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## RETHINK YOUR MARKET RESEARCH

**"Kill all focus groups!"** was the dramatic cry of Jeff Goodby, founder of respected US-ad agency Goodby, Silverstein & Partners, writes Daniel Plettenberg, managing director of EVO Marktforschung, Hamburg.

This claim is a familiar one – that the consumers are too clever. Of course, consumers are not as naive as they were in the '50s. They have certainly heard about market research, and some will have attended focus groups before.

In the good old days customers had to be educated. Today advertising has become something between entertainment, music video and lifestyle presentation – often, enough people speak about the latest ad on the telly like they speak about the latest video of Madonna or the new computer game. Today, the image transported by the spot is much more interesting.

We cannot turn back the clock: the consumers are much cleverer today and much harder to impress.

What does this mean for qualitative market research?

First of all stop whining about



Daniel Plettenberg

"too clever" respondents; the loss of naivety is a reality we have to acknowledge. That means MR has to change to keep up

Trust yourself. The exclamation "Kill all focus groups!" shows that Mr Goodby may not have understood the idea of qualitative MR (or maybe seen to many bad groups). On most occasions, the truth is not what the respondents said, but how they said it, or what

they didn't say, or at what point during the discussion an insight came. The task when analysing the groups is to go beyond what the respondents said.

Find new ways of research. For example, expert depth interviews can bring richer, quicker insights than 10 focus groups.

Why not let a fashion designer, a car salesman, a painter and a designer debate about new designs for a car interior design.

While the consumer is still looking for words to describe what he might like or not like, the experts are already debating about the deeper meaning of the new steering wheel.

Find new ways of analysis. Who knows everything about the new product? Of course – the client! So his involvement in the analysis process can be a big plus for the outcome of research. The client has the insight into the brand.



Got an opinion you'd like to share? Don't keep it to yourself, email the *AM* editor at [stephen.briers@emap.com](mailto:stephen.briers@emap.com)