

## **About interviewing people to uncover needs and craft a strategy and vision**

For the interviews we will start in the following week about the internal product X, we need to define the research question and the interviewing questions.

As you can see in the answers from our last round <internal link>, we got mostly feature requests and we haven't explored the foundations of our users needs. The notes below comes mostly from Torres (2021).

Our objective is to find out the right thing to do.

### **Distinguishing Research questions from Interview questions**

Research question is what you are trying to learn. Interview question is what you ask in the interview.

If you do continuous interviewing you don't need to ask everything at once, but only the most important parts at that time.

### **Do not force your research question in a interview if that customer do not care about it**

Always deviate it to what needs, pain points, and desires matter most this customer. You want to have the customer set the direction of the interview.

### **Ask them to share specific stories about their experiences**

You need to transform your research question into interview questions that elicit these stories.

E.g. Tell me about the last time you purchased a pair of jeans.

You might want to widen or narrow the question: "Tell me about the last time you bought clothes".

### **Widen and narrow your questions according to your current needs**

Narrow questions help you optimize and get to Traction Metrics., existing products. Broader questions help you to uncover new opportunities, new products, markets, etc.

## **When interviewing, let the applicant talk, but conduct it**

Let the applicant talk 80% of the time. What he talks about is your best input.

Do not let them talk freely. If the information provided is not useful. Interrupt and nudge. You have a limited time to extract information from them.

The most effective use of the time is if the conversation is covering a subject you both are familiar.

## **Challenges with asking people what they need**

When you ask someone how they choose something, they will create a Rationality process to justify their choice. They might say they value a certain aspect of that, but when really doing Decision making they might do it differently.

One example from Torres (2021) is of a customer who said fit is their number-one characteristic when choosing a pair of jeans. But when asked how was the process of buying her last pair, she said she got it from Amazon. When asked how she knew it would fit, she said "I didn't, but they were a brand I liked, and they were on sale".

One thing is how someone thinks they do something, another thing is how they actually do it.

Another challenge is that when interviewing people, they might not fairly remember exactly the reasons why they did something.

We are also bad at quantifying how often we do something. We give answers that are more general instead of specific, because we want to tell about our sense of Identity and not about our actual Behaviors.

## **The left-brain interpreter**

Gazzaniga (1967) conducted a research in which a choice was made with only the left-eye for split-brain patients. They are people whose the connection between the two hemispheres was compromised. Left part of the body is controlled by the right hemisphere. The left hemisphere takes care of the language. When asked about why the decision was made, the researcher expected people to stumble, but they were able to fabricate responses to justify their choices.

### **Confidence is not a good indicator of the truth**

According to Kahneman (2011), Confidence does not reflect the Truth, because it is a feeling that only reflects the coherence of the information and the cognitive ease of processing it.

### **Do the right questions to uncover actual behavior**

To build a successful Product, it is needed to understand customers' actual behavior, not the story they use to fool themselves.

### **Avoid software that is building to be built**

Not picking open-source alternatives because the team doesn't love it, or we need small customizations and it prefers to build from scratch. They provide the idea the team hasn't asked "isn't there something more important we could be working on?". Not considering Opportunity cost. The system the team is building is always "one feature away" from being perfect to be broadly adopted. Usually, not considering it a Sunk cost the team should move on.

### **Only build when you have exhausted alternatives**

As a platform team, don't build when you don't have to. Take care of arguments like "Google does it, therefore we should", that's bad Product Management. You need high standards, which requires time, so overbuild is a no go.

You can only build a few things, you need to choose wisely. Don't try to imitate systems from other companies (especially bigger ones) that took multiple years to work.

Instead, opt for a clear understanding of the Problem. You might realize your assumptions were wrong. Instead of a new storage system, the teams might need better diligence on what they store (they might be storing garbage data). Instead of a new compute framework, they can be writing bad queries or code.

### **On the importance of spotting the right thing to do**

Russell Ackoff on Peter Drucker's point about the difference on "Doing the right thing" and "doing things right".

Management is about doing things right, which might imply Technical quality, but it doesn't imply necessarily overall quality. There's the example

of Japan doing vehicles right, but building automotive vehicles can be the wrong thing because of pollution.

Leadership is about doing the right thing. It's more strategical.

Russell Ackoff arguments that it's better to do the right thing in a wrong way than doing the wrong thing right.

When in a Leadership role, it's important to focus on that and delegate Management part. Or it's going to become a double focus and compromise the leader part.

To do the right thing as a leader, it implies taking the hands off the day-to-day operations and spend time looking at the direction of things. Examine trends in Data, Discovery on what the company should be doing to keep competitive. Then, with this information, set the Strategy objectives for Growth.

Sources: The difference between management and leadership and Russell interview.

## References

Gazzaniga, M. S.: 1967, The split brain in man, *Scientific American* **217**(2), 24–29.

Kahneman, D.: 2011, *Thinking, fast and slow*, Macmillan.

Torres, T.: 2021, *Continuous Discovery Habits: Discover Products that Create Customer Value and Business Value*, Product Talk LLC.

**URL:** <https://books.google.com.br/books?id=HsJzzgEACAAJ>