# Guidance on running employee focus groups

This guidance provides best practice examples on how to conduct focus groups that seek employee views and feedback on the business.

The role of the facilitator is important. The facilitator needs to build that trust and draw out what participants really think and feel. Identify someone either internally or externally all employees feel they can share their views with confidence.

## Preparation

* seek a broad cross-section of employees, within available timescales and resources
* seek eight-ten people for any workshop (no more than ten)
* make sure that no participant has their manager or direct reports in the same workshop
* ensure every individual's manager is contacted in advance to explain why the employee’s participation is important to the business
* send each participant a short brief in advance of the workshop, explaining the purpose and importance of the session
* agree the role of the facilitator

## Logistics

* the group should not last more than an hour (anything more is a disincentive for people to attend/participate)
* timings for each section in the agenda are indicative (but, overall, you should stick to the hour)
* the facilitator will need one or two flipcharts to scribe the themes and feedback that emerge
* the room must be well-lit and well-aired to encourage attention and participation
* make sure some refreshments are also available (eg tea, coffee, soft drinks

## Content

### (1) Introduction and warm up (5 mins)

* introduce yourself as the facilitator and explain your role
* summarise the role of the workshop
* summarise broad topics (“The kind of things we're going to be exploring are…”)
* ask participants to briefly introduce themselves and their role
* emphasise confidentiality

### (2) Overview (15 mins)

* What is your overall view of the business? - this may be an opportunity to flush out any major issues that employees want to raise early on
* What words would you use to describe this business to those who don’t know it?
* Is this different to the way you would like to describe it? What other words would you like to us but don’t think you can? Why not?
* How would people outside the business (e.g. customers, partners, suppliers) describe it? What words would they use?
* What are the business goals for the business over the next 12 months? And the key challenges it faces? How well-placed do you think the business is to rise to these challenges?
* Looking forward, are you more or less optimistic about business prospects? Why do you say this?

### (3) Life in the business (20 mins)

* What’s it like working in the business at the moment?
* How do you enjoy working here? What inspires you about the place? What makes you motivated to come to work in the morning?
* Is there anything about the business that switches you off/demotivates you?
* Are you clear on your role/what's expected of you here? Do you have the tools and materials you need to do your job?
* How do you feel about the opportunities available to you? Are you sufficiently challenged by your work?
* How involved do you feel in the business as a whole? How much do you feel it's "your business"?
* What would you recommend about the business as a place to work? What might put you off recommending it?
* How does working here compare to life with previous employers?

### (4) Leadership and management (15 mins)

* Do the company’s leaders give you a clear vision of the future for the business and your role within it? If not, what's missing?
* Do leaders make their expectations clear? Do their actions match their words?
* Do you feel you can share views and ideas with leaders of the business?
* Does your manager know you as an individual? Do they have a good understanding of your skills, capabilities and development needs?
* Do you get clear and honest feedback on your performance?
* Do you receive recognition/praise from your manager when you do things well?
* Do you feel you can challenge your manager – do they listen when you come up with new ideas?

### (5) Conclusion & review (5 mins)

* If there was one thing you wanted to change about the business, what would it be?
* Is there anything that we haven’t covered in this discussion that you would like to raise?
* Summary of key themes from the discussion.
* Thank participants for attendance and involvement.
* Explain what you will be doing with the feedback and what the next steps will be.