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GLOBAL MARKET RESEARCH  
AND CONSULTING

the

# RDA Advisor

Insight

Innovation

Implementation

"A full-service market research and consulting firm providing strategic perspective and customer focus"

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## Ask the Research Guru

**How do I go about recruiting participants for sensitive-themed qualitative research?**

First of all, plan to conduct one-on-one interviews rather than focus groups. The prospect of discussing contentious topics in a group setting, or of disclosing highly personal information in such a setting, is not apt to have respondents lining up in droves. Moreover, the groups themselves would likely be an uncomfortable experience for all involved.

Before committing to the project, make sure that adequate sample is obtainable, that you are able to allocate sufficient recruiting time, and that the project budget allows for generous-sized participant incentives. Do not make the mistake of assuming the recruit process will be roughly the same as it is for non-sensitive research; depending on the degree of sensitivity involved, it may well require a larger sample, a longer time frame, and a higher incentive.

In designing your recruit screener, make sure to identify the sponsor (client or vendor) up front, and take care to use neutral, non-judgmental language in the questions. Perhaps the most important thing, however, is to disclose the research topic at the point of invitation, if not

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## Targeting Key Consumer Segments

Effectively segmenting the market is vital to the strategic planning processes of a company. A segmentation approach can be used to identify important commonalities within individual consumer groups, allowing a company to develop highly targeted marketing strategies and new products that best fulfill the unique needs of each consumer segment.

A recent case in point comes from RDA Group's Auto-Ideation™ II Study which identifies unmet consumer needs related to vehicles. The inaugural study conducted in 2003 focused on consumers in product segments that were defined by traditional vehicle categories like SUV, luxury car, etc. By contrast, the 2005 update targets twelve consumer segments based on lifestage (Families with Young vs. Mature Children, etc.), lifestyle (Road Warriors, Multi-purpose Users, etc.), demographics (Gen Y, Seniors, etc.) and special interests (Tuners, Hobbyists, etc.).

By understanding the unmet vehicle needs of these unique consumer groups, product planners are able to consider ideas and develop concepts for new features that fit the need profiles of each of these groups. Looking at the following consumer segments illustrates the importance of this type of targeted segmentation:



"Seniors" (vehicle owners in the 55-years and older age group), for example, express needs that are more reflective of their mature life stage. Their vehicle needs revolve around easier **entry/exit** into vehicles and greater **safety** while driving. Seniors also stand out for wanting enhanced **visibility** to help them better see the road, other vehicles, and obstacles in their path.

At another extreme are "Tuners"... enthusiasts who modify, show or race their vehicles. Not surprisingly, **personalization** and **performance** needs are very important to this group. This desire for personalization extends to almost every aspect of their vehicles ranging from simple color changes to highly technical modifications. Given the financial and personal investment these owners make in their cars and trucks, **damage protection** also surfaces as a key area of need.



Knowing that these consumer segments as well as others have a unique set of needs allows companies to custom fit their product offerings to each segment. The benefits are that consumers have products better designed for them and companies have winning products that add to their bottom line.

*For further information on the Auto-Ideation™ II study, please contact Jim Thomas (jthomas@rdagroup.com).*

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## Ask the Research Guru

### How do I go about recruiting participants for sensitive-themed qualitative research?

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sooner. Indeed, keeping the subject matter a secret until the actual session is never a good idea; respondents who feel tricked or misled are more apt to be distrustful and tight-lipped than cooperative and forthcoming.

If possible, employ an online web recruit rather than the more intrusive approach of phone recruiting. Send targeted respondents an invitation, via US mail, that directs them to the screening site. The web-based screener must convey legitimacy in every aspect: the pages should be contained within or linked to the sponsor's website, and all appropriate privacy information should be clearly communicated and prominently displayed. Send recruits their confirmation packets via e-mail or US postal service; employ phone calls only to verify receipt of the packets.

Two things to keep in mind: one, if the parameters for recruit budget and timing are tight, the project should be put aside until the parameters loosen; and two, recruitments that require respondents to admit to transgressive attitudes or behavior, such as having radical political views or a criminal past, are virtually impossible to complete.

*For further information, please contact editor@rdagroup.com*

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## Employee Profile Sanford Stallard

**Title:** Senior Vice President,  
Qualitative Services

**Area of Expertise:** Moderates focus groups and conducts multi-phase Auto-Ideation™ sessions, executive interviews, and website usability tests.

**The elements of a successful focus group:** “One, quality respondents. Two, clear understanding on the part of the moderator and client as to what is to be accomplished in the groups. And three, doing one’s homework on the specific topic and industry.”

**How to engage an unresponsive group:** “I try a variety of activities, including creativity exercises, to stretch their minds and give them a break from the material. I also make sure they have plenty of extra coffee and cookies - caffeine and sugar help wake up sluggish minds. Sometimes you simply cannot wake up a sluggish group, that’s one of the reasons why you do more than one focus group per setting.”

**What he likes best about working at RDA:** “There exists a great deal of flexibility here to try different approaches. Some RDA employees have changed careers without having to leave the company.”

**Family:** Chris (son), who is a senior at the University of Michigan and the Wing Commander of his Air Force ROTC detachment. Upon graduation, Chris will enter the Air Force Advanced Flight Training Program.

**Hobbies:** “Since my son received his private pilot’s license, I have become interested in aerial photography. Also, I occasionally autocross and participate in amateur races.”

**Favorite Movies:** *The Godfather*, *Bullitt*, and *Groundhog Day*.

**Last Book Read:** Pete Peterson’s *Running on Empty*, which discusses the U.S. trade deficit and debt load.

## Welcome New Clients!

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PUBLISHER’S  
STATEMENT:

The RDA Advisor is a quarterly newsletter published by RDA Group and designed to provide an informative, up-to-date company profile to our clients, suppliers, and other colleagues.