boxesandarrows

A Stakeholder Interview Checklist

This is an excerpt from from Kim Goodwin's excellent Designing for the Digital Age. It is quite long, so we've broken it into several sections. Many thanks to Ms. Goodwin and Wiley for allowing us to share this with our readers.

A Cheat Sheet For Interviewing Stakeholders

If you need a little help in your stakeholder interviews, tape a copy of this summary inside the front cover of your notebook.

Things to watch out for

- Presumed constraints—ask why they are constraints
- Jumping to solutions—ask what problem the solution would solve

All stakeholders

- What is your role in this project?
- What did you do before this?

- What is this product going to be?

- Who is this product for?

- When is the version we're designing going to be released?

- What worries you about this project? What's the worst thing that could happen?

- What should this project accomplish for the business?

- How will you, personally, define success for this project?

- Is there anyone you think we need to speak with who isn't on our list? Who?

- How would you like to be involved in the rest of the project, and what's the best way to reach you?

Marketing stakeholders

- Who are your customers and users today, and how do you want that to be different in five years?

- How does this product fit into the overall product strategy?

- Who are the biggest competitors and what worries you about them?

- How do you expect to differentiate this product?

- Using a few key words, how do you want people to see your brand (both the company brand and the product brand)?

- What is the current state of the identity, and can we see a style guide (if there is one) and examples of it applied to materials?

Engineering stakeholders

- What technology decisions have already been made, and how firm are they?

- How large is the development team assigned to the project, and what are their skills?

- Would you draw a diagram and tell me in lay terms how the system works? (existing products only)

Sales stakeholders

- Who is typically involved in the purchase decision?

- Why do customers buy a product like this one, and why this one over competitor's?
- When you lose sales, what are the most common reasons?
- What things do customers complain about or ask for most often, and why?

Senior executives

- Questions similar to those for marketing stake-holders, plus:
- What do I need to know that you don't think other members of your team have said?
- If you had to choose between going to market on schedule with a flawed product, or going to market late with a solid product, which would you choose? (If there seems to be some conflict on this point)

Subject matter experts

- What are the typical demographics and skills of potential users, and how much variation in these is typical?
- What distinctions in user roles and tasks would you expect us to see?
- What sorts of workflows or practices do you think we'll be seeing in the field?

Other product team members

- QA: What problems do you currently see in development?
- Support or customer service: What problems do you see most often?
- Training or technical documentation: Where do users most often get confused today?

All parts of the chapter

- The Engineering Stakeholder Interview
- The Sales Stakeholder Interview
- Interviewing Executives and SME Stakeholders
- A Stakeholder Interview Checklist
- Project Management for Stakeholder Interviews

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Kim Goodwin is the author of the bestselling book, Designing for the Digital Age. Kim is currently consulting for clients in varied industries including aviation, consumer electronics, and retail. She spent most of the last decade as Vice-President, Design and General Manager at Cooper, leading an integrated practice of interaction, visual, and industrial designers and the development of the acclaimed Cooper U design curriculum. Kim has led projects involving a tremendous range of design problems, including web sites, complex analytical and enterprise applications, phones, medical devices, services, and even organizations. Her clients and employers have included everything from one-man startups to the world's largest companies, as well as universities and government agencies. This range of experience and a passion for teaching have led to Kim's popularity as an author and as a speaker at conferences and companies around the world. View all posts by Kim Goodwin →

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