

**Yorkshire Water**

**Channel Strategy Research**

**Online focus group discussion guide (2 hours)**

**Qualitative research objectives:**

**To gain a clear understanding of different customer needs and wants from the various channels available to them and understand how and what YW can learn from other companies in respect of channel availability and use.**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  **(1) Introduction** | **10 mins** |
| **Brief introduction** | * I work for a company called DJS Research; we are an independent market research company and today we are working on behalf of Yorkshire Water. They are interested in your views on the best and most efficient ways for you to be able to get information and service from Yorkshire Water in different scenarios.
* MRS code of conduct
* Do feel free to ask us any questions at any point if you are unsure/unclear about anything. There are no right or wrong answers, we’re just interested in your views and opinions

*Moderator to reinforce to respondents that everyone’s feedback will be summarised into a report however reassure respondents that their information will be reported on anonymously. No one will be identified in the final report.** Brief explanation about video recording/observers
* Intros around the group: name, who they live with, whether they work and what they do, approx. water bill and whether they consider it to be high/low and if they are on a water meter.?
 |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **(2) Perceptions of YW** | **10 mins** |
| **Understand opinions of Yorkshire Water** | *First of all, I’d like us to think about Yorkshire Water…*What words spring to mind when I mention Yorkshire Water? How would you describe them?* Who can tell me what Yorkshire Water does? What services do they provide?
* How satisfied are you with the service you receive from YW? **GO AROUND THE GROUP AND GET SCORES OUT OF 10 FOR SATISFACTION**
	+ What is it that makes you satisfied/dissatisfied with YW?
* On a day-to-day basis, what do you want from Yorkshire Water? And, what do you need from them? Do they deliver on these wants and needs? What’s missing? What could prompt you to give a higher score for satisfaction?
 |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **(3) Channel expectations (high level)** | **20 mins** |
| **To scope out channel expectations**  | *Thanks for that, we’ll come back to Yorkshire Water shortly. For now, I’d like us to think generally about the communication channels or methods we use when we need to use a company’s services, or when we need to contact them. By channels we mean anything from a search on Google to speaking to someone directly, and everything in between…****MODERATOR NOTE: In this section we want to understand how customers want to be able to interact and communicate with companies at a general level. What are the must haves, what makes their lives easier (or more difficult), what is most important and what is least important or potentially off-putting.****I’m now going to read out* *a number of different scenarios in which you might need or want to contact a company. For each scenario, I’d like you to jot down how you would prefer to communicate with / contact a company in that scenario.** Paying a bill
* Getting an insurance quote
* Booking a holiday
* Reporting a power cut
* Reporting that your bins haven’t been collected
* Telling a company that you’ve moved to a new address
* Booking a table at a bar or restaurant

MODERATOR: Once participants have noted down their channel preferences ask them to talk about the options they chose and why.*There are a number of different ways in which customers can contact companies and organisations (and* *a number of ways in which they can contact customers). Thinking about what we’ve just discussed…** Can anyone tell me the names of any companies that offer a particularly good range of methods for customers to contact and interact with them?
	+ Are there any companies you enjoy interacting with digitally? Why is that?
* And are there any that are particularly poor?
	+ Are there any companies who don’t offer a good level of digital service? What are the issues you’ve encountered?
* What is it that makes or breaks an initial contact with a company?
	+ What makes or breaks follow up contact with a company?

*We’ve covered a lot there. Before we move on, I’d like us to continue to think generally about the methods we use when we need to use a company’s services, or when we need to contact them:* * What are the most important things for companies to offer in relation to how you can deal with them? (Range of channels? Speed? Simplicity? Efficiency? Empathy?). Why is that most important to you?
* And what might annoy you, or put you off using a company’s services? (Scripting?, Automated routing?, Complexity?)
 |
|  |  |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **(4) Exploring channel preferences** | **15 mins** |
| *Now, thinking about Yorkshire Water again…**FOR BILL PAYER AND FUTURE BILL PAYER GROUPS** Can anyone tell me what sorts of things customers might contact them about? How can customers contact them? Preferred channels, and why? How satisfied are they with each channel?
* And what might YW contact its customers about? How does YW contact its customers? Preferred channels and why?

**MODERATOR: Keep notes and list for later****FOR BILL PAYER GROUPS:** *Before the group this evening, you were each given a scenario in which you might need to contact Yorkshire Water and were tasked with exploring how you might go about doing this…***FOR CONTACTOR GROUP:** *Each of you have contacted Yorkshire Water in the past 12 months, thinking back to that contact – could you briefly tell me what it was about? Still thinking about this contact, and when you realised you needed to contact Yorkshire Water…***FOR FUTURE BILL PAYER GROUP:** *I’d now like you to imagine that you are moving house and you will be responsible for paying the water bill in your new property. In that scenario, what would you do? (MODERATOR: Re-frame questions below for FBPs, e.g. Could you please tell me what you’d expect to do in this scenario?)** Could you please briefly talk me through the process you went through? MODERATOR: go around the group and prompt and probe on channel choice and preference and why. Also probe on how easy or difficult it was to find the information they wanted (was it clear and accessible)? Did anyone use AI (e.g., Alexa, Siri etc.) – why / why not? Any benefits or disadvantages? Would they discuss with family members, friends or neighbours to seek advice first?
 |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **(5) Contact scenarios** | **35 mins** |
| *Thank you for all of your responses so far. I’d now like to talk about the various contact methods – both incoming from customers, and outgoing from Yorkshire Water – that they manage. I’m now going to show you details of the methods that Yorkshire Water have open for customers*MODERATOR: Show slide 1: YW channels, and give participants a minute to look through* What do you think of the contact channels Yorkshire Water operate? Any surprises? Anything missing? Anything that shouldn’t be there?
* Are these methods sufficient? How confident are you that you would be able to contact Yorkshire Water via a method that suits you and your needs?
* Generally speaking, would you prefer to be able to contact a company in the way that you ideally want (convenience), or in a way that gets things done most quickly (speed)
	+ And, thinking about when you contact a company and it is not an issue that is or can be resolved in a single contact, would you prefer to communicate using the same channel throughout, or would you be happy for communication (both ways) to be across a number of different channels? Why do you say that? Are there any instances where multiple channels would be appropriate? Any instances where it would only be appropriate to communicate via a single channel?

***MODERATOR:*** *FOR THIS SECTION, MOVE PARTICIPANTS INTO TWO BREAKOUT ROOMS, AND GIVE THEM ONE SCENARIO EACH FROM THE BELOW (ONE BILLING / METER AND ONE ISSUE (INTERRUPTION, BLOCKAGE, OBSTRUCTION). POST SCENARIOS IN CHAT IN THE BREAKOUT ROOMS FOR REFEERENCE:** ***High bill****: You have received an unexpectedly high bill (for example, your bill is usually around £360 for the year – or £30 per month – but you are notified that it is going up to around £600 per year – or £50 per month)*
* ***Struggling to pay:*** *You have had a change of circumstance, and your other bills and outgoings are exceeding the amount of money you have coming in, and you would like some information and advice about how you might be able to reduce your bill*
* ***Supply interruption:*** *You wake up one morning and turn the tap on to fill the kettle, and you realise that you have no running water*
* ***Sewer blockage:*** *You return home to find that the toilet and drains are backing up due to a blockage*
* ***Requesting a meter:*** *Your circumstances have changed, and you decide that a having a water meter would better suit your needs and usage habits*
* ***Reporting an obstruction:*** *You are out and about in your local area, and you see that there is a burst or leaking pipe that has caused flooding on the road*

*Now, I would like us to split into two groups, and I’m going to ask you to work through a potential scenario that customers might contact Yorkshire Water about. I want you to think about* ***where you would look, and******how (and why) you would want to be able to contact Yorkshire Water (if at all).*** *Then,* ***I’d like you to think about how you would like Yorkshire Water to contact and communicate with you (if at all), and why****.***MODERATOR:** Ask someone from each group to take notes as they go so they can present back to the group after. **Give groups 10-12 minutes to discuss their two scenarios and jump into each group to discuss with them throughout**ASK GROUPS TO PRESENT BACK EXPLAINING WHERE AND WHY THEY WOULD LOOK IN THE PLACES THEY IDENTIFY, AND WHAT THEY WOULD WANT AND NEED FROM YW (IF ANYTHING) IN THAT SCENARIO.**MODERATOR:** As groups are presenting back, keep a list of common channels, wants and needs, and any that are unique to the scenario in question (with a focus on the difference between a query and an issue).*Thank you for your feedback! We have identified a number of channels, wants and needs that we would expect from Yorkshire Water in those different scenarios. Thinking about when we want to be able to find information from or interact with Yorkshire Water, what are:** The key channels for interacting with YW? (The channels that are non-negotiable)
	+ Why?
* The non-key channels for interacting with YW? (Any channels that are scenario specific and aren’t a must have)
	+ Why?
* The key channels for YW to interact with you?
	+ Why? If different to how they contact YW, why is this?

Still thinking about the key channels for interacting with YW…* What are the differences between an urgent and non-urgent contact? How do your expectations differ?
	+ What would you consider as an urgent contact? And what would you consider non-urgent? (MODERATOR, KEEP A NOTE OF URGENT Vs. NON-URGENT AND IF NECESSARY, PROMPT ON: bill shock/high bill, spotting a leak in the street, finding a leak on your property, sewer blockage on your property, sewer blockage away from your property etc)
	+ Thinking about the urgent issues we’ve identified, are there any differences in what you’d expect from YW and when? What / why?
	+ And what about the non-urgent contacts? Are there any differences in what you’d expect from YW and when? What / why?
* When would you expect to be able to communicate with YW through these channels? (Should they always be available, or are there any times when it’s not essential?)
* Explore essential vs. non-essential contact – what scenarios classify as essential and what channel is needed in this scenario? What times of the day/week should this be available?
	+ For any non-essential times: what channels, if any, would you consider a suitable alternative if you weren’t able to contact them through your preferred channel (e.g., late at night, on a bank holiday etc.) – are there any differences between billing/meter contacts and issues around blockages, supply interruptions etc? Why?
* When, and how, would you expect YW to communicate with you? Does it always have to be through the same channel as the one in which you contacted them? Why / why not?
	+ How would you expect this process to work? Would you expect YW to decide how to contact / communicate with you, or would you expect to be able to decide? Any benefits or disadvantages to either approach? are there any differences between billing/meter contacts and issues around blockages, supply interruptions etc? Why?
 |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **(6) Yorkshire Water’s current position** | **20 mins** |
| * Earlier we discussed any companies that provide a particularly good range of contact methods for customers. Thinking about those companies (MODERATOR: refer to list), how does Yorkshire Water compare in terms of the number / volume / variety of contact methods available?
	+ Do YW offer more or less? What are the benefits of what those good companies do? What do they do differently? Are YW better or worse? What could YW learn from them?
	+ Where do you think YW should focus their attentions? Should they focus on breadth (why)? Or should they focus on a smaller number of channels and methods (why)?
* Yorkshire Water are required to provide communication channels that suit everyone’s needs, regardless of their circumstances. They are slightly different to other companies who can just provide services to a particular target audience (e.g., Amazon or First Direct)
	+ - Are there any advantages for companies like Yorkshire Water who must cover everyone’s needs? What / why? And are there any disadvantages?
		- [IF NOT ALREADY COVERED FROM DISCUSSION POINT ABOBE]: Are there any advantages for companies who provide services to a certain target audience? What? Why? And any disadvantages?
* Now, thinking back to the scenarios we asked you to work through earlier in relation to contacting Yorkshire Water about a specific problem, you identified a number of different channels and routes that you would expect to use in that scenario…
	+ Are there any scenarios in which the contact method is less important? What / why?
	+ Thinking back to the scenarios you worked through, what other methods – if any – would you consider acceptable if your preferred channel wasn’t available? How satisfied would you be with this? What concerns, if any, would you have? (IF NECESSARY, PROBE ON: accessibility concerns – especially for customers in vulnerable circumstances):
		- How would you feel if, for example, you decided to call Yorkshire Water about your bill and you were informed that there would be up to a 45-minute wait on the phone, and that you might be able to get served more quickly if you used Web Chat instead? Pros and cons? Would it work for you? Any it might not work for?
		- What if the contact was about a supply interruption? Would that be different, how and why?

*Thinking back to the key channels we discussed earlier (e.g., phone, online, website etc. (MODERATOR PICK THE TOP 3 CHANNELS DISCUSSED) …** When would you expect to receive a response from Yorkshire Water in relation to…
	+ An urgent contact
	+ A non-urgent contact
* How do you think YW compare to other similar organisations (e.g., your gas and electric provider) on this? Where should they be looking to improve? (MODERATOR NOTE: probe on whether there is a difference in YW compared to others in relation to inbound contacts, or outgoing comms / info). What are the differences? Where could YW improve?
* Where, if anywhere, do you think YW could adapt their services whilst still maintaining a service that is acceptable to customers? E.g.,
	+ Going paperless for bills and letters (any advantages or disadvantages?)
	+ Removing the option of speaking to someone for payments (any advantages or disadvantages?)
 |

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **(7) Thank & close** | **5 mins** |
| *•* Are there any other comments that you would like to add? Is there anything further that you would like YW to know about what we have been talking about today?• And finally, do you think water companies should consult their customers on topics such as the one we have been discussing today? Why/why not? How should they do it? |

**Thank & Close**