

Contextual Interviews



Take Off

Market

User

Idea

Concept

Evaluation

Interview the user **in the relevant situation and surroundings**. The interview takes place as close as possible to the context, where the product/service will be used.

The interview takes place **while the user is using** the product/service.

Through the interview you try to understand why they do certain things and what their expectations are.

Information is collected as audio, video or in writing.

It is important, that the interviewer is familiar with the type of situation, where the product/service is used.

You get a good idea about how people actually use different things.

Step by Step

Define your target group. Fx defined by user profiles (see separate method card).

Select 5-8 people for interviews.

Plan time for interviews.

Understand your subject and the situation. Try it yourself if possible.

Expectations. Write down, what you will especially be looking for.

Documentation. Chose a method to document your experience. Fx notes, photo, video, audio.

Carry through interviews. Ask without influencing the users behaviour.

Analyze results. What do the users do? How? Why? etc.

Critical Error



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Look at the customer experience step by step, and identify the critical situations, where things can go wrong. Identify the critical errors. Fx it is very critical, that the payment check out works smooth in a webshop.

Break down the user situation in its individual incidents and activities.

Write down each incident and activity on a **yellow** Post It-note and organize them in order if possible.

Analyse things, that can go wrong.

Write down each individual thing, that can go wrong on a **red** Post It-note and place it under the activity, where the problem could occur.

Let the result inspire you to **make the product or service better, more secure, easier, more fun etc.**

Observe users in real life situations

Go to places, where the product/service is used and watch the users use it.

Observe how the user is using the product or how he reacts on the service. Notice the distinct phases and look for problems, doubt, frustrations, error etc.

And pay attention to possible improvements - even where the user doesn't experience any problems.

Document your observations

Photo and Video:

Observations of environment, actions and important details are registered with a camera.

Sketches:

Catch observations with quick hand drawings. Don't worry too much about details, but try to catch the situation, so you can remember it.

Notes:

Handwritten notes - or spoken notes on fx. your mobile phone. Pay attention to the situation, and take notes immediately after.

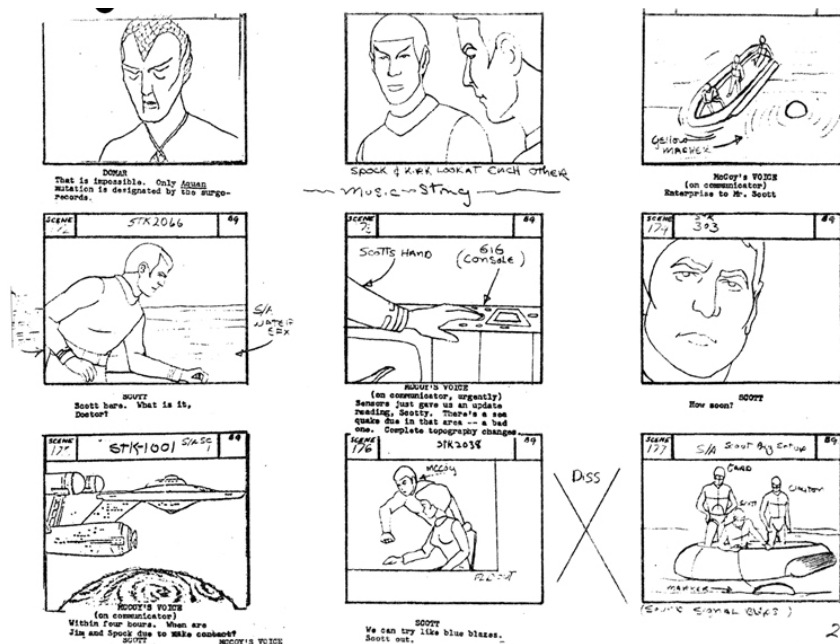
Storyboards



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Make little **cartoons** of **scenarios** where the target user is using your product or service, or where he/she is doing something, where you want to make it easier or better for the user. Focus on the critical actions and situations.

You might also use photos to illustrate the scenario. Make them yourself while observing the user in action or search the web.



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Act as users

Improvise as actors through different situations with people in different roles.

Prepare in advance which roles and situations you want to perform - but don't make scripts. Improvise.

Example:

The Danish national train service - DSB - invited actors to play different types of passengers with different problems and different personalities.

The usual train staff acted as themselves, and tried to handle the situations and the customers as they normally would.

Afterward they discussed ways to improve.

Role Play may be recorded on video and played afterwards for discussion.

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Create big or small 2- 3-dimensional models of products or service situations.

Just make it rough and quick with whatever materials you got.

**It is a lot easier to understand,
when you can see and touch.**

Make it in cardboard, LEGO, clay or whatever material you got at hand - or can get for almost nothing.

And remember....

...just make quick and dirty...

The first model doesn't have to look exactly like the end product. It is easier to get critical comments from people, if they can see, that it is just a rough model.

We tend to be more polite, if we are shown something, that people have put a lot of work into.

Mood boards



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Lifestyle analysis by making **collages** of pictures - or a series of video clips - that describe the users important moods and preferences.

It is the combination of pictures, that create an overall impression of the user.

A mood board should catch **feelings, values and moods**, that describe the user, but can be hard to describe exactly in words. And they also give a visual image of the user.

You might look for pictures in the users favourite magazines or search the web by using relevant search phrases.

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Make up a person that represents a group of users. A user profile should describe the specific user in very specific details. Fx.

Name Yes, give him or her a name. You will find, that he/she can not be given just any name.

Portrait Find a photo to portray the profile. It helps your imagination.

Demography Sex, age, family status, address, occupation, education, income etc.

Personal goals and values. What would the person like to achieve and what are his/her personal values - in general and concerning the specific product area. What is good and what is bad.

Consumption and buying habits If your product/service is for private use, it is especially relevant to consider which specific products and brands the profile buys - and where they are bought.

Needs What are the specific needs and problems in the area, where you are searching for solutions.

Skills How experienced and knowledgeable is the person concerning your product area. What are his habits, at where are the limits of his abilities.

Perspective on the task and product For which purposes is the person using the product or service, and how important are these in his daily life? What is the persons role, when the product/service is used.

Object archtypes & icons



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Make a selection of typical products (pictures of them) - that is part of the daily life of your users. It should be products, that symbolize the values that the users find important in their life.

It is easy to search the web for pictures of the products, that your user might buy.

You may also include pictures that illustrate services, that your user prefer.

Make fx a plate or a slideshow with the image. Make one for each user type, if you work with more profiles.

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“Make your user think aloud”

A user is asked to do specific tasks with your product or solution and think aloud during the process. What does he see, what does that make him want to do, what does he think and feel etc.

The observer will typically make a video recording and simultaneously ask open questions as a help for the user to formulate reflections.

This is excellent for users who have difficulties in explaining themselves systematically and to capture areas which might be filtered out in a structured interview.

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“Try how the shoe fits”

Seek understanding by **using the product** or **trying the situation**.

In this way you see things from the user perspective.

Try it in **different situation** and for **different purposes**.

Try different suppliers and products.

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“Peep into the users diary”

The users are asked to register own observations and answer questions regularly over a longer period of time.

Excellent for understanding incidents that does occur frequently, and to seek insight in conditions which requires user experience and usage over a longer period of time.

Cultural Probes

Give the user a package of probes for registering and documenting relevant observations and activities, e.g. camera, diary, postcards etc.

Focus Groups



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Select a small group of people for a guided discussion about a specific idea or topic.

With this qualitative method you can learn from users sharing their thoughts, attitudes, emotions, experience and misunderstandings about a topic in a more intimate setting.

A facilitator or moderator is necessary to guide the discussion. The discussion is managed by using a list of questions written down in advance.

Focus Groups can be used for generating as well as filtering ideas.

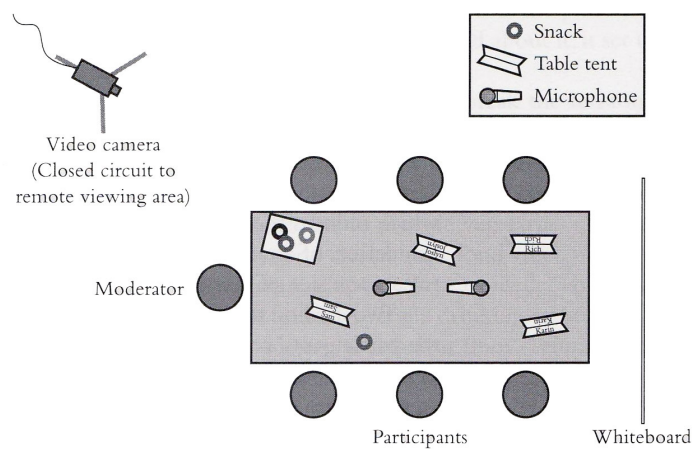


Figure 9.2 Temporary conference room-style focus group layout.

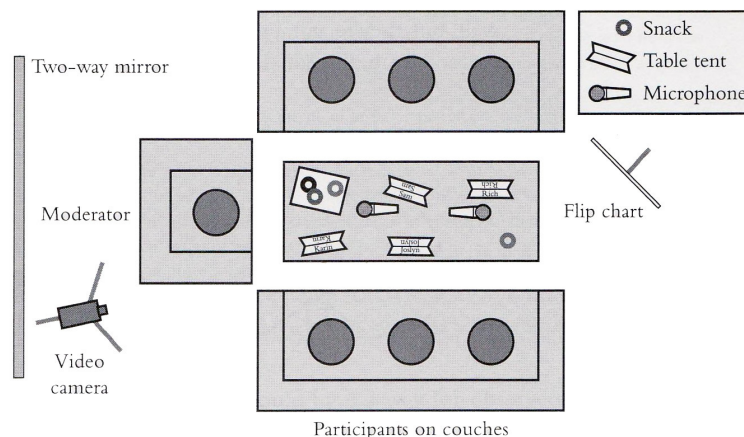


Figure 9.3 Permanent living room-style focus group layout.