

Interview Guide

Community Design Challenge Grants

In the past (say for job interview), you interviewed individuals to see how they would fit in your world. Now we want you to interview them to understand their world.

Purpose of the Interview

Interviews help support the use of the innovation framework in the classroom because they increase the **value** associated with classroom tasks. Involving students in activities that require user interviews helps students develop **empathy** for user's needs in the context of a content lesson. Value is created when the student is able to use the interviews to generate outcomes or solutions that are identified as successfully meeting the needs of the user. Interviews develop value in several ways:

To uncover latent needs. An interview can help identify gaps between the use, usability & meaning of an idea, object or experience for a user to reveal unmet needs.

To find surprises. Interviews can find differences in who the people are and what they have stated they want and what these people actually do, and what they say they actually need.

To gain empathy for user. Interviews can help the designer discover the emotions that guide a user's behaviors.

To identify the type of user. Interviews can help identify if a user is "extreme" or "mainstream". Extreme users are people who are pushing the system and may reveal unmet needs before the mainstream users do.

Create a Discussion Guide Before the Interview

A discussion guide will include the following elements:

1. Your focus question: A reminder that this is what our project is all about
2. Key topics and questions to address during the interview. What are the questions you absolutely need to ask? There should be only about 3-5. Everything else should flow from those questions, and from the interviewee's responses.

Setting up the Interview

With your team

1. Identify 8-10 individuals you would like to interview from that target audience.
2. Try to interview people with different perspectives in their own surroundings. Remember to include representatives from across the range of demographic attributes you're interested in.
3. Pair up team members and have them choose 2-3 individuals each to interview. Pairs should include an interviewer and a recorder (documents the interview through field notes, photos, video, observation). It is encouraged that at least one member of the pair, preferably the interviewer, not be familiar with the interviewee (e.g., a person from the transportation sector could interview a workforce agency customer). Note: If you are unable to team with someone, audio record the interview (with the interviewees' permission).
4. Document the interview with photos, video, field notes. In your packet, refer to 1) Design Research Methods, 2) Open-Ended Question Activity, 3) Empathy Tips, and 4) Fieldnote Template.

At the beginning of the Interview

1. Introduce yourself and your partner and what your roles will be during the interview (interviewer and taking notes)
5. Thank the interviewee for their time.
6. Reiterate why you are doing the interview and that you expect the interview to last about 15-30 min.
7. Ask if they had time to look at the consent form, if they have any questions. If not, ask them to sign it.
8. Explain the focus of the project and why you chose them to interview.
9. Explain how you will use the information. Ensure them that their name will remain confidential and that you will only be using the information they provide to help you better understand their experience.

The interview: Listening to their story

1. Begin by establishing a rapport with the interviewee and making them comfortable. You can do this with a "soft" question and then gradually move into your focus area. Examples:
"How long have you lived in [town/city/county/state]?"
"Tell me a little about yourself."
"You have a lovely home. How long have you lived here?"
2. Move into your focus area, with beginning and follow-up questions such as the following. The best information often comes from follow-up questions non on your list. Be sure to listen carefully and ask for more information and details for clarification and to better understand the customer experience. Don't settle for superficial answers.

3. Then let the direction of the conversation dictate further questions. Here are some sample follow-up questions: "Can you tell me more?" "I'd like to hear more about your thoughts on that." "I'm not sure I fully understand that; can you explain?" "Why is that?"
4. The recorder should take note of what you are experiencing as well as observing the users going through a process, activity, or event.
5. Thank the interviewee for their time. Talk about any follow-up (e.g., "I will provide you with that information you requested as soon as I get back to my office. "Would you like to us to keep you updated on our project?")

Tips for a Good Interview

1. There is only one function of the interview: to listen to the interviewee's story. The goal of the interview is NOT to provide information. However, it makes sense to follow up with any requested information after the interview is completed.
2. Good interviews aren't necessarily organized interviews. Don't be afraid to go off book and let the conversation flow naturally. The best interviews are conversations and not a series of question-and-answer exchanges. During the interview, you want to give the interview "space" to say what is on their mind.
3. Orient, but don't prime the interviewee for what you hope/expect to hear And don't try to establish rapport by talking about your experiences. This is about them, not about you.
Example of priming: "I know that sometimes taking the bus can be difficult. In fact, I remember the last time I took the bus. It was terrible . . . "
4. Ask short, factual questions then follow up with attitudinal questions. But try to NEVER ask questions that have only a "yes" or "no" answer.
"When do you shop? How often? Whom do you go with?" "Do you have a plan? Do you bring a list?"
5. Get specific examples. Move quickly past general statements by zeroing in on a specific example.
" Show me something you bought recently. Tell me how you bought it."
10. Walk backward, then forward. Interviewees will start with what they see as the action. It is the interviewer's job to uncover the pre-action and the reaction.
"When did you first decide you needed that?" " When you see that in your closet now, what do you think?"
11. Ask attitudinal questions last. Eventually you will ask users what they think and feel. Careful: If you ask this early, it may color all their responses.
"How did you feel after that shopping experience? What could have improved your experience?"
12. Don't try to fill the silence while the interviewee is thinking. Force yourself to wait. You'll often be glad you did, as that helps the interviewee's deeper thoughts to emerge and be expressed.
13. Interviewer bias is real. Linguistic and cultural barriers may provide further challenge. Try very hard to approach the interview as objectively as possible. Also, be careful not to use value-laden terms (e.g., "Tell me about the difficulties you experience in commuting.")

After the Interview

1. Debrief with your partner your general impressions from the interview. What was the interview thinking? Is this the same as what they were saying?
2. Ask questions such as “What did we learn?” “What surprised us?” “What confirmed our assumptions going in?” “What do we need to follow up on based on what we learned?”
3. Be sure to record your thoughts to share with your team.