

**U.S. Mint Focus Group Research  
Discussion Guide  
Customers and Non-Customers**

**I. INTRODUCTION (5 minutes)**

**According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 1525-0012-\_\_.**

- **Ground Rules:** Audio-taping, confidentiality, candor, cell phones, pagers, etc.
- **Background & Objectives:** The purpose of today's discussion is three-fold; namely to: 1) learn about your current coin collecting interests, behaviors and purchases; 2) gather your feedback regarding current U.S. Mint products; and 3) ascertain your reactions to some new product and marketing ideas.
- **Introductions:** First name, types of coins that are especially liked, length of time collecting and/or buying U.S. coins.

**II. CURRENT COIN COLLECTING/BUYING PRACTICES (10 minutes)**

- **(Non-Customers) What particular types of coins have special interest or appeal to you and what makes these coins so attractive to you? Probe...**
  - Beauty or artistry?
  - The history associated with them?
  - Other factors, if any, that play a role in your attitudes and behaviors?
- **(Non-Customers) What coin purchases, if any, have you made? For example, have you bought any U.S. coins from dealers, Internet auctions, (etc.)?**
  - **If some:** Why have you not purchased any coins from the U.S. Mint?
    - To what extent is lack of awareness a factor?
    - What about limited knowledge/dissatisfaction with current products?
    - How about the perceived value/prices of the products?

- What do these other sources provide that the U.S. Mint does not?

- **If none:** Why have you never purchased any coins from any sources?
  - To what extent is lack of awareness a factor?
  - What about limited knowledge/dissatisfaction with current products?
  - How about the perceived value/prices of the products?
- **Probe** if any have purchased any special coins (similar to those included in the product concepts to be discussed later)
  
- **(Non-Customers) Have you ever considered purchasing coins to give as gifts? Probe...**
  - **If so:** For whom? What occasions?
  - **If not:** Why not?
  - What circumstances would prompt you to make such a purchase?
  - What types of items, if any, would propel you to make a purchase?
  
- **(Customers) What types of coins and coin-related products have you bought from the U.S. Mint? Probe...**
  
- **(Customers) Thinking specifically about the coins that you buy from the U.S. Mint, what specific products and how much of each do you typically purchase directly from the U.S. Mint in a year? Probe...**
  - Annual coin sets (e.g., quarters, uncirculated, proofs, silver proofs, etc.)
  - Commemorative coins
  - Bags/rolls
  - American Eagle Proof or Uncirculated coins (e.g., silver, gold, and platinum)
  - Gold Buffalo
  - Medals
  - Other items (e.g., specialty products)
  
- **(Customers) What types of coins do you expect to purchase from the U.S. Mint in the next year? Probe...**
  - Annual coin sets (e.g., Quarters, Presidents, Full Annual Sets in Uncirculated, Proof, Silver Proof, etc.)
  - Commemorative coins
  - Bags/rolls
  - American Eagle Proof or Uncirculated coins (e.g., silver, gold, and platinum)
  - Gold Buffalo
  - Presidential \$1 coins
  - Medals

- Other items (e.g., specialty products)

- ***(Customers) What U.S. coins, if any, do you buy from other sources such as dealers, Internet auctions, etc.? Probe...***
  - Which specific coins/sets?
  - Precious metals (e.g., Investment [bullion] coins)?
  - For items that could be obtained directly from the Mint: Why use these other sources and not the U.S. Mint?

### **III. ASSESSMENT OF CURRENT COIN PRODUCTS AND NEW PRODUCT IDEAS (20-30 minutes)**

*[Non-customers: Distribute catalog first. Then, (all) Distribute Annual Proof Sets (including Presidential 4-Coin Set), Uncirculated Sets, Silver Eagle Proof, Uncirculated and Bullion, Gold Eagle Proof (1/2 and 1/10 oz.), Platinum Eagle ¼ oz., American Buffalo.]*

- ***(Customers/Non-customers) Overall, what are your impressions of the coin products that the U.S. Mint produces? Probe...***
  - Which ones are best? Worst?
  - What is your assessment of their overall quality?
  - How about their artistry, appearance, etc.?
  - What about their packaging?

*[Distribute descriptions/prototypes of new product ideas individually, and ask the following series about each.]*

- ***(Customers/Non-customers) How do you feel about this product?***
  - What aspects do you especially like? Dislike?
  - What changes, if any, would you suggest?
  - Probe... What, if anything, needs to be improved?
  - What concerns, if any, would you have about this product?
  - Would you be interested in buying this product? What quantity?
- ***(Customers/Non-customers) Explore reasons for disinterest; Probe...***
  - Too expensive
  - Lack of interest in this type of coin/product in general
  - Don't like the design/themes
  - Prefer to purchase other products and budget is limited

- Don't want to feel compelled to purchase the entire series
- ***(Customers/Non-customers) What do you think the U.S. Mint could do to make purchasing these products more compelling (Probe: packaging, presentation, alternate designs, combination sets with other coins)?***
- ***(Customers/Non-customers) Probe any additional issues/reactions***

#### **IV. PRODUCT MINTAGE LIMITS (CUSTOMERS ONLY) (20 minutes)**

- ***(Customers) How do you determine whether, and what quantity, of precious metal (i.e., American Eagle Gold, American Buffalo, Commemorative Silver/Gold) coins you will purchase? Probe...***
  - What impacts the decision of *whether* to buy?
  - How does this vary by type/size of coin
  - What impact do published mintage limits have on this decision, either explicitly or implicitly? *(Note: Ground this in specific products they purchased in the past.)*

*[Explain that each year the U.S. Mint produces a set quantity of Gold Proof coins. Distribute mintage figures for past few years for AE Gold coins. Explain that mintage targets are set in advance of production and can, in some cases, be lower or higher than ultimate demand for the product – in particular, AE Gold Proof 1 oz. coins have sold out relatively quickly in recent years. Further explain that the U.S. Mint could continue its current practice of setting precise mintage quantities in advance, or could alternately “mint to demand” for lower volume products such as gold coins or Commemorative coins.]*

- ***(Customers) How would you feel about the U.S. Mint adopting this “mint to demand” approach? Probe...***
  - Concerns and unintended consequences
  - Preferences for specifics on how it would be implemented
    - Timing of decision points
    - Communications/announcements
    - Restrictions
    - Interrelationship with placing limits on purchasing
- ***(Customers) What impact would this have on your purchasing patterns? (Probe: differences by product type, especially AE Gold 1 oz. and Bald Eagle Commemorative variations)***

- Amounts
- Timing

- ***(Customers) What would be your preference between these two approaches (pre-set limits versus mint to demand)? Probe...***
  - To what extent do your preferences differ based on the types/size of coinage?
  - How will one approach versus the other impact your purchase dynamics and quantities?

*[Distribute sheet showing mintage figures for past few Commemorative coins.]*

- ***(Customers) If limits are set for the upcoming Bald Eagle Commemorative coin, what limits would seem appropriate to you?***
  - Gold
  - Silver
  - Clad

## **V. COLLECTORS' CLUB (30 minutes)**

*[Distribute description of Collectors' Club concept.]*

- ***(Customers/Non-customers) How do you feel about this new initiative?***
  - What aspects do you especially like? Dislike?
  - What changes, if any, would you suggest?
  - Are there any aspects that you perceive would be undesirable or "unfair" (and how would you suggest changing these)?
- ***(Customers/Non-customers) Based on the description provided (and suggested modifications), what are the key benefits that this would provide to you? Probe differences among...***
  - Experienced collectors
  - New collectors
  - Non-customers
  - Youths

*[Distribute list of potential program elements/features and ask participants to review/rank importance.]*

- ***(Customers/Non-customers) Overall, based on the descriptions provided, what impact would this have on your likelihood to purchase U.S. Mint products?***
  - Types of products?
  - Quantities and total spending?
  - Ordering timing or practices?
  - ***Probe:*** degree to which answers are contingent on the presence of specific program elements
- ***(Customers/Non-customers) What other impacts would this have on your relationship with the U.S. Mint?***
  - Overall level of engagement?
  - How/where you get information and/or communications?
  - Other

*[Show potential names for Collectors' Club initiative.]*

- ***(Customers/Non-customers) Are there any alternate names you would suggest?***
- ***(Customers/Non-customers) How do you feel about these candidate names for the program?***
  - Likes/dislikes
  - ***Probe:*** implications, connotations, and potential sources of confusion
- ***(Customers/Non-customers) Which is most preferred?***

## **VI. SHIPPING CHARGES ON LOW-PRICED ITEMS (15 minutes)**

*[Explain that the U.S. Mint sells a number of low-priced items (e.g., \$15 or less) on which shipping charges of \$4.95 are currently levied.]*

- ***(Customers/Non-customers) To what extent are you interested in ordering these lower-priced items?***
- ***(Customers/Non-customers) How do the shipping charges affect your (past or future) purchasing intentions/behaviors?***

- Bundle with other items in a single order?
  - Cause you to not order at all?
  - No effect?
- ***(Customers/Non-customers) Suppose the U.S. Mint waived or reduced shipping charges on orders where total spending was \$15 or less. How would this impact your future purchasing intentions/behaviors for these types of items?***

*[Explore alternate ideas/pricing structures as identified by U.S. Mint.]*

## **VII. MISCELLANY & WRAP-UP (10 minutes)**

*[Complete rating sheets defined by U.S. Mint related to specific topics discussed.]*

- ***(Customers/Non-customers) Probe additional issues identified by U.S. Mint; thank and conclude***