

All About Qual: Perspectives from Across our Partner Network

WITH

Clark L. Murray

Focus Group Moderator | Former On-Air Television Journalist

Welcome to ***All About Qual***, an ongoing interview series in which we highlight some of the unique methodologies, perspectives, and experiences from our partner network that make qualitative research such a flexible and powerful tool for getting to the “why?” behind the “what?”. In this edition, we sit down with **Clark Murray**, Managing Partner of Churchill Group Qualitative Research LLC, a qualitative research practice in New Canaan, Connecticut.

Q: To be honest, we’ve never interviewed anyone with a background in on-air broadcast journalism. Before we dive into the topic of research, tell us: do you ever “get used to” being on camera? How do you prepare for live television?

A: The key is to NOT think about being on television and talking to thousands of people. Instead, you should think about talking to one person who is sitting informally in their family room. Approaching it as one-to-one communication takes a lot of pressure off and allows you to speak much more naturally and conversationally.

Q: Your time in journalism obviously had a major impact on your subsequent career, and you’re known for employing a “Reporter-Journalist” interviewing method. We’re not asking you to give away trade secrets, but could you describe that approach?

A: My “Reporter-Journalist” Interviewing Method is built on three principles, all three of which are used by journalists when they are pursuing a story. First, you go in with a clear set of hypotheses that you want to prove, disprove, or modify via the interviews. Second, with the interview subject (or the “respondent” in marketing research terms), you focus initially on building rapport so that you earn trust. Third, you give the interview subject room to answer in

their own way—you let them provide their answer in a way that makes most sense to them versus pushing them to tell it using your format, sequence, or language. The overall idea is to make the interview as respondent-friendly as possible. After all, the respondent is the one doing YOU the favor by answering your pesky questions.

Q: You've conducted close to 1,000 studies during your time as a qualitative researcher. Is there a particular category or subject matter that you'd say that you specialize in or enjoy more than others, or do you see yourself as a generalist at heart?

A: I think of myself as a generalist who deeply respects the uniqueness of each client and their industry. I enjoy learning about new types of industries and different businesses and brands within each industry. It's a benefit to being able to import concepts from one to another.

Q: How has experience helped you as a researcher? What do you know or understand now that you wish you knew or understood when you were just starting out?

A: During any type of interview or focus group, talk less and listen and observe more. When in doubt, shut up. Make the respondent the star, not you.

Q: What do you look for in a recruiting or research facility partner? We have our own thoughts about what is most important, but we'd like to hear yours!

A: I'm always drawn to partners who err on the side of over-communicating with me (even if they are telling me about a problem) and who assert ideas (even wild ideas) for doing things differently.

Q: What question do you wish that your clients asked you more often during the research process?

A: How can we innovate the process to get more and deeper insights out of this research?

Q: It's hard to go five minutes these days without reading about how technology is either going to destroy the world of research or usher it into a previously unimaginable future. What's your take?

A: I am absolutely convinced that new technologies will make research better in every dimension. Hasn't that been the impact of new technologies over the last 20 years? Smart marketing researchers will embrace the opportunity (and challenges) for innovating with technology.

Thank you, Clark, for sitting down with us and sharing your perspectives and experience!

About Us

Beyond the Table Research, a premier market research facility in Pittsburgh, is proud to serve as a crossroads where distinguished researchers, carefully vetted respondents, a modern, thoughtfully designed venue, and a hands-on, experienced project management converge to create exceptional insights. To learn more about our capabilities as a resource partner, please visit our website at bttrfocus.com, or take a [virtual tour of our research facility](#).

Clark L. Murray began his career as a broadcast journalist at WCMH-TV in Columbus, Ohio and developed extensive marketing, advertising, and qualitative research experience at J. Wunderman Thompson, Kraft Heinz, and Computer Sciences Corporation before starting the Churchill Group LLC, his independent research practice. To learn more about his services and experience, please visit his website at churgroup.com