips, practical information and their wealth of knowledge. Breakthroughs is a must-see! While you are out exploring on the internet, do not forget about Qcasts. QRCA's monthly webcasts (find them at www.qrca.org) are another great educational resource.

...Research is being conducted, and you are concerned because no M&Ms are present. We all know that M&Ms do not make the best dinner, but they are a staple in the back room of focus group facilities. No one is really quite sure how that happened, but even clients get distressed when these sweet treats are nowhere to be found.

...You could be mistaken for a private investigator, with pockets full of recording gadgets. Whether you are conducting a shop-along or ethnographic research, having items like digital recorders and small cameras is critical to documenting the research findings. One of the latest gadgets I have added to my investigator tool kit is Livescribe's Pulse SmartPen. This pen not only writes, but it also records the discussion as well, and it is great for interviews and client debriefs. Of course, I learned about this great tool from conversations with other qualitative researchers.

Finally, you know you are a qualitative researcher if you are saving your frequent flier miles to go to the QRCA Symposium in Chicago, on Thursday, May 12, 2011. The Symposium is the perfect opportunity to learn from a team of researchers (QRCA members and their client partners) who will present case studies highlighting how qualitative research was used to address their research needs. More importantly, though, the Symposium is the perfect place to check out my theory and see what qualitative researchers are really like. I hope to see you there! 

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