

User research

So who are your users?



You are not your user!

Your client is not your user!

Your client is not your user!



**Really
important
point!**

Understanding your users

- Initial business analysis usually identifies the general types of users.
- In a business context, **marketing departments often have a good overview of users.**
- We need to find out more detail, though...

User research

- **Setting research objectives**
- **Techniques for research**
 - Lab Interviews
 - Surveys
 - Contextual Interviews & field research
- We will cover just three of many ...
<http://www.usabilitynet.org/tools/methods.htm>

What are some research objectives?

- **Skill** levels (expert or novice?)
- **Likes and dislikes**
- **Product usage** patterns & product-related desires
- **Vocabulary**/language
- **Environments** (connection speed/browser/hardware/shared or exclusive use?)
- **Social** and economic factors

More specific research objectives

- What do users **want?** (user preferences)
- What do users **do?** (user behaviours)
- What do users **need?** (gap between user desire and their current behaviour or tools)
- What do users **feel?** (emotional responses)

- Our aim is to develop an **understanding of our users** and the way they carry out their tasks.
- Focussing on **what users need and what they currently do** is more productive than asking users what they want.

The danger of asking users what they want...



The danger of asking users what they want...

- Often users **voice a perceived need**
- Users often **do not mention some requirements** assuming they are obvious
- Users also **will not appreciate technical possibilities** (or impossibilities) **nor your client's needs**
- You can ask users what they currently do, but it's your role as a designer to **create the future website that will meet unmet needs**

Technique 1: Interviews

- **You can also get users in a lab** (or any other place) and involve them in activity sessions
- Ask users to explore their habits and decision making processes by using **games, sketching, interviewing** and **web surfing** in the lab
- Helps users to **recreate their actual experiences** even though they are out of their everyday environment

Use this method as:

- **A more quick and cost-effective** approach to understand **goals, attitudes** and **behaviours** where you can reproduce what you need in a lab

Planning interviews

- Set your **goals for your research**
- Write a **discussion guide**
- **Don't stick to the discussion guide!** It is a resource for an open conversation, not a survey
- Take a few notes but if you need a good record of the interview record it, don't try to transcribe while you're reading

Research goals for a travel website

Brief from client

- What are the key features in a booking engine?
- How can we best sell hotels to people who come for flights?
- Can we improve customer retention with (cheap) after-sales service?

Research goals

- What do users want to do on a booking website?
- What do users think of features in competing booking engines?
- How do users choose hotels at the moment?
- What makes up a trusted recommendation for a hotel?
- What is the whole travel experience like for the user?
- What are the key moments of frustration or pain in this?

Discussion guide: a common structure

- **Set expectations** for the session – time, recording, payment
- Get some background information and have a chat to **build a rapport** – this is one place where it's OK to reveal your own opinions
- Ask about **current internet and computer usage**
- Understand their real life by talking about **relevant behaviour offline** – remember to identify needs through current behaviour
- Start with general topics and then move naturally into more detailed ones
- Close the interview by asking for any last comments or questions

For a travel booking website...

- When was the last time you went overseas? ➤ Set the scene
- Where did you go? Why? ➤ Motivation
- Why did you choose the place you went to? ➤ Motivation
- What kind of holidays do you like? ➤ Preferences
- Tell me how you went about finding the holiday ... ➤ Research
- How many sites did you visit? When did you know when to book? ... ➤ Booking
- Tell me about the day you took the flight... ➤ After-sales

Exercise: Write a discussion guide

- Your client wants to launch a DVD mail rental service. Write a discussion guide to get information about:
 - Current movie-watching behaviours and practices
 - What information about the movies the website should display
 - How movie recommendations should be presented
 - What additional features should the website include?
- Remember to start by setting the scene and building rapport

Technique 2: Surveys

- Surveys are a great idea if the website already exists and has an audience
- Many web-based tools have made surveys a very practical and cost-effective method

Survey questions: some terminology

- Closed-end questions have a limited number of choices in response

I am very satisfied with my current insurance company:

*Strongly
Disagree*

Disagree

*Neither agree
nor disagree*

Agree

*Strongly
Agree*

- Open-ended questions require the user to write a response in their own words

What is your relationship with your current insurance company like?

Differences in question types

- Closed-ended questions are **much quicker to analyse** and provide a snapshot response of what is important to the users
- Open-ended questions **can gather a lot richer information from users**, but they need a lot more time in analysis
- Always used closed-ended questions wherever possible (eg for gender or age questions)

Types of Survey Questions

- All surveys should collect **basic background information**
 - Demographics (age, gender, etc)
 - Experience with technology (how many years have they used the internet, how confident are they)
- Questions can also ask about **current patterns of use**
 - Descriptive: How often users visit, how often they stay for
 - Intent: What they are looking for, whether it was found
- A final type of question to include is **attitudes or evaluations of the website**
 - Overall Satisfaction: Did the user's experience meet their expectations?
 - Drivers of satisfaction: What are the individual parts of the website that did or didn't meet their expectations?

General rules on writing survey questions

- Each question must have a single idea and be clearly worded. Avoid jargon or technical terms.
- Give clear instructions about how users are meant to respond to the questions. (eg 'check one')
- Where you are measuring opinions, include an 'N/A' rating to avoid forcing people to rate experiences they didn't have
- Order questions to move from general topics to specific ones

Two most important aspects of writing Surveys

- **Keep the survey as short as possible**
 - Any survey more than 10 minutes will begin to bore your users and affect data quality.
 - Never ask a question that isn't required
 - How can you tell if a question is required?
- **Always pilot your surveys with representative users**
 - This will help make sure that your question wording is clear and unambiguous

What's wrong with these survey questions?

- State your age in years:
- How long have you used the internet?
 > 1 year 1-3 years 3-5 years 5+years
- How useful is the internet to you?

What's wrong with these survey questions?

- State your age in years:

Asking users to select from a range of ages (eg 15-19; 20-25 etc) means less analysis work and greater likelihood of users giving this personal information

- How long have you used the internet?

> 1 year

1-3 years

3-5

What if I've used the internet for 3 years?
Don't use overlapping ranges


- How useful is the internet to you?

Good opportunity for a closed-ended question. Or use different wording like "How is the internet most useful to you?"

Survey wrapup:

- This section covers only the basics of survey design and analysis. This is a detailed topic that will reward a lot of attention
- **Surveys and interviews can be complementary methodologies**, where possible you should use both.
 - Use surveys before interviews to identify who is using your website at the moment
 - Use surveys after interviews to follow up interview results and check the relative size of your findings

What's missing?



***“What people say,
what people do,
and what people say they do
are entirely different things”***

Margaret Mead

...there's more to it!

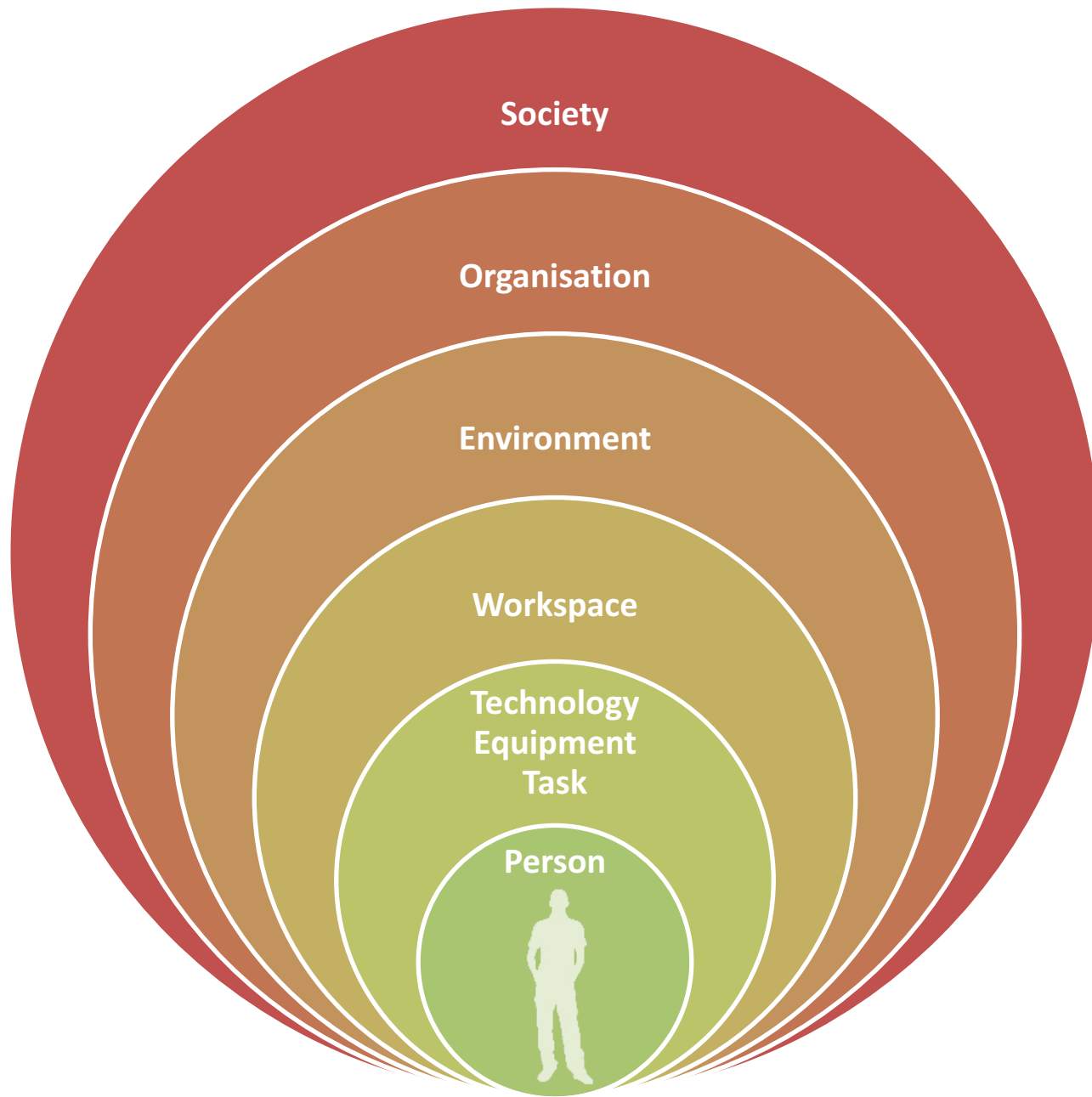
- Context: the **human, physical, organisational, historical and social environment** in which a product is used
- These variables can determine **how technology is used** & how **work is carried out** that appears to be similar
- Degree of fit between context-of-use and product design **influences uptake**
- Understanding the context of use is therefore **vital for effective user-centred design**
- Traditional HCI was often more concerned with the interaction between humans and machines. **Why do you think that is?**



<http://www.flickr.com/photos/whiteafrican>



<http://www.flickr.com/photos/elron6900>



***Question:** So how are you going to find out about the context your product or service will be used in?*

Hang out with the people you're designing for...



Contextual Inquiry

- **Observe and interview** users in context of their work to see **what users do, not what they say they do**
- *“go where the user works, observe the user as he or she works and talk to the user about the work.”*

Use this method to get:

- Deeper insight into **motivations and behaviours**
- An understanding of user goals and needs, in particular the **unsatisfied or unarticulated**
- Identify **problems and work-arounds**
- Understand **organisational and environmental factors**

Contextual Inquiry

Master - Apprentice model:

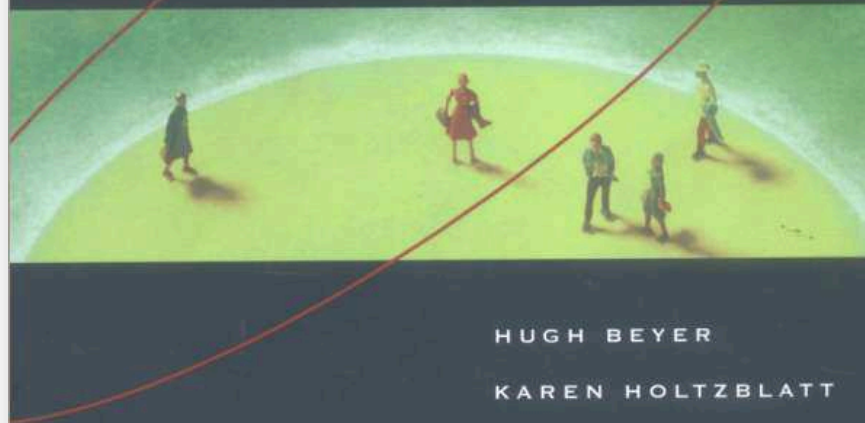
Avoid interview/interviewee or novice/expert situation

Based on four core principles:

1. **Context** – all work is observed in its context
2. **Partnership** – no “interviewer” situation
3. **Interpretation** – the researcher interprets the observations and shares them with the user to validate
4. **Focus** – on concrete data & tasks

CONTEXTUAL DESIGN

*Defining
Customer-Centered
Systems*



HUGH BEYER

KAREN HOLTZBLATT

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What does this mean for my project?

- **Who are your users?**
- If your users work in an office (or similar) then contextual inquiry will help you get more empathy with your users
- If there is a real-world parallel to your website, then observing this may help give inspiration
- If neither apply, concentrate on other methods

What does this mean for my project?

- Which of these websites might benefit from contextual inquiry?

Online dictionary

Wedding photographer

GP Booking system