User Interviews:

* Interview I

Name: Nipun Agarwal

Profession: Software Engineer (New College Graduate)

* Prefers to use video tutorials to get a complete overview of a new topic that he wants to deep dive into.
* Prefers to get personal help from experts on topics where he gets stuck.
* Said such assistance helps in designing a well curated study plan with a list of only relevant resources to study hence helps in saving time. Quoted example of big data class that he took at school where he had taken such advice and personal learning assistance from a colleague who had prior 3 years of industry experience in big data.
* Also helps in reducing learning curve.
* Not a big fan of study groups. Thinks it’s a waste of time. Although noted one exception where had taken a difficult subject. Since the class assignments were extremely tough, he became a part of a 15-student study group which would meet often and discuss about solutions to problems. Helped in improving problem solving approach.
* Interview II

Name: Ajay Raghunathan

Profession: Data Scientist (New College Graduate)

* Prefers to get an overview about a new topic via Wikipedia.
* Deep dive on those topics via research papers. Also uses them to get the idea about the pre-requisites for the particular topic.
* Strongly mentioned on learning pre-requisites for his domain.
* He said that to fulfill the knowledge gap while learning he consults subject matter experts available at work (plus also on Quora) taking personal help from them.
* Also mentioned that this is lacking at school since the professors and TA’s have limited availability.
* He emphasized that his domain requires a lot of personal guidance otherwise learning is steep.
* Had faced numerous situations where he ended up beating around the bush for long.
* On the question of preference of a study group as a part of learning he said NO as he does not like the idea at all.
* Interview III

Name: Akshay Singh

Profession: Masters Student in Industrial Engineering

* Prefers online resources to learn about a new topic.
* Mentioned that since there are a lot of online sources, he uses multiple sources to verify approach and solutions to a problem statement.
* To learn about background material, he uses Coursera extensively.
* He emphasized that online resources might seem a good start but extensive knowledge from in person advice from an expert is utmost important.
* He uses helps from ex-students who have good knowledge on the concerned topics.
* He would also use help from professors but mentioned timing is a constraint.
* Online forums are rarely of help in solving conceptual doubts. Told about a question that he had asked in December 2016 but got solution for it just last week.
* Notably said that proximity is a big factor in doubt clearing. He could talk to someone over a problem to find a solution but said that it has its own limitations and said that the most preferred way is F2F. F2F also helps in learning a little extra about the topic and is not restricted to only the question that is being asked.
* Said the most responsive online community is the GitHub community but felt that people there lacked descriptive explanation.
* On the question of preference to study groups, he said he loves it and has been doing it since first semester. He has a group of 3 like-minded students who work together to learn all the time.
* He noted 3 major advantages: i. Time to learn is reduced, ii. Lowers the learning curve iii. Collaboration helps in improving problem solving abilities as discussion helped them looking at a problem from multiple perspectives
* Interview IV

Name: Siddhesh Tiwari

Profession: Advanced Analytics Analyst (New College Graduate)

* He said that learning a new topic is tough for him as he gets overwhelmed with the number of resources available online.
* Out of all user interviews, he mentioned the use of twitter extensively as a way of discovering the right resources for learning. He mentioned that he would prefer twitter to find blogs on the specific topics rather than google it out as twitter would relate a blog post link to a specific person.
* When asked about how do you fulfill a knowledge gap, he said first preference is to look for someone who has knowledge on that topic. If unsuccessful, then look out for online material.
* He said communication to & fro is a key method for him to learn about something.
* He also specified that this communication not only helps in clearing doubts but also gives extra learning. He is able to pick up from the thought process on how to go about solving the problem.
* On being asked about study groups, he said that he prefers it as interaction helps in building a good knowledge base and also breaks monotonicity of solitary learning.
* Interview V

Name: Sunil Venugopal

Profession: QA Engineer pursuing Online Masters in Computer Science

**Insights:**

1. Learning is now not only based out of traditional sources like education portals but has grown more out of portals that were not targeted as education specific. Quora and Twitter emerged as two such sources.
2. Each user at some point specified that personal help from an expert is necessary in accelerating there learning.
3. No online resource is a 100% source to learning even if seems to say so.
4. Collaboration for learning is a student specific preference but those who like it say that it has helped in better problem solving.