

Interviewing Fundamentals

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INNOVATION

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The interview is an informal discussion – it is not a question and answer exercise

1. Fundamental elements

But there's also more to it than just having a chat...

In considering the nature of the discussion:

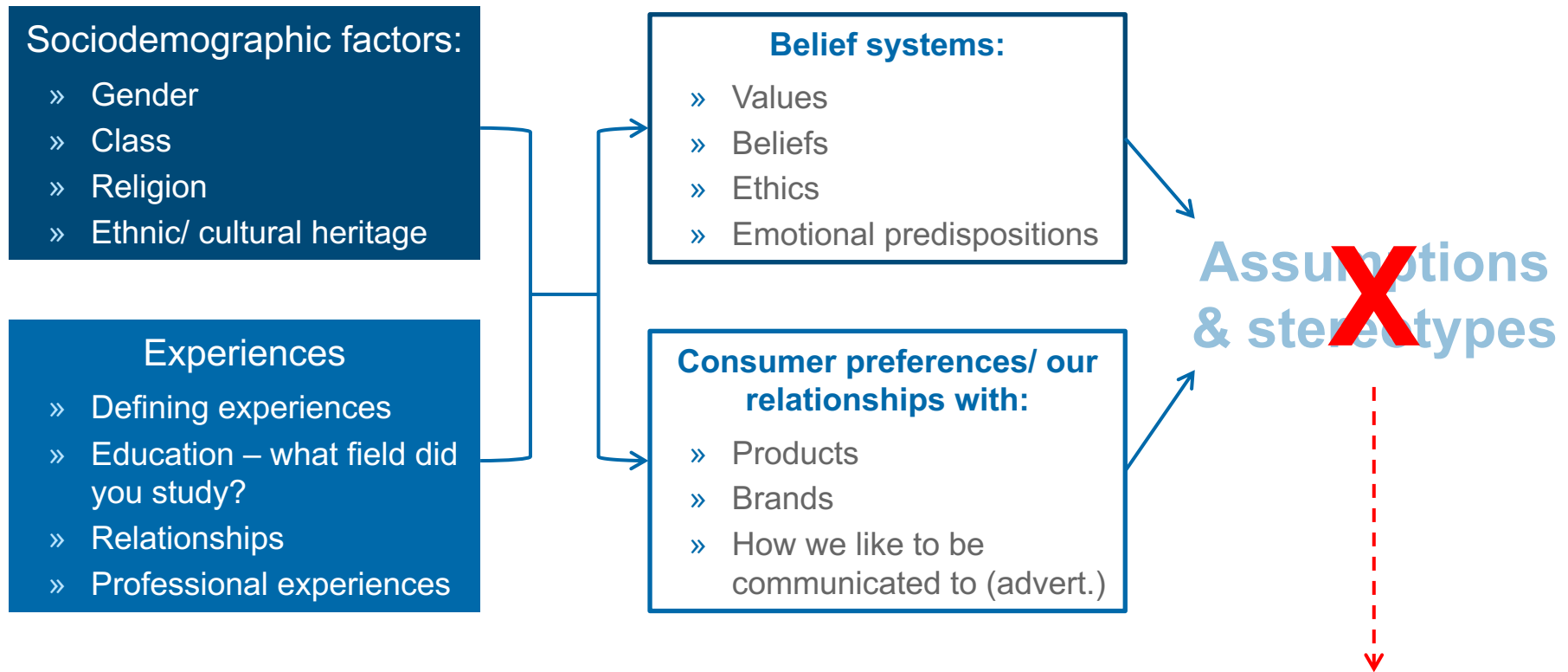
- » Has a tangible structure towards achieving desired goals and outcomes
- » Don't need to ask every question in the guide
- » Don't need to follow the exact order of questions in the guide

Some initial key principles

- » Responses **should be respondent led**
 - » Responses **should not** be interviewer led
- }] → **Avoids bias in the data**
- » **Structure** (what is discussed) needs to be **lead by the interviewer**
- }] → **Ensures objectives are met**

Knowing thyself is important – who am I?

2. Self Awareness and Reflectiveness



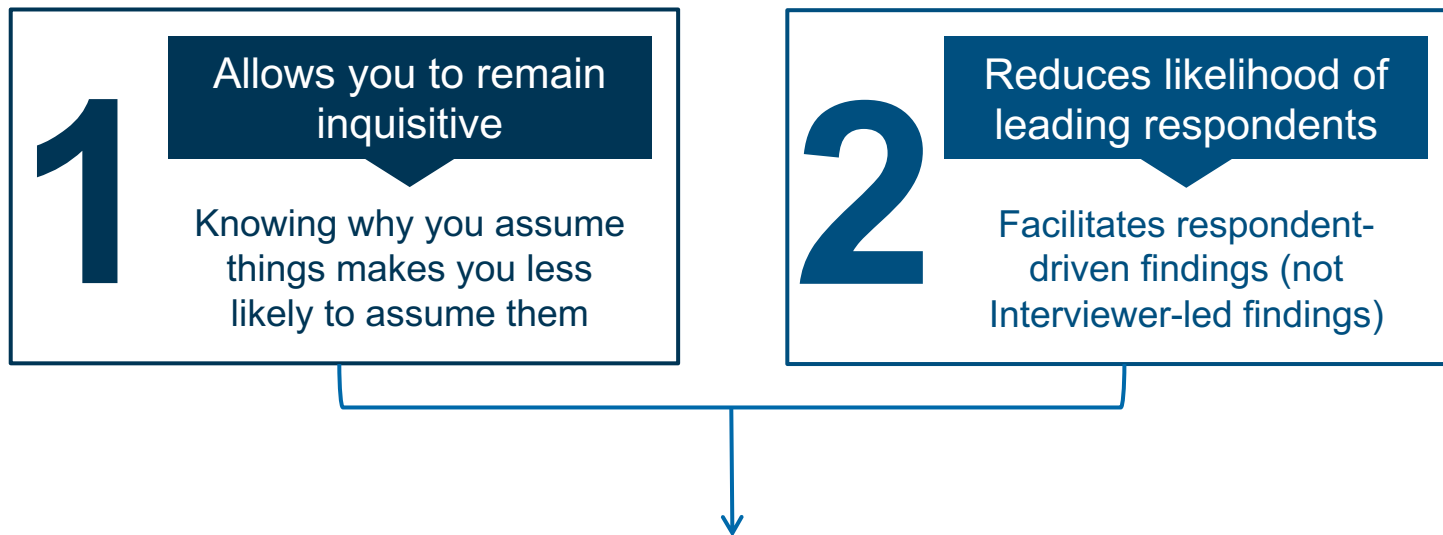
#1 Trap for Interviewers:

- » We should **never assume anything!**
- » **Always have respondents explain themselves** (even if you think it is bleedingly obvious) – allow the opportunity to be surprised

Self awareness helps you remain inquisitive and reduces the likelihood leading respondents

2. Self Awareness and Reflectiveness *cont.*

Self awareness and reflectivity have two important functions:



These are fundamental skills of the interviewer

- » Facilitate outcomes with the most relevance
- » Enable clarity during the analysis process

Establishing empathy and trust enables the best responses

3. The Importance of Empathy

EMPATHY

*The **psychological identification** with or vicarious experiencing of the feelings, thoughts & attitudes of another*

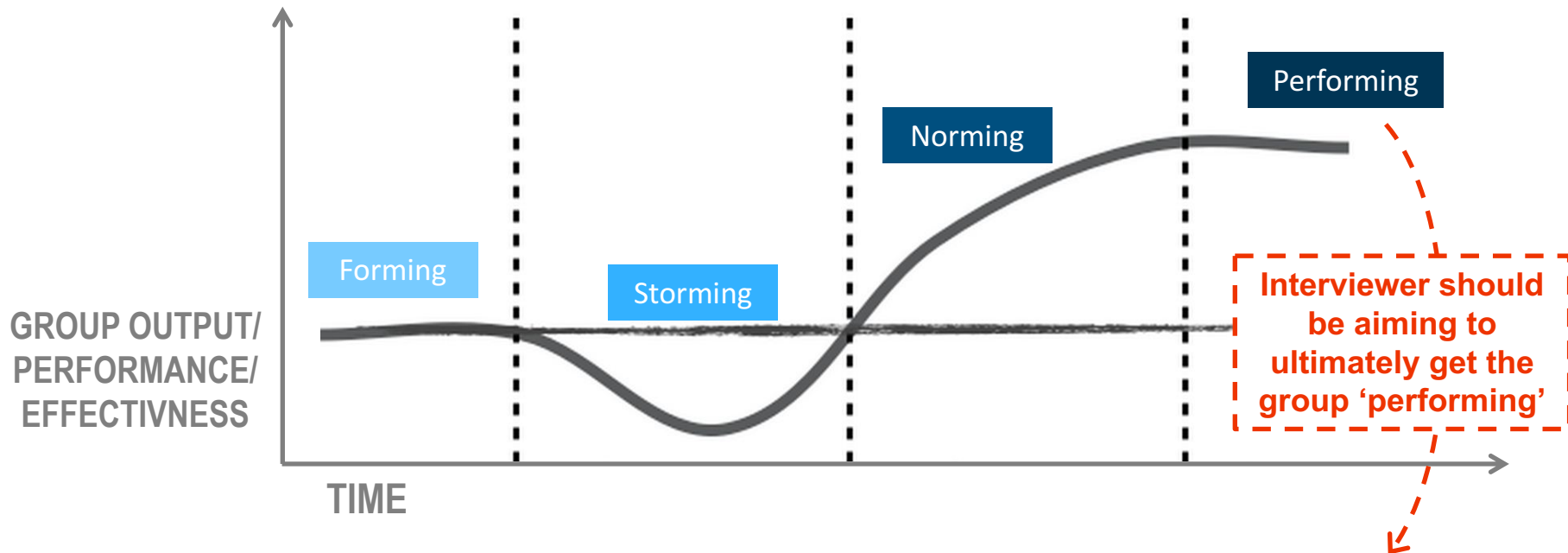
Understanding what it is like to be your respondents

When someone feels understood, there is **trust** implicit in the relationship

When people feel trust, they are more willing to be open, vulnerable, confess/ admit to things that might otherwise be unsaid

Understanding the evolution of a group should inform the structure of the conversation

4. Evolution of a Group



Forming

Team acquaints and establishes ground rules.

Formalities are preserved and members treat one another as strangers.

Storming

Members start to communicate their feelings but still view themselves as individuals, rather than part of the team.

People resist control by group leaders (and can sometimes show hostility).

Norming

People feel part of the team and realise they can achieve work together if they accept others' viewpoints

Performing

The team works in an open and trusting atmosphere where flexibility is the key and hierarchy of little importance

The interviewer guide should take into account how the discussion develops

4. Evolution of a Group *cont.*

Don't challenge participants too early

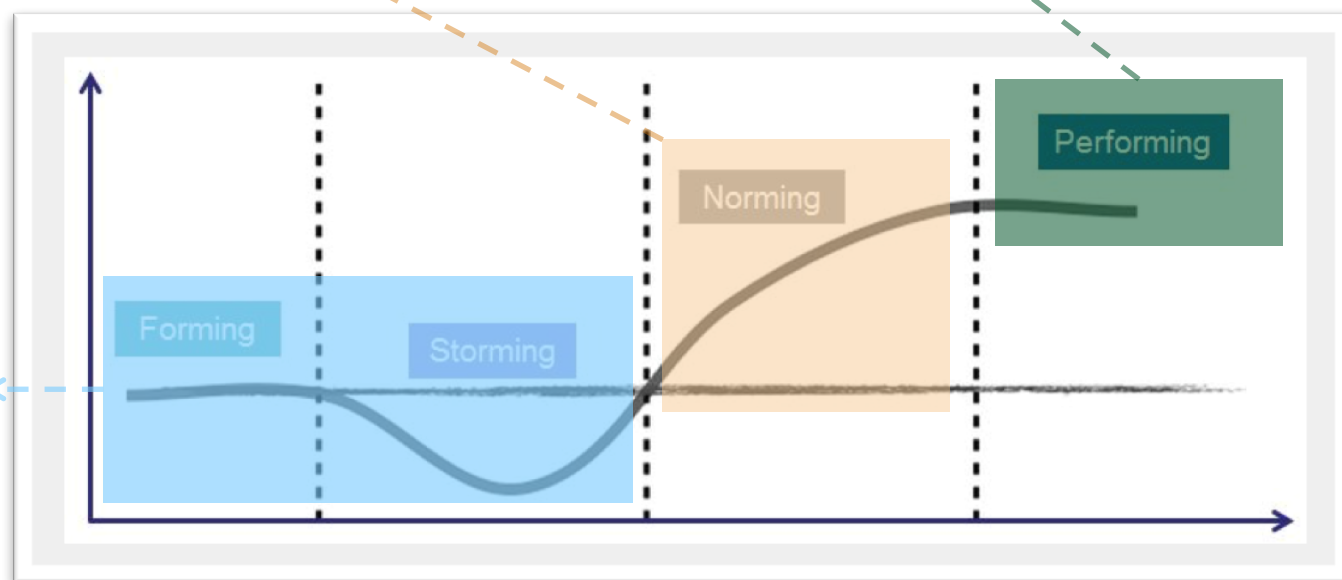
- » More of a rational emphasis
- » Take it easy on the emotional stuff (limit number and complexity of the projectives)

Design the guide to best take advantage of the 'performing' stage

- » Emotional, projective and creative tasks towards the end
- » (not always possible – can be limited by other methodological constraints)

Need to facilitate 'forming' and 'norming' stages'

- » A good introduction and warm-up is key – don't rush it



Need to allow enough time for respondents to reach the 'performing' stage

- » Don't rush and ensure you book enough time in (i.e., at least 90min)

Take the time to invest in a proper introduction – it will help you later in conversation

5. Important Elements of the Introduction

**Its all about
establishing
trust!**

- » **Try to establish rapport as soon as possible**
 - As soon as people enter the room
 - Generally be open and welcoming
 - Find shared interests/ similarities with respondents

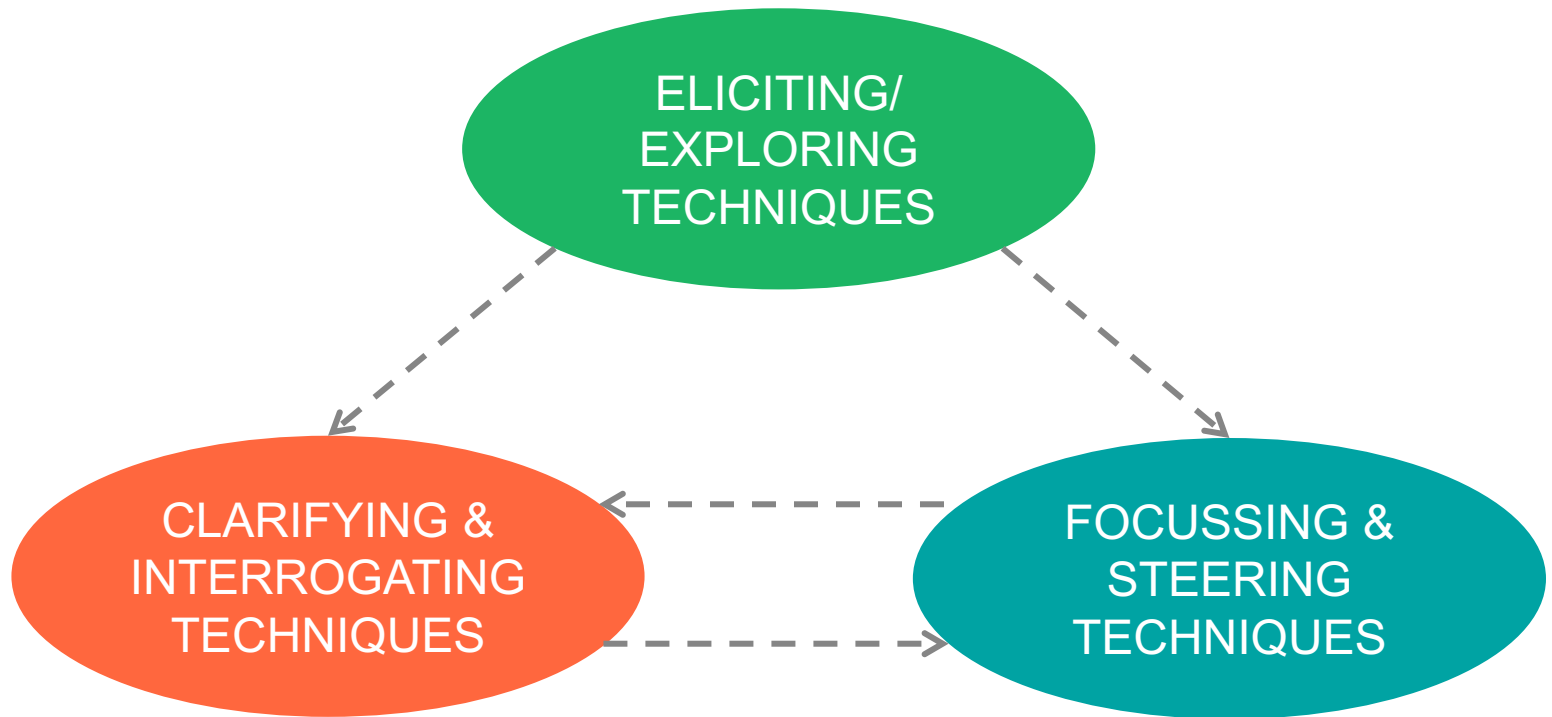
- » **Establish the rules**
 - Gives you more flexibility throughout the conversation (including license to be assertive at times)
 - (one person talking at a time/ your role to make sure everyone has an equal say/ makes an equal contribution)

- » **Foster the right type of tone/ environment**
 - Energy and light-heartedness (or sensitivity and respect)
 - Sense of collaboration and respect (no right or wrong answers)

- » **Confidentiality**

Discursive techniques generally fit into three categories...

6. Technical Overview



The interviewer is constantly facilitating this process both on macro and micro perspectives

Eliciting techniques encourage respondents to keep talking without leading their responses

7. Eliciting techniques

ELICITING/ EXPLORING TECHNIQUES

Eliciting techniques are especially important at the beginning of a topic discussion, when you want responses to be as respondent led as possible

- » **Open questions**
- » **Non-semantic encouragement** (*mmh, mmh...*)
- » **Reflecting**
 - Emotions: *So that made you feel ...*
 - Actions: *It sounds like [this happened]...*
- » **Paraphrasing/ summarising**
 - More of a micro focus for eliciting
- » **Semantic encouragers**
 - *Tell me more about that...*
 - *... and that's because...*
- » **WHY – WHY – WHY – WHY (laddering)**
- » **Body Language**
 - Sitting squarely
 - Open posture
 - Leaning in
 - Eye contact
 - Relaxed demeanor
 - *A smile can go a long way!*

Clarifying and interrogating ensures you glean the right info and enough detail

8. Clarifying and Interrogating Techniques

CLARIFYING & INTERROGATING TECHNIQUES

Begin to clarify only after you've had a chance to glean an initial understanding and feel it's appropriate to dig deeper

Pay close attention to faces, eye contact, tone of voice and other non-verbal cues

» Probing

- I'd now like to talk about
- Have you encountered/ considered/ experienced

» Laddering (why, why...)

» Paraphrasing/ summarising

- More of a macro focus for summarising

» Closed questions

- [Do a summary] – *have I understood this correctly?*

» Tentative challenge of contradictions

- *You have said [this thing] that is different to [that other thing you said], can you tell more about that*

... and ask yourself whether they mean what they're saying or ...

- *Are they saying what they think I want to hear*
- *Are they saying how they wish things were?*

It's OK to talk about potentially contradicting non-verbal cues, but do it carefully, sensitivity and respectfully

Focussing can be difficult to master, but is essential to getting the most out of the discussion

9. Focussing Techniques

FOCUSSING & STEERING TECHNIQUES

But be careful you only steer topics, not responses...

» You can be explicit

- *I'd now like to talk about...*
- *Thanks, but we've already talked about [this other topic]. Right now I'm more interested in talking about...*

» Ask the same question different ways

- ... and don't be afraid to do this over and over

» Summarise the topic you want to speak more about

» Be explicit with a summary...

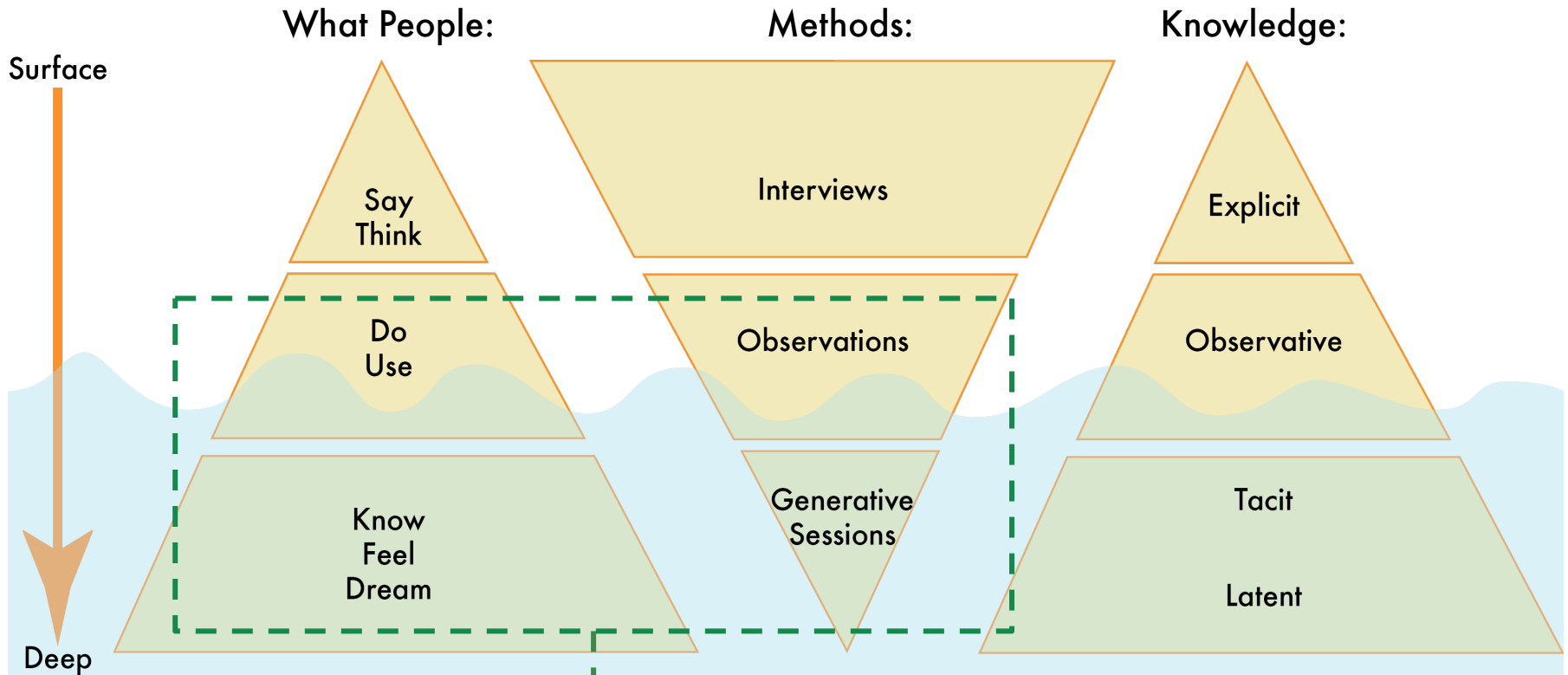
- *That seems to be a recurring thing for many people. Since many of you have talked about it I feel I've now got enough on [this topic]. However, you also said [this other thing] that was interesting. Tell me more about that.*

» Call respondents out on going off-topic

- *So it seems we've wondered a bit of topic. Lets get back to [what we're suppose to be talking about]*
- (but do it with humour)

Moderation requires us to 'go deep'

10. Generative Techniques

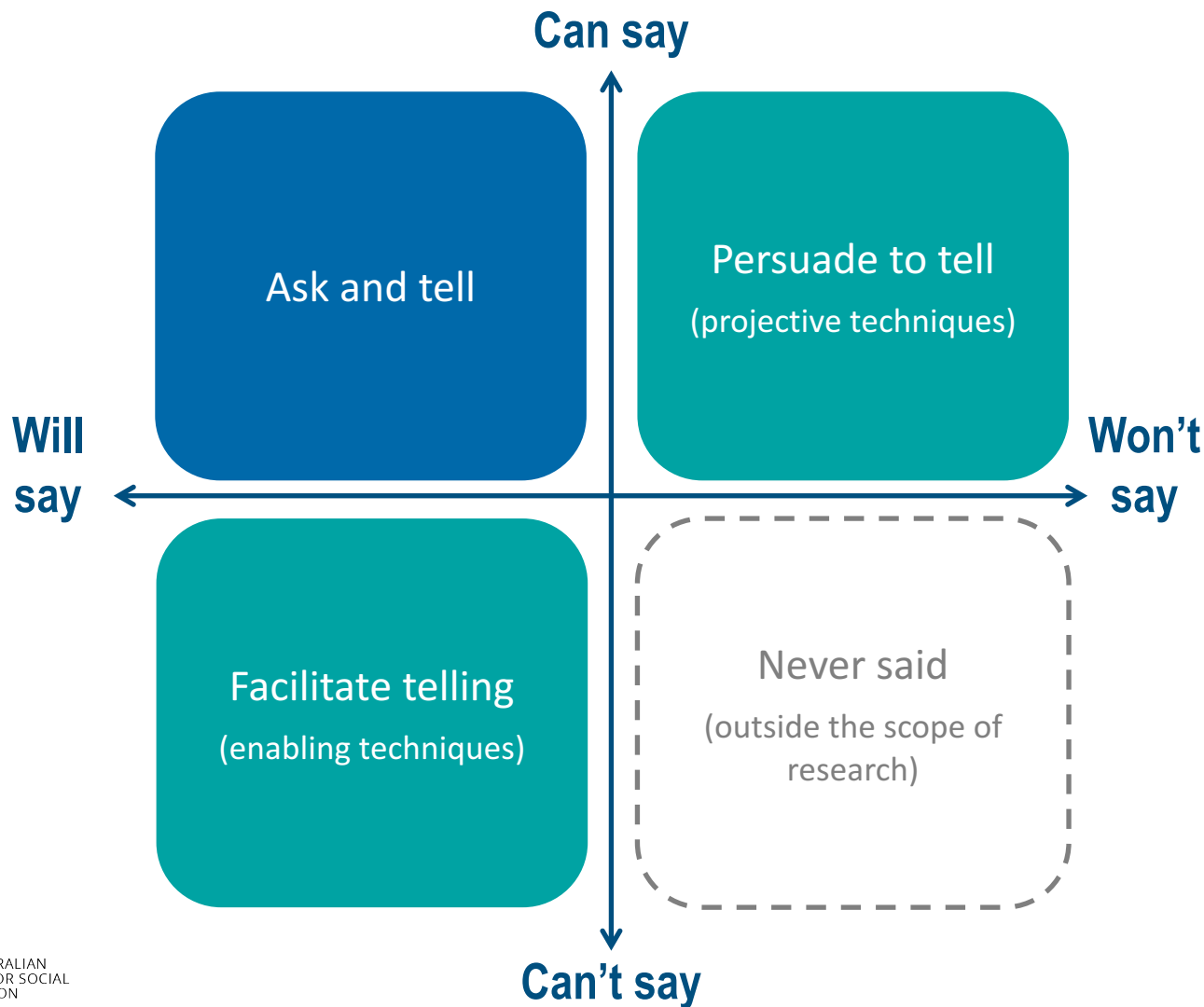


Source: Liz Sanders and Pieter Jan Stappers, Convivial Toolbox: Generative Research at the Front End of Design, BIS Publishers, 2012

**We want to be
working in this space**

It's also helpful to think about what respondents can vs. can't say and what they will vs. won't say

10. Generative Techniques *cont.*



Although each technique has its own process, some aspects are common to all

10 .Generative Techniques *cont.*

Some tips to help get the most out of your exercises...

Prepare participants

- » Let them know what's coming – don't throw it on them
- » Clearly explain the task
- » Reassure them – make it safe
- » Be clear that they don't have to do it if they don't want to

Prepare yourself

- » Allow enough time in your DG
- » Make sure you have all the necessary materials
- » Rehearse what you will say & how
- » If necessary, prepare to demonstrate it (without biasing/ directing responses)
- » Feel & act comfortable – if you are nervous, participants will pick up on it – make sure you believe in the task
- » Ensure your own mood/energy matches the task ahead

Some aspects are common to all projective techniques *cont.*

10. Generative Techniques *cont.*

Some *more* tips to help get the most out of your projectives...

Prepare timing & atmosphere

- » Don't introduce a technique too early – think about the group process e.g.:
 - » Word association & mapping work well at the start of a group
 - » Other activities require participants to have bonded, be relaxed & trusting – i.e., have entered the performing stage

ALWAYS get participants to interpret what they have done

- » The point of the technique is not the thing that is created, but the deeper and richer discussion that can be generated

Vary the techniques you use

- » This ensures participants can express themselves in a variety of ways, and means you can access the topic at hand from a variety of different angles and perspectives

Thanks!

...any questions?