User Research

An obvious, but critical, ingredient of user-centered design of

software applications is for designers to gain a thorough under-

standing of potential users’ work (including its surrounding con-

text) which an intended application will support. This involves

observing potential users and interviewing them about their work. The

goal is to produce a descriptive model of current work practice that can be used to

guide further design activities (e.g., how the worker will become more productive

through introduction of a new or improved computer support application). P. 1

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Interviews alone are not sufficient to meet all the needs of work/task

analysis. It is vitally important to observe users doing work in their nat-

ural settings, and to gather and document examples of that work. P.3

Potential users of an application are usu-

ally experts in the work domain which the application is intended to sup-

port, whether or not they are considered experts in the use of computer

software. P. 3

difficulties with experties:

he tacit nature of many

aspects of expertise, and (3) the potential for experts to exercise

transla-

tion competence.

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