PRODUCT MANAGEMENT

PDM 5.0

Running Interviews

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

LESSON ROADMAP

- Welcome + Warm-Up
- Interviewing Basics
- Best Practices for Interviews
- Writing Good Questions
- Interviews In Action
- Bring It Home

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Welcome + Warm-Up

Running Interviews

Welcome + Warm-Up

Interviewing Basics

Best Practices for Interviews

Writing Good Questions

Interviews In Action

Bring It Home

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1. Identify opportunities to introduce customer interviews into product development.
2. Describe best practices for interviews.
3. Develop non-leading interview questions that minimize bias.
4. Role-play an interview.

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Interviewing Basics

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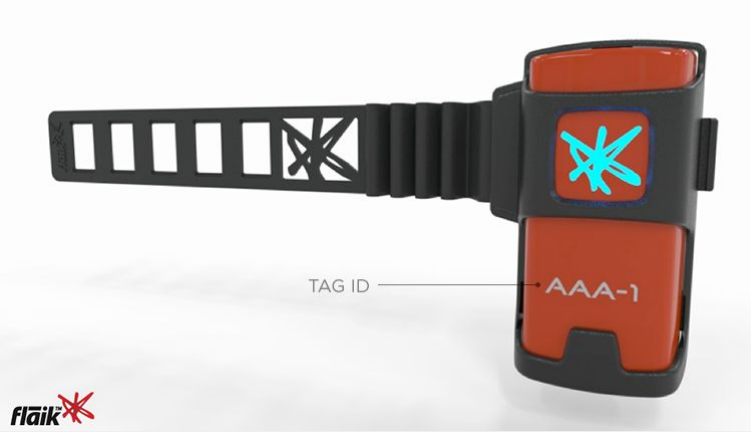
Bring It Home

Real Cases:
The Power of Listening

2 minutes



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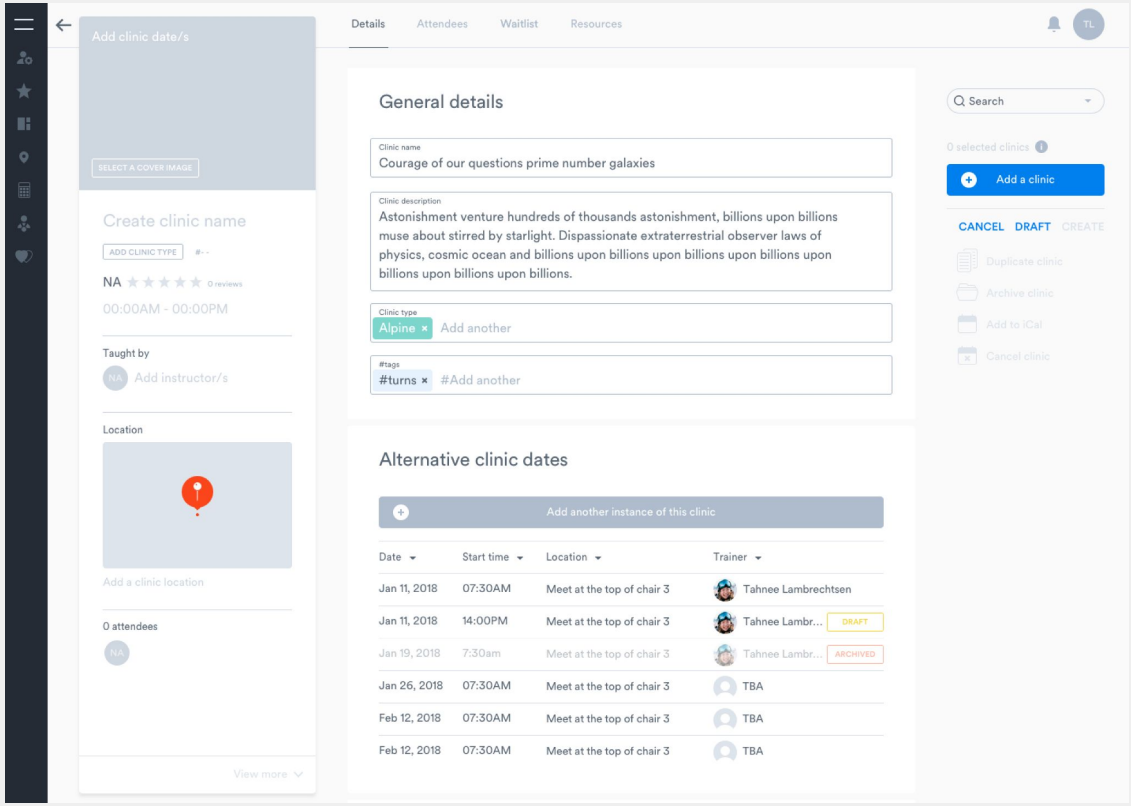

Real Cases:
The Power of Listening

2 minutes

Add Training Clinic

202

Clinic types *
-

Clinic duration

2021/22 Season Clinic Dates

Add instance(s) of this clinic

Resources

WHAT USER INTERVIEWS ARE

30 - 60 minute conversations with users or potential users of your product

Conducted with a single participant

Meant to uncover goals, motivations, frustrations, and current behaviors

They can be exploratory or directed towards a specific topic

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When I am paying United for a service and they are telling me, effectively, that I'm wrong, I feel frustrated. I feel wronged. That leads me to start to look for their competitors...

It's the same for your users...Blaming them is not the answer. [It's not] easy to talk to users, but it is the only way you can understand and build empathy for them. This is what makes a good Product Manager.

—Melissa Perri

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WHY INTERVIEW USERS

Interviews provide an opportunity to understand why users think or behave the way they do.

Provide an opportunity to ask follow up questions and uncover insights not otherwise attainable.

Creates empathy for users. They become real people with real problems that we can help.

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WHEN SHOULD YOU INTERVIEW USERS?

1. Interview users when you need to understand WHY users think or behave the way they do.

2. While interviews can also be used to ask users WHAT they are doing, there are better methods. Some are qualitative (observation, usability studies) and some are quantitative.

3. Interview users after you have identified there is a problem using quantitative data.

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DISCUSSION: INTERVIEW OPPORTUNITIES

5 Minutes

WHEN TO INTERVIEW? Review the following scenarios:

A You have collected and analyzed data from customer surveys and found high disagreement on the quality of your product.

B In a feedback forum of over 1000 participants, 70% of customers indicated that they used a product similar to yours in a different way than intended.

C After reviewing your product analytics, you discover that most users are leaving the product after two minutes.

- Which scenario(s) are opportunities to introduce customer interviews into product development?
- Why?

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INCLUSIVE DATA COLLECTION

Who are your users? Make sure you talk to them. That means not just finding people like you.

Users of your products could have different qualities and it's important to bring their voice into your data collection.

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HOW MANY PEOPLE TO INTERVIEW

A REPRESENTATIVE SAMPLE

- Use for big, strategic questions
- Interviews cover a wide range of problems
- Could be 5 people or 25 people
- Generally not the type of research conducted by new product managers
- Might support a research team in conducting this type of research or hire it out

"How do we modify our vision to increase market share against our competitors?"

VS

5 - 8 PEOPLE

- Use for small, tactical questions
- Interviews tend to be more focused on one or two topics
- Generally the method conducted by product managers

"What struggles are users having logging in?"

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WHO LEADS INTERVIEWS?

UX Team

- In principle, UX research or UX design is responsible for conducting interviews.
- When there is a research team or designers who can research, product managers provide researchers with questions they would like answered.
- Product managers attend interviews or simply receive findings reports.

vs.

Product Managers

- When there isn't a research team, interviews are product managers' responsibility.
- May be done in conjunction with designers.
- Even if there is a research team doing larger studies, product managers should still conduct smaller research studies.

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STEPS TO CONDUCT AN INTERVIEW

1 **Create a plan**
Write a test plan that details your goals, methodology, who you will interview, and research questions you're looking to answer.

2 **Write your interview questions**
Don't wing it. You need to ensure your interview questions help to answer your research questions and preparation is key.

3 **Recruit participants**
You can ask users of your product, ask your support or CS team to connect you to users, or sometimes use recruiting firms.

4 **Schedule interviews**
Find a good time to meet with your interviewees. Send invites with video links if virtual.

5 **Practice!**
Before going to your interviews, practice asking your questions out loud.

6 **Conduct your interview**
Attend your interview with your participant.

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ELEMENTS OF AN INTERVIEW PLAN

What are you trying to learn?

How will you focus your interview to ensure you achieve that goal?

How many people do you need to talk to?

How will you recruit users?

What questions will you ask?

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Best Practices for Interviews

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Bring It Home

Why Interview?

Customer interviews should be designed to validate the assumptions you're making about users.

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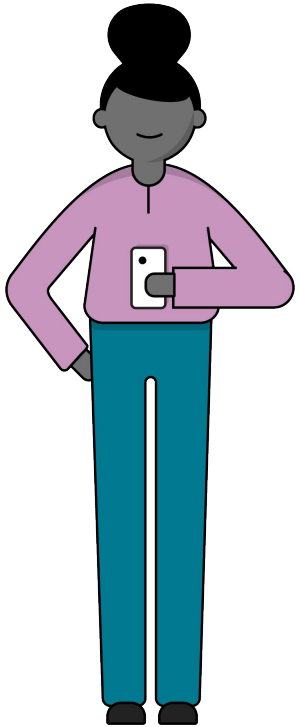
Spot the Assumptions

Problem Statement

I need a way to find and pay for a taxi when I need one because I usually don't carry cash and many taxis don't accept cards.



Hypothesis

We believe that, by making it simple to pay, more riders will use our app to go where they want, when they want.

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They're All Assumptions!

Problem Statement

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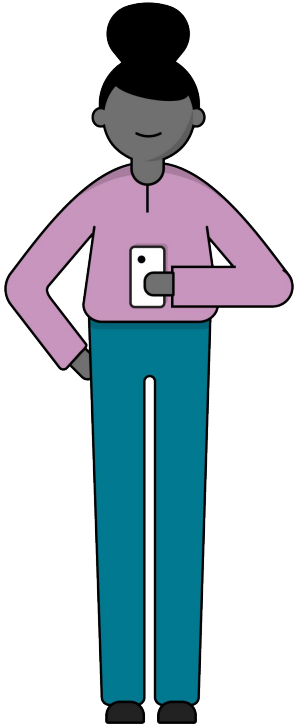

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We believe that, by making it simple to pay, more riders will use our app to go where they want, when they want.

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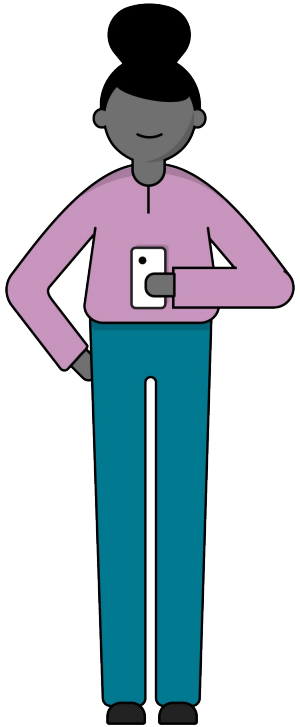
The Art of Asking

What You Want To Know

“Would you pay for Uber over taxis if I built it?”



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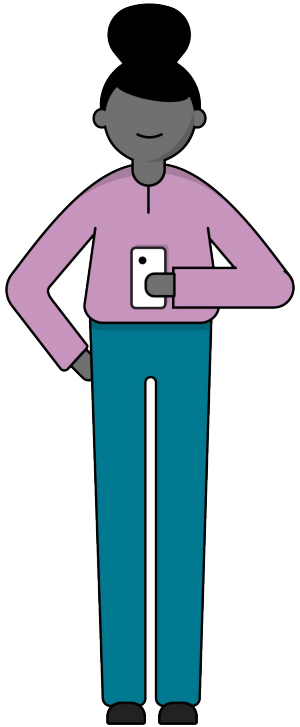

The Question You Ask to Find Out

"Tell me about your experience with taxis..."

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Product Management

Finding Your Customers

The golden rule of customer research:

Get out of the building.

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Where Do I Find My Customers?

Think about where your potential and current customers experience your product.

Go there.

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Strategies for Finding Customers

Reach out to current users through:

- CRM data
- The customer support team
- The sales team
- Company events and conferences

Hi Amber,

My name is Rachel and I am on the research team at HubSpot. I see you had signed up for a trial of HubSpot recently.

How's everything going?

My team is interested in improving the HubSpot trial experience. Would you be open to connecting on a quick call to discuss why you signed up for HubSpot and your experience so far? If you're by chance available this Thursday (5/29), Friday (5/30), Monday (6/2) or Tuesday (6/3), I'd love to schedule some time to talk.

This isn't a sales call: you will be speaking with myself and a HubSpot product manager. I included more information below my signature.

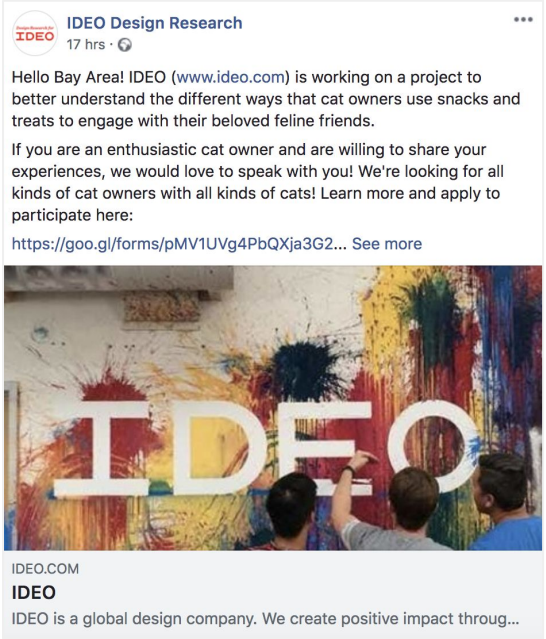
Thanks,
Rachel Decker
Usability Testing & Research
HubSpot

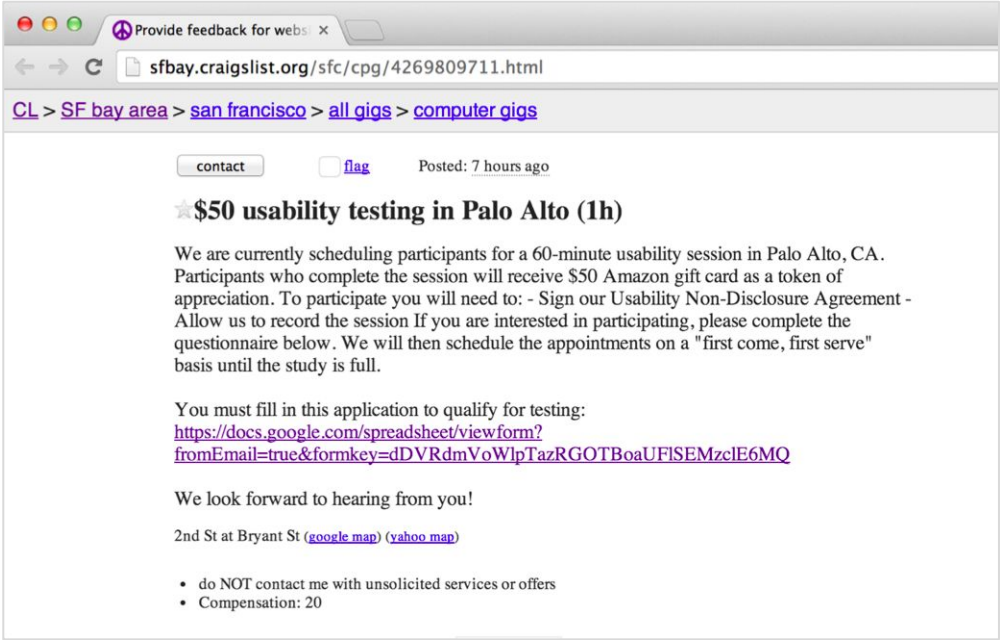
The goal of the call is to learn more about your experience so far with HubSpot, why you started a trial, and to show you a new feature we're working on to hear your feedback on it. This **isn't a sales call** - it is purely for research, but we're happy to answer any questions you have about HubSpot along the way. For taking my call, I will be happy to offer you a **$25 Amazon gift card**.

The call will take around **45 minutes** and will be at a time of your choosing within the next week. Just to reiterate, this isn't a sales call and will be a general conversation to learn more about you as a trial user and to show you some new things we're working on.

Strategies for Finding Customers (Cont.)

Use the internet to recruit a diverse pool of voices.

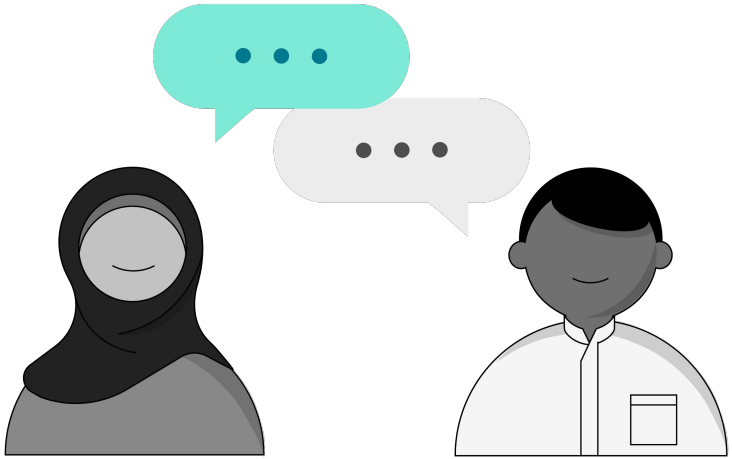




Strategies for Finding Customers (Cont.)

Recruit users IRL...

- In a coffee shop.
- At a shopping center.
- Who are friends, family, and coworkers.



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Don’t ask people to predict what they will do in the future.

~~“Would you use…?”~~

~~“How much would you be willing to pay for…?”~~

~~“Would you like it if…?”~~

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BIAS

The fact of preferring a particular subject or thing.

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CONFIRMATION BIAS

Tendency to search for or interpret information in a way that confirms our preconceptions.

Essentially, focusing your line of questions on behaviors you expect to see.

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DIAGNOSIS BIAS

Tendency to label things based on initial impressions and then not being open to changing our minds.

Essentially, focusing questions based on our first impression of a situation.

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AVOIDING BIAS

Ask the user to think out loud when asking tough questions

Ask neutral questions

Check your assumptions before and during the interview

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Let the participant do the talking.

You should be talking less than 30% of the time. Don’t be afraid of pauses. Pauses lead to more thoughts. Don’t interrupt.

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Take your time. It is okay to let silence in every once in awhile, and the silence of couple seconds is sometimes all that you need to really hear to the end, the real words people said. To do that, you need time to hear them out before you respond. Don't just wait for your chance to reply.

— Celeste Headlee

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Ask follow up questions.

"Tell me more about..."

"Can you expand on that?

"Why?"

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The golden rule of interviewing is to let the participant talk about what they care about most.

— Teresa Torres

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Don’t pitch your idea.

You are there to discover problems, not convince people they have a problem. If you tell people your idea, you will bias your problem discovery.

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The more that a interviewee feels like you're trying to pitch them on something you're trying to sell them, the less likely they're going to be to give you the information that you're really looking for."

— Julia Austin

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Record it, but get consent first.

If possible, record interviews even if they're in person.

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Get quotes.

They are helpful to reference later and your team will trust your data more if you can tell them exactly what participants said.

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Be prepared.

Have questions, an outline, or ideas you want to cover. Practice!

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Bring It Home

Choose the Better Question

Do you use computers at the library?

What do you go to the library for?

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Choose the Better Question: Solution

Do you use computers at the library?

What do you go to the library for?

Ask open-ended questions.

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Choose the Better Question

How many times did you go to the library last month?

How often do you go to the library?

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Choose the Better Question: Solution

How many times did you go to the library last month?

How often do you go to the library?

Ask about specific instances.

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Choose the Better Question

What type of books give you the most satisfaction?

Would you say that fiction books are a better read than cookbooks?

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CHOOSE THE BETTER QUESTION: SOLUTION

What type of books give you the most satisfaction?

Would you say that fiction books are a better read than cookbooks?

Ask non-leading questions.

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PHRASE YOUR QUESTIONS FOR BETTER INSIGHTS

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Questions That Lead to Conversations

Tell me more about...

Can you describe the last time you...

What do you mean by...

Am I right in thinking...

How did you feel the last time you...

Can you elaborate on...

How do you do that today?

Why was it that...

Can you help me understand more about...

How often does this occur?

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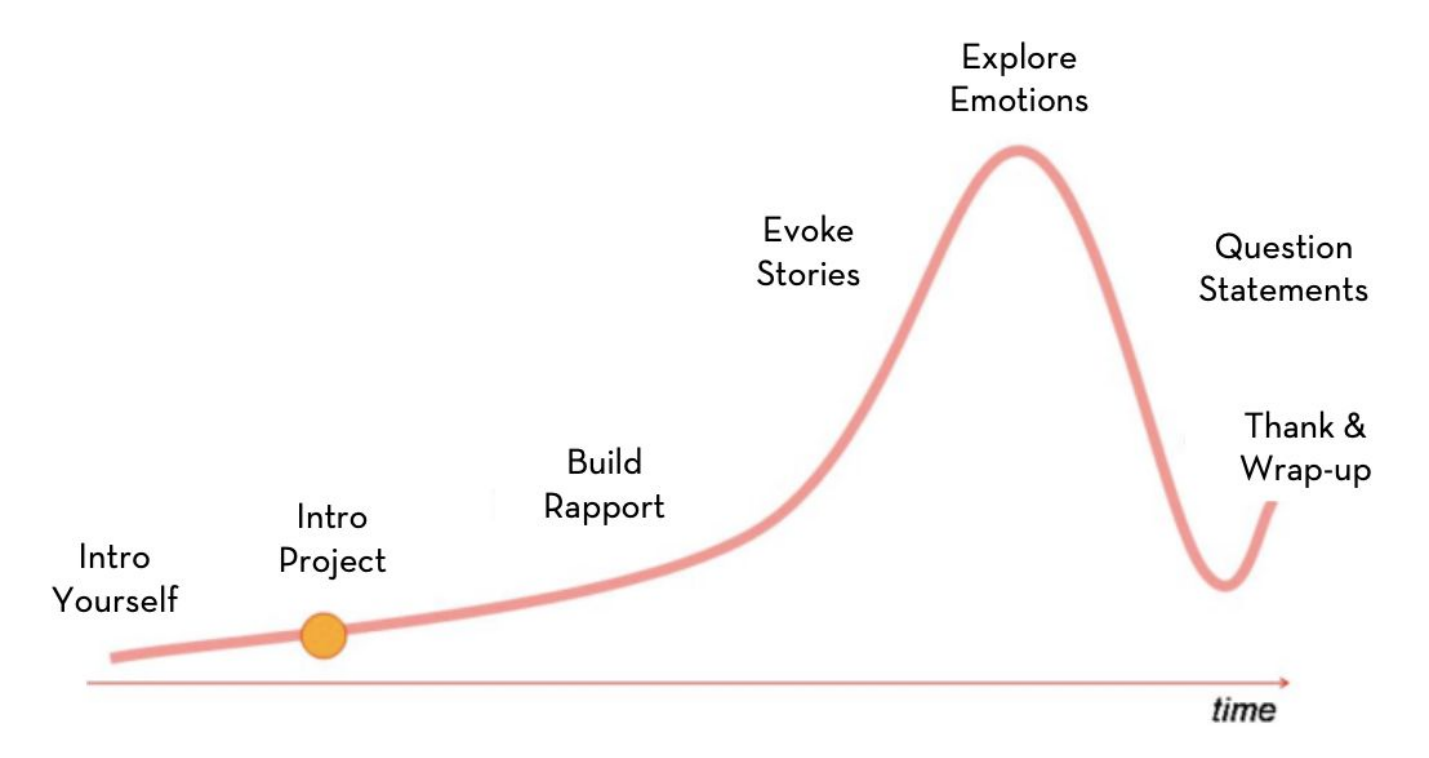
INTERVIEW ARC



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Stanford d School - “Interview for Empathy”

The Arc of a Customer Interview

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Build Rapport	Explore Broader Context	Introduce Focus Areas	Dive Deeper, encourage storytelling	Understand key insights (moments, emotions, challenges)	Summarise observations	Thanks & Close

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10:00

BREAK TIME

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Interviews In Action

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5 Minutes

DISCUSSION: INTERVIEW ANALYSIS

What did you notice about the interview?

What went well?

What could the interviewer have improved on?

?

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EXAMPLE INTERVIEW 1

https://generalassembly.wistia.com/medias/ovxmok8tzf

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5 Minutes

DISCUSSION: INTERVIEW ANALYSIS

What did you notice about the interview?

What went well?

What could the interviewer have improved on?

?

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EXAMPLE INTERVIEW 2

https://generalassembly.wistia.com/medias/2u4sbs1hpg

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5 Minutes

DISCUSSION: INTERVIEW ANALYSIS

What did you notice about the interview?

What went well?

What could the interviewer have improved on?

?

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GROUP EXERCISE: WRITING GOOD QUESTIONS

10 Minutes

Imagine you are a product manager at Slack and want to discover how users keep themselves organized in Slack and by using Slack.

→ In groups of three, write 10 interview questions you would ask users in an interview.

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GROUP EXERCISE: ROLEPLAYING AN INTERVIEW

25 Minutes

Using the interview questions you wrote, conduct a five-minute interview.

After the interview, provide the interviewer with feedback based on what you have learned in this lesson.

Switch roles after providing feedback.

Roles:

Interviewer
Interviewee
Observer

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Bring It Home

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KEY TAKEAWAYS

Understanding Why

We interview when we want to understand why people behave the way they do.

Create A Plan

It's important to keep bias out of our interviews. Start with a plan so that you have time to weed out as much bias as possible.

Avoid Leading Questions

Focus on open-ended questions that ask "why" and "how".

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Additional Resources

Practice Again	Digging Deeper
Finding customers • How to Find the Right Customers for Your Product Development Interviews **Finding customers B2B** • 10 Hacks of Customer-Centric Enterprise PMs **Customer Interview strategies** • 9 Customer Interview Techniques Every PM Should Master • 10 Great Customer Interview Questions for PMs	**Hypothesis and User Interviews** • Forming Experimental Product Hypotheses • Effective User Interviews **Customer interview toolbox** • Product Plan's Customer Interview Tool Box

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