

MODERATOR GUIDE – Cohort C/D

GROUP DISCUSSION ON IT WORKFORCE

SETUP NOTES:

- Get food and refreshments ready, organized and tidy at the room.
- Place a name tent in front of each seat, along with two informed consent forms and a starter survey.
- Voice recorder is in the middle, video camera is loaded with a blank tape and note taker is in charge of placing it in record mode as soon as the moderator begins. If boundary microphone is available for the video, place it on the table in the middle of the participants.
- Researcher(s) welcome participants and invite them to take a seat and help themselves with the food and drinks.
- Participants are invited to seat in their spaces according to their names.
- Once everybody is situated in their places, formally start the session.

Welcome and overview of session

First of all, **thank you very** much for participating in this group discussion. My name is () and I will be facilitating the group. **These are** my research assistants, who will be observing and taking notes of this group discussion but not participating. We are working on a **project funded by the National Science Foundation under the direction of Dr. Jeffrey Stanton** who is a professor at the School of Information Studies-Syracuse University. **The goal of this project is contribute** to a better understanding of the profession and ultimately, improve job satisfaction in the IT field. Our discussion will pertain to your career expectations about **Information Technology (IT) jobs**.

Administrative Details

Today's focus group will last about **an hour**. You have been selected for this focus group because you are currently students in courses relevant to the IT field and you are our best source of information regarding this topic. Remember that there are no wrong answers, so just say what is on your mind and keep the discussion as **NATURAL** as possible. I want everyone to have the opportunity to talk, so please feel free to mention whatever is on your mind.

Information from this group will be combined with the information collected from other groups. Our research team will then use all the information to develop reports of our findings. You will not be identifiable in these reports unless you specifically wish to be.

We need to do two things before getting started: First, please **complete the informed consent** form to indicate your willingness to participate in this discussion. Sign one copy and hand it to me and keep the other one for your records. Second, please take a moment to **complete the brief starter survey** that you see in front of you. I'll give you a couple of minutes for this and we will start as soon as you are ready.

OK, let's begin!

Please **introduce yourself, say what your current major is, and what year you plan to graduate.**

[Moderator indicates which person should go first.]

Perceived changes due to academic and work experience

1. To start the discussion, let's compare notes from our starter surveys to see **what there is** from **your work experience that makes you feel you made the right or wrong choice** about your major? What did you write down for items J and K on the starter survey?
2. Is this the type of job that you would like to have **when you graduate**? Why or Why not?
3. How have **your feelings about your chosen career changed over time**? (Prompt if needed: Do you feel more committed than before to working in an IT field or less? Why? What has happened that made you want to change your career plans? Prompt to compare academic experiences of IT versus initial professional experiences.)

The IT work environment

4. What kind of work did you have in the IT field? Did you work with people like yourself?
5. How about the social environment at your work place. How would you describe your co-workers? How would you describe your supervisor? (Prompt: Tell me about the social and professional interaction in the work place? Did you get along better with IT professionals or with others?)
6. Do you think that your work environment was or is a typical IT environment? If yes or no why?
7. How would your IT work environment be discouraging to women or minority employees? Or would it be encouraging? How?

Stereotypes

8. If I asked you to **describe the "IT profession"** how would you describe it in a few words?
9. What are some **stereotypes** that you have heard about IT people? How accurate do you think these stereotypes are? Do you feel like you are a person who breaks the mold or fits the mold?

10. What do you think is the **common idea that most people have about the communication skills** of IT people? Where do you hear these kinds of opinions coming from? Now, Do you personally think that IT people communicate well?
11. What would you think if I said that IT people have their own “occupational culture?” [If more clarification is needed, moderator can mention things such as IT people having their own jargon, unusual job demands, feelings about other groups, such as users] How would you describe IT occupational culture?
12. We know that to start working in their profession, lawyers have to pass the bar exam and teachers have to get a state certification. Is there something **similar for IT professionals**? If yes, what is it? If no, do you think there should be?
13. Do you think there are specific reasons why **women and minorities** would avoid choosing IT related majors or careers in the IT field? What kinds of academic or work experiences do you think may drive people away from careers in IT?

The academic program

14. Did you ever talk about workplace issues such as stereotypes or prejudice in one of your IT classes? Who brought up the topic? Was it a productive discussion?
15. Is there something you wish you had formally talked about in class before getting into the job?

Do you have any questions that I can answer? Thank you very much for your participation

**APPENDIX A
INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY GROUP DISCUSSION
STARTER SURVEY**

Please complete the brief survey below. This information will be the basis of our initial discussion.

A. Today's date:
B. Your current major (write undecided if you don't know):
C. Graduation year:
D. What degree will/do you have (examples: Associates degree, Bachelors Degree, Masters Degree):
E. Name of your university:
F. What work experiences have you had that make you feel like you made the <i>right choice</i> about your major? (group projects, internships, co-ops, summer jobs, first job after graduation etc.)
G. What work experiences have you had that make you feel like you would like to change your career choice in the future?
H. What did you mostly like about the IT environment in your work experience?
I. What did you mostly dislike about the IT environment in your work experience?
J. If I ask you to mention someone who played an important role in your career choice [mentor/motivator]. Would you name someone in your case? [no names are required]