

February is for Focus Groups

Visual Components for Focus Groups

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What jurors see can be just as powerful as what they hear.

Visual components play a critical role in modern focus groups, particularly when testing how jurors process and respond to case information. Research shows that people rely on mental shortcuts, think relatively rather than absolutely, and are influenced by the tendency to give greater weight to first impressions. Because of this, how information is presented visually can significantly shape perception. A single image, timeline, or graphic can anchor a juror's thinking before deliberations even begin.

In a focus group setting, attorneys can present case materials in a shortened mock trial format and gather feedback in real time. This allows them to evaluate not only the strength of the evidence, but the strength of the presentation itself.

Focus groups allow attorneys to test and refine visual strategy in several key ways:



Demonstrative Exhibits – Charts, timelines, medical illustrations, safety regulations, and accident reconstructions can simplify complex facts and make abstract concepts concrete.



Sequencing of Evidence – Determining whether certain visuals are more impactful in opening statements or more persuasive when revealed later in the case.



Streamlining the Case – Identifying which visuals clarify the narrative, and which ones distract from it.



Participant Note-Taking and Surveys – Capturing individual reactions to specific visuals as information unfolds.



Testing Emotional Engagement – Observing how images, graphics, or video clips influence both cognitive and emotional responses.

Emerging trends are also reshaping how visual components are tested. Online mock trials conducted through video conferencing platforms allow attorneys to present digital exhibits in a cost-efficient format. Emotion-driven focus groups are placing greater emphasis on how jurors feel when certain visuals are introduced—not just what they say afterward.

At the end of the day, *visuals are not decoration - they are*

direction. They guide jurors through the story, frame the issues, and influence how facts are remembered.

As this series has explored, focus groups are not just about testing a case. They are about refining strategy, anticipating bias, strengthening narrative flow, and preparing for the realities of trial. When used thoughtfully, they provide clarity before stepping into the courtroom—where first impressions matter, and second chances are rare.