

COMPETITIVE ANALYSIS & USER RESEARCH

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Learning Objectives

- Understand the benefit of User & Competitive Research
- Describe the skills required to conduct an effective user interview
- Describe the methodology for conducting competitive research
- Effectively collect User and Competitive Research



UBER



WHY DIDN'T YELLOW CAB INVENT UBER?

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- They didn't believe their users wanted it
- They didn't think their competitors would invent it

WHY DIDN'T YELLOW CAB INVENT UBER?

- They didn't believe their users wanted it
Result of bad user research
- They didn't think their competitors would invent it
Result of bad competitive analysis



How the customer explained it



How the project leader understood it



How the engineer designed it



How the programmer wrote it



How the sales executive described it



How the project was documented



What operations installed



How the customer was billed



How the helpdesk supported it



What the customer really needed

**USER RESEARCH KEEPS
YOU FROM BUILDING
CRAP NO ONE WANTS**

USER RESEARCH HELPS TO SOLVE REAL PROBLEMS

- You are not the user
- Don't assume you know their problems
- Don't assume they will behave as you expect them to
- Don't assume you've thought of everything

USER RESEARCH HELPS TO ALIGN THE TEAM

- Research can align team members' understanding of the problems
- Research can remove incorrect assumptions people may have going into a project
- Research can clarify who the users are and what the problems are helps remove personal preferences from the design

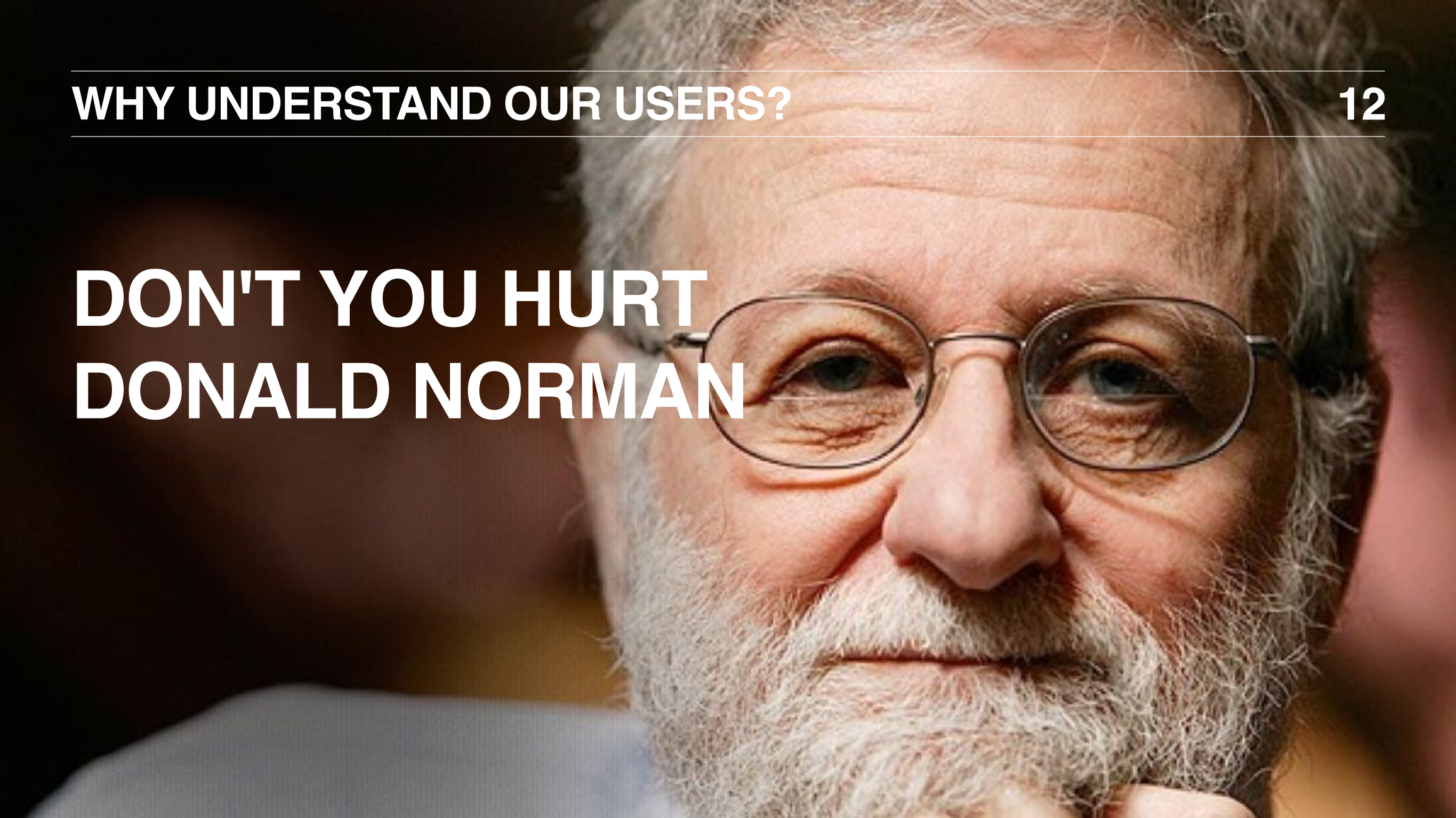
USER RESEARCH HELPS TO PRACTICE USER-CENTERED DESIGN

- If you're not involving your users, you are not practicing UCD
- If you're not involving your users, you are not designing a user experience

WHY UNDERSTAND OUR USERS?

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**DON'T YOU HURT
DONALD NORMAN**

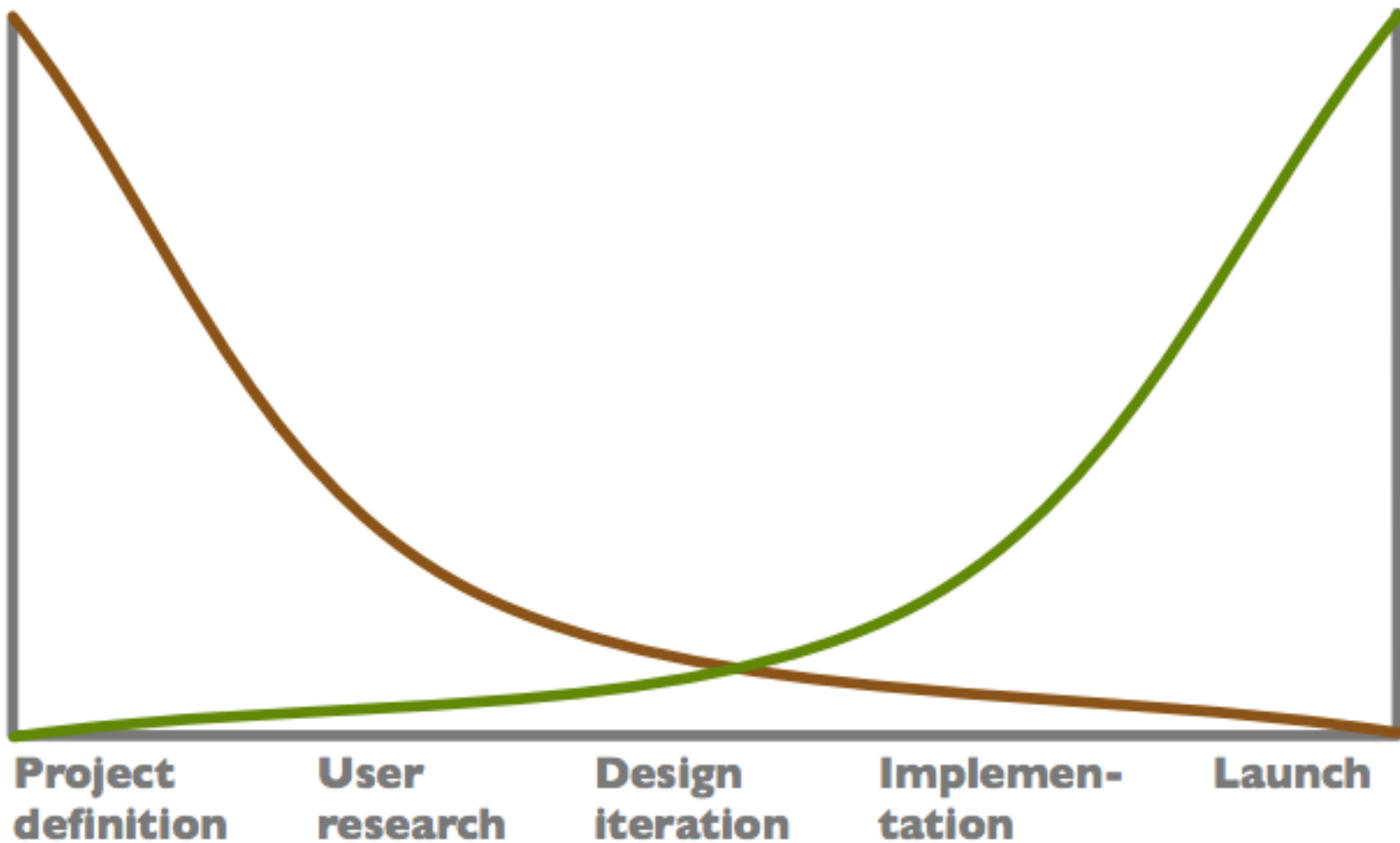


USER RESEARCH HELPS TO SAVE MONEY

- Research up-front can help you avoid designing or building things that don't matter
- Continual research can validate your ideas and save you time and money

Number of design alternatives

Cost to change your mind



“Give me six hours to cut down a tree and I’ll spend the first four sharpening the axe.”

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

BASICS OF USER RESEARCH

INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL FACTORS

- Personal History
- Mood
- Culture
- Education
- Location
- Devices
- Relationships (objects and people)
- Relationships (people and people)

GOALS AND TASKS

- What is the user trying to accomplish?
 - In a general sense?
 - When they might use your product?
- What tasks must the user complete to accomplish their goals?
 - Are there any pain points in the current ways they go about these tasks?

HABITS

- Do they use social networks?
- What sites and products do they use?
- Media consumers or producers
- Relationships with products?
- Relationships with people?

HOW ARE THEY ACCESSING OUR SERVICE?

- At work or home?
- At a library or other public setting?
- Mobile, tablet, desktop?
- In the car or on the road - Are they distracted or in a hurry?
- What Browser/OS combo are they using?
- Do they have a wifi connection or using cell data?

WHEN ARE THEY VISITING OUR SITE OR APP?

- Morning or evening?
- Routinely or occasionally?
- **During a crisis or other extraordinary time?**

BASICALLY - REMEMBER THE 5 WS AND 1H

- Who?
- What?
- Where?
- When?
- Why?

- ...and How?

**HOW DO WE
OBTAIN
THIS
INFORMATION?**

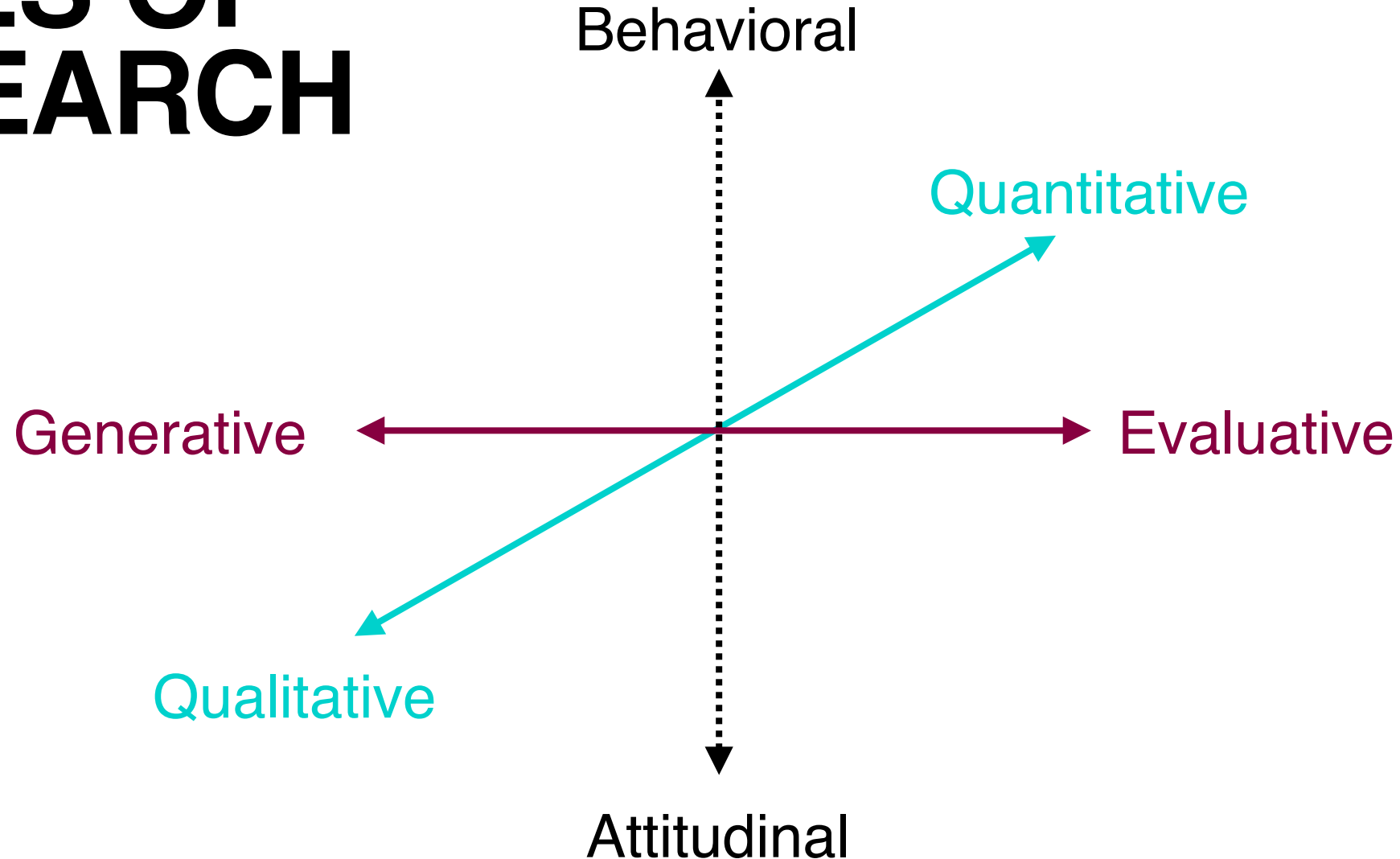
OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH METHODS

- Interviews
- Contextual Inquiry
- Diary Studies
- Card Sorting
- Surveys
- Eye Tracking
- Data Analysis
- A/B Testing

WHAT WE WILL FOCUS ON NOW

- Interviews
- Contextual Inquiry
- ~~Diary Studies~~
- ~~Card Sorting~~
- ~~Surveys~~
- ~~Eye Tracking~~
- ~~Data Analysis~~
- ~~A/B Testing~~

TYPES OF RESEARCH



USER INTERVIEWS

WHAT ARE THEY?

- One-on-one conversations between researcher and participant
- Skews towards Qualitative
- Tends to be more attitudinal than behavioral

BENEFITS OF USER INTERVIEWS

- Very personal; increases user empathy
- Produces rich qualitative information
- Enables follow-up questions

CHALLENGES OF USER INTERVIEWS

- Making participants feel comfortable
- Listening actively
- Respecting boundaries
- Avoiding leading, dead-end, and compound questions

EXAMPLE -

Your firm is marketing a charcoal grill to people who traditionally use gas grills.

They've established that gas grills are easier to light, but that charcoal tastes better.

Now they want to know - is there a social factor to why people choose gas over charcoal?

A BAD EXAMPLE

Q: "Do you feel that grilling outdoors fosters family togetherness?"

Q: "Is there anyone in your family who doesn't enjoy grilling?"

Q: "But you feel it's a bonding ritual all the same?"

Q: "Would charcoal have interfered with the process of social bonding?"

A GOOD EXAMPLE

Q: "How often do you grill outdoors?"

Q: "Does grilling serve a social function for you, outside of merely preparing food?"

Q: "Do you cook with gas or charcoal?"

Q: "Is there a reason you picked gas over charcoal for these events?"

ASKING GOOD QUESTIONS

- Ask open-ended questions
- Ask about actual behavior, not intention
- Avoid leading questions
 - Avoid compound questions
 - Avoid pointing out specific issues

ASK OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

“Do you like to use free weights at the gym?”



“What types of equipment to you like to use at the gym?”



ASK ABOUT ACTUAL BEHAVIOR

“How many times **do you plan** to go to the gym this year?”



“Describe your gym schedule last year.”



AVOID LEADING QUESTIONS

“**Would you say** cardio classes are a better workout than weight lifting?”



“What type of exercise gives you the best workout?”



CONDUCTING USER INTERVIEWS

HOW-TO CONDUCT A USER INTERVIEW

1. Prepare topics and questions
2. Conduct interviews
3. Analyze results

PREPARING QUESTIONS

- Consider what you need to know about your subject
- Carefully write unbiased questions
- Consider what types of responses you might get
- Write potential follow-up questions
- Use your questions as a guide, not a script

MAKE PARTICIPANTS FEEL COMFORTABLE

- Always ask for permission if you are recording
- Explain the reason for the interview
- Explain that their answers are confidential
- Don't be a question robot
- Take notes, but don't be buried in them

PRO TIPS

- Listen at least twice as much as you speak
- Don't feel the need to fill silence
- Don't interrupt
- Keep Them Talking
 - “Tell me more about...”
 - “What do you mean by...”
 - “Help me understand better...”

THE TIPPING POINT

- You'll know when you've asked a great question because the conversation will just flow.
- Smart Interviewers create space for stories to emerge. The moment a participant shifts from short answers to stories is the tipping point in an interview!
- It's much like real life. We small talk with our co-workers, but the tipping point to real honesty and openness is when we start to share our true experiences and stories. It can feel uncomfortable to probe, but the interview setting is not the time to worry about social discomfort!

CONTEXTUAL INQUIRY



*“Quietly observing users is more valuable and
the real reason to go into the field”*

NIELSEN NORMAN GROUP

FOR US, THIS BASICALLY MEANS WATCHING SOMEONE USE A WEBSITE

- Questions can be instructional - "try to add a product to your cart"
- Will reveal struggles related to UX/UI
- Will illustrate gaps in technical skill better than simply asking

COMPETITIVE ANALYSIS

(Basically, user research on a site you didn't make)

WHY COMPETITIVE ANALYSIS?

- Chances are, someone has already made a version of what you hope to build - and have users you can analyze without investing any of your own resources.
- With enough information, you can leverage someone else's (costly & risky) innovation and make a better version of it.

WATCH THE SOCIAL NETWORK IF YOU HAVEN'T ALREADY

▸ <https://youtu.be/QqP38kZC1QA>

COMPETITIVE ANALYSIS

- What else is out there?
- What is working? What isn't?
- What features do the competitors have that our users will expect?
- What features are missing in the marketplace?

	A	B	C	D
landing page				
section page				
Product Page				
Purchase Complete				

FOR INSTANCE:

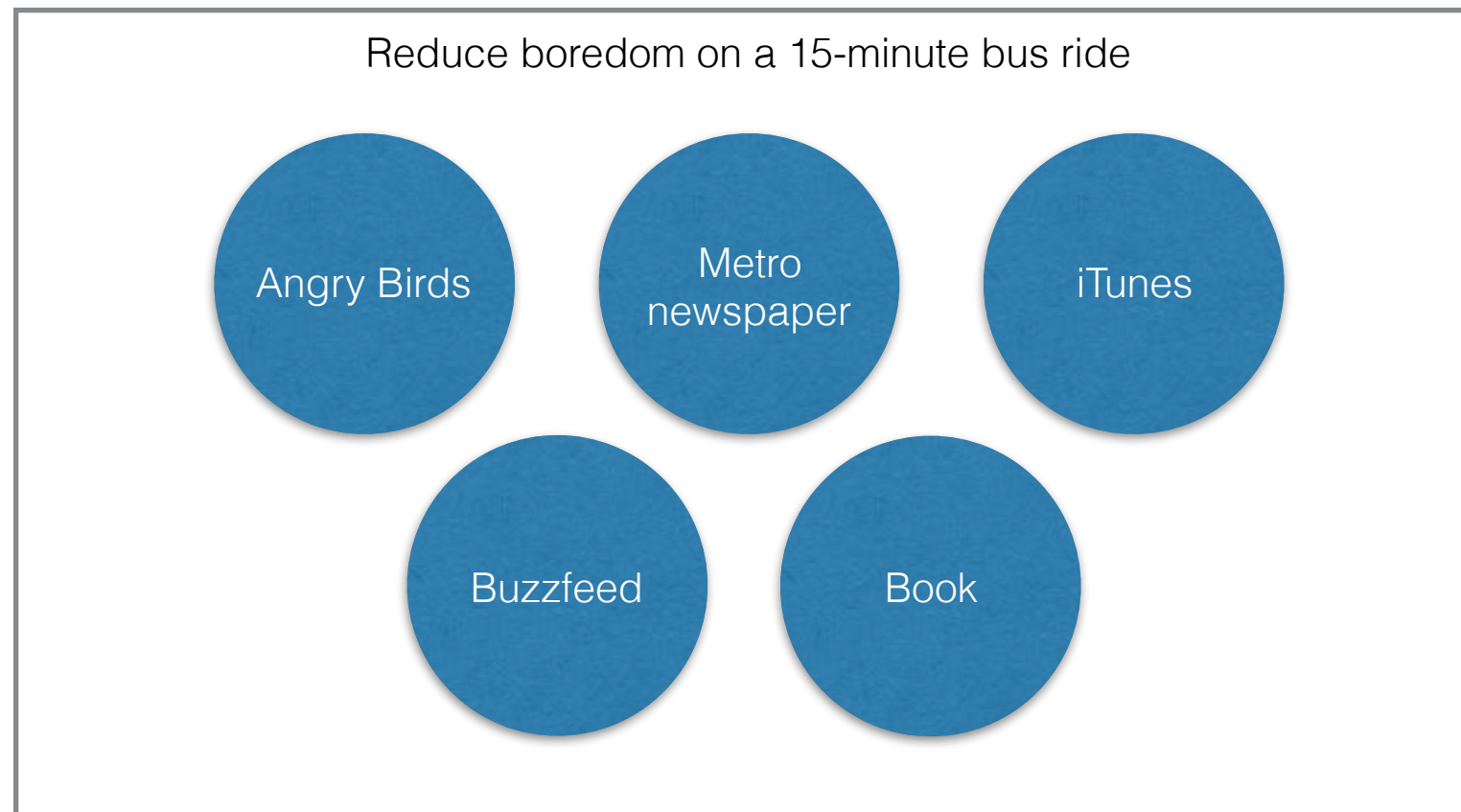
- Name some competitors to the BBC News App.

COMPETITIVE ANALYSIS – FIVE WHYS

- “I like using the BBC News app”
 - Why? “It’s really quick to move around”
 - Why? “I only use it in fairly short bursts”
 - Why? “I’m usually using it on my bus ride”
 - Why? “I get bored on my 15 minute bus ride”

COMPETITIVE ANALYSIS – FIVE WHYS

Now who are your competitors?



PREFORMING A COMPETITIVE ANAYLSIS

WHY DO WE DO COMP ANALYSIS?

- Identify standard features and best practices
- See how others approach design problems
- Identify opportunities to differentiate or innovate

- Avoid reinventing the wheel



BASIC FORMAT

		Competitor	Competitor	YOUR IDEA
Comparison Criteria				

MARKET POSITIONING

	Facebook	Twitter	BigNick'sSocialNetwork. Online
Business Model	Advertising	Advertising	Freemium
Target Audience	People who went to college before 2012	People who think they have something important to say	Invite-only Tech Proffesionals
Homepage Headline	Connect with friends and the world around you on Facebook.	Start a conversation, explore your interests, and be in the know.	Come back when you get an invite, scum

FEATURE COMPARISON

	Facebook	Twitter	BigNick'sSocialNetwork. Online
Public Profiles	YES	YES	NO
Private messaging	YES	YES	YES
Introduction request	NO	NO	YES

QUALITATIVE EVALUATION

	Facebook	Twitter	BigNick'sSocialNetwork. Online
Visibility of system status	Notifications available instantly; poor error messaging	Indicates new messages at the top of news feed;	No notification, world's 'quietest' social network
Match between system and the real world	Uses real names and faces; terminology is straightforward	Terminology such as “hashtag” and “at reply” unfamiliar to new users	Uses codenames for most functions, mostly indiscernible
User control and freedom	Difficult to set privacy settings	Difficult to find people	User have access to edit other user's profile and settings

QUANTITATIVE EVALUATION

	Facebook	Twitter	BigNick'sSocialNetwork. Online
Visibility of system status	5	4	1
Match between system and the real world	4	3	2
User control and freedom	3	4	5

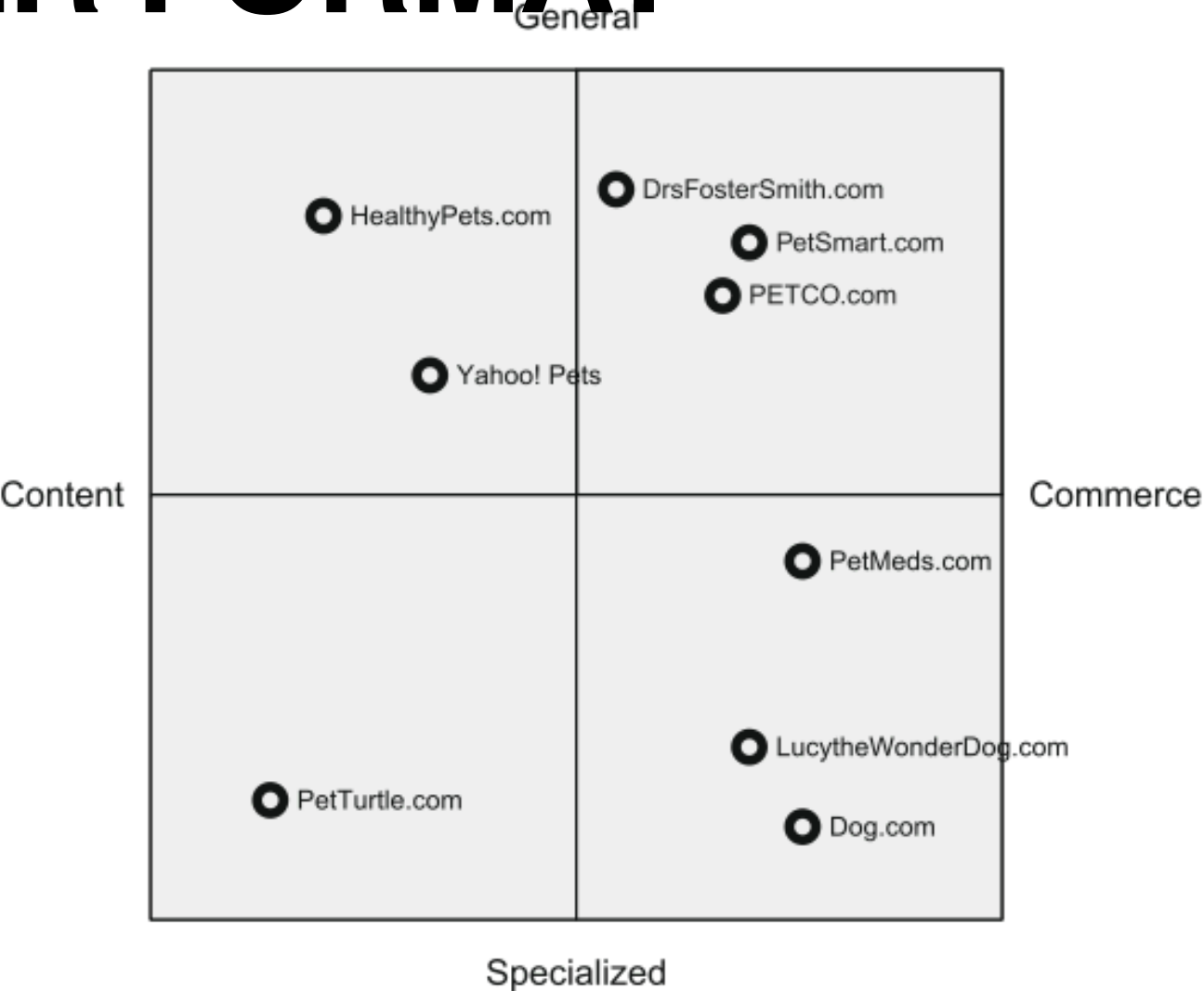
ELEMENT ANALYSIS

	Facebook	Twitter	BigNick'sSocialNetwork. Online
Landing page	News Feed	Home (news feed)	Secret Message & Riddles
Primary navigation	My Profile, Edit Profile, News Feed, Messages, Events, Photos, Browse	Home, Connect, Discover, Me	Home, Hack, Hide, Destroy
Footer	About, Create Ad, Create Page, Developers, Careers, Privacy, Cookies, Terms, Help	(None)	Delete Account Permanently

LAYOUT COMPARISON

	A	B	C	D
landing page				
section page				
Product Page				
Purchase Complete				

ANOTHER FORMAT



SURPRISE - PROJECT 3 TIME

SURPRISE - WE'RE STARTING PROJECT 3!

For project 3, you're going to pick a web/app/online service to improve.

PROJECT 3 FIRST STEPS:

1. Pick the website/app/online service that could be improved
2. Conduct competitive analysis/user research on it
3. Present your findings to the class
4. Class will vote on best/most achievable ideas
5. Top 3 will be the subject of Project 3 for our 3 groups

TODAY'S ASSIGNMENT:

1. Pick the website/app/online service that could be improved
2. Write at least 10 questions that could be used to analyze your site
3. Use those questions to interview at least 2 people (non-classmates) about your site
4. **Write a quick summary/pitch (could be written, visual, mockup, etc) that describes - based on your research - what issues there are with your competitor, and how you can improve them.**

Q&A