

User Research

INFO 200

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User Research agenda

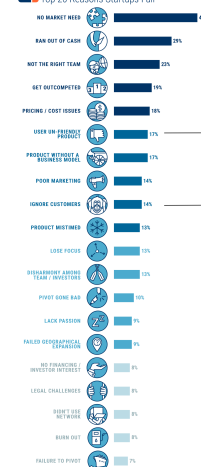
- ❖ why do user research?
- ❖ types and methods
- ❖ assessing how people use designs
- ❖ issues & challenges
- ❖ a counterpoint view

user research

why do research?

- you are not them, they are not you (“people will like this” ≠ “I like this”); **don’t design for yourself**
- design “**defines** the human world” and must be “sufficiently novel” and “fit into each user’s **existing** world”
- identifying patterns and developing empathy
- understanding of context(s), **in context** (cf. lab, surveys, guesswork) in lieu of assumptions regarding physical environment, mental models, habits, relationships
- “assumptions are insults”
- a means of enhancing inclusiveness
- **many methods and types**

BASED ON ANALYSIS OF 181 STARTUP POSTMORTEMS
Top 20 Reasons Startups Fail



NO MARKET NEED 42%

USER UN-FRIENDLY PRODUCT 17%

IGNORE CUSTOMERS 14%

From “The Top 20 Reasons Startups Fail, Nov. 2019,
<https://www.cbinsights.com/research/startup-failure-reasons-top/>

literature reviews/prior work

why reinvent the wheel? what's already been done/what is already known?

library sources www.lib.washington.edu including librarians, research guides (including Informatics), etc

Start Your Research Online

Online Resources

- Articles & Research Databases
- E-Journals
- Encyclopedias & Dictionaries
- E-Newspapers, Media, Maps & More
- Course Reserves
- Collections & Archives
- Mobile Search Tools
- Streaming Video

Research Help

- Research Guides
- Evaluating Information
- Citation Styles & Tools
- Research Data Services
- Off-Campus Access & Technical Support



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quantitative methods

surveys, polls, existing data sets, census records

+ statistical analysis (not necessarily “big data”), graphs, etc

often can give you the **what** and **who** but rarely the **why** or **how**, good up to a point

ethnography/ethnographic design research

“understand and document the activities and mind-sets of a particular cultural group who are observed going about their ordinary activities in their habitual environment”

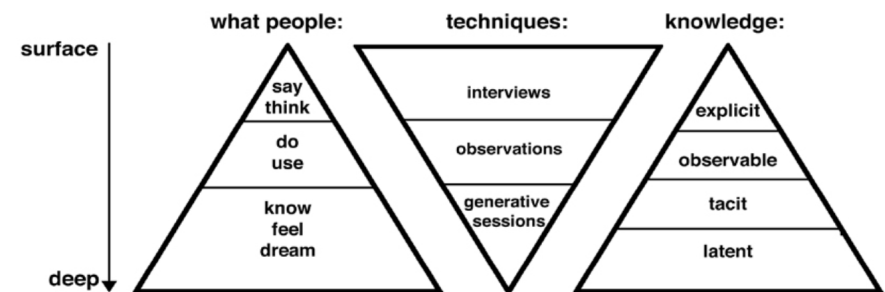
challenges in that?

don't ask people what they want - why not? (even worse: “Don't you want this?”); social desirability effect

people don't know what they don't know

people don't know what an “information problem” is

try “tell me about a typical day in your current job,” “a problem that came up you had difficulty solving,” “how you got stuck and couldn't move forward”



ethnography/ethnographic design research (4 D's)

deep dive (qualitative v. quantitative)

daily life (holistic, naturalistic, diaries), incl. participant observation

data analysis (with the aim of fuller understanding)

“drama” (narrative, storytelling, personas)

what's wrong with focus groups?

understanding of people in *their* contexts with *their* questions/issues/problems that then *you* can try to design solutions and assistance for

hence, don't start at the end

and then

techniques for assessing prototypes and designs:

- **usability testing** for ease of use, performance metrics
- **A/B testing** to compare 2+ candidate designs, incl. on whether users are doing what you want them to do
- **usage analysis** to track user data, metrics (page views, clicks, engagement time, unique visitors)

participatory design/co-design

challenges

can there be too much user research? other issues?

- users may not anticipate the unfamiliar, be able to break out of what they think is possible, expected, feasible
- or focus too much on their own individual, specific circumstances
- or want everything (feature bloat)

so the designer has to weigh the value of user research with the rest of the context of design methodology

Who is this and why is he important?

Jony Ive, former Apple Chief Design Officer
(left June 2019 to start his own company)

Hired by Steve Jobs in 1997

Designed the iMac, iPod, iPhone, iPad, MacBook Air, Apple Watch, AirPods, portions of the iOS user interface

Were his designs driven by user research?

Users - Yes. User Research - No.

“We don’t do focus groups. They just ensure you don’t offend anyone and produce bland inoffensive products”

In fact, he often made decisions that were not what users desired because he felt he had a bigger or longer-term vision

