3.1.4 *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

Research objectives: Things you can find out about your users

- **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

- You can only address this issue by grounding the discussion in users' real world behaviour

- Users also **will not appreciate technical possibilities** (or impossibilities) **nor your client's needs**

Method 1: Interviews

- **You can 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 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
- 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
- Ask about **current internet and computer usage**
- Close the interview by asking for any last comments or questions

For a travel booking website…

- When was the last time you went overseas?
- Where did you go? Why?
- Why did you choose the place you went to?
- What kind of holidays do you like?
- Tell me how you went about finding the holiday …
- How many sites did you visit? When did you know when to book? …
- Tell me about the day you took the flight…

➢ Set the scene

➢ Motivation

➢ Motivation

➢ Preferences

➢ Research

➢ Booking

➢ 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

Method 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 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 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 questions** are much **quicker to analyse** and provide a snapshot response of what is important to the users

- **Open questions** can gather a lot **richer information** from users, but they need a lot more time in analysis

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 long 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. (e.g. '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.

- **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 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** years

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 question. Or use different wording like "How is the internet most useful to you?"

Survey wrap-up:

- 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 are 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

Method 3: Contextual research & field studies

- 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**

Society

Organisation

Environment

Workspace

Technology
Equipment
Task

Person
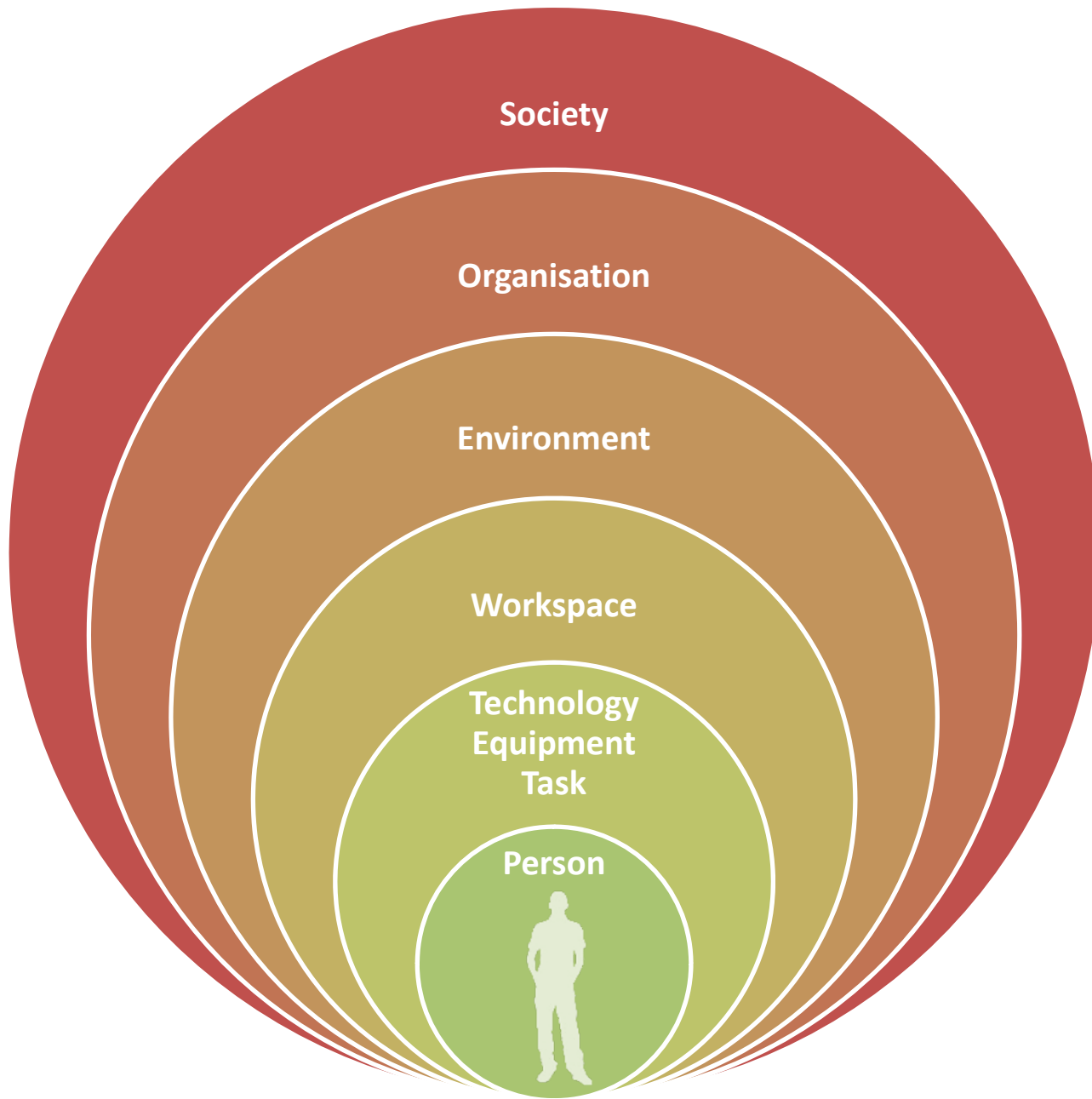
Contextual Inquiry

- **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

User research recap

- **Interviews**
  - Relatively cheap, easy to run and easy to extract data
  - Hard to get large numbers, limited ability to generalise

- **Surveys**
  - Good for existing websites and large numbers of users, even international, can be cheap
  - Great care needed for set-up, analysis and avoiding bias

- **Contextual Inquiry**
  - Unbeatable for complex or unfamiliar situations or identifying unmet needs
  - Lots of data, a lot of which will not be relevant; highest cost