

CONDUCTING USER RESEARCH: INQUIRIES & INTERVIEWS

Insert Instructor Name
Title, Company

- Why is User Research important?
- What do we need to know?
- Research methods
- Different approaches to research
- Practice Activity

Learning Objectives

- Describe the skills required to conduct an effective user interview
- Define contextual inquiry and articulate its benefits
- Conduct a contextual inquiry study
- Prepare unbiased interview questions
- Conduct an effective user interview

DO NOW 5 min



Practice

What do you think are the top 3 pain points of a Local Kiosk User?

Write each pain point on a separate post it.

Turn and talk to your neighbor and Share Out

WHAT IS USER RESEARCH?

“Give me six hours to cut down a tree and I’ll spend the first four sharpening the axe.”

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

“If I had an hour to solve a problem I’d spend 55 minutes thinking about the problem and 5 minutes thinking about solutions.”

ALBERT EINSTEIN

WHY UNDERSTAND OUR USERS?

TO SOLVE REAL PROBLEMS

- REMINDER: You are not the user
- Don't assume you know their problems
- Don't assume they will behave as you expect them to
- Don't assume you've thought of everything

What I want from a restaurant website:

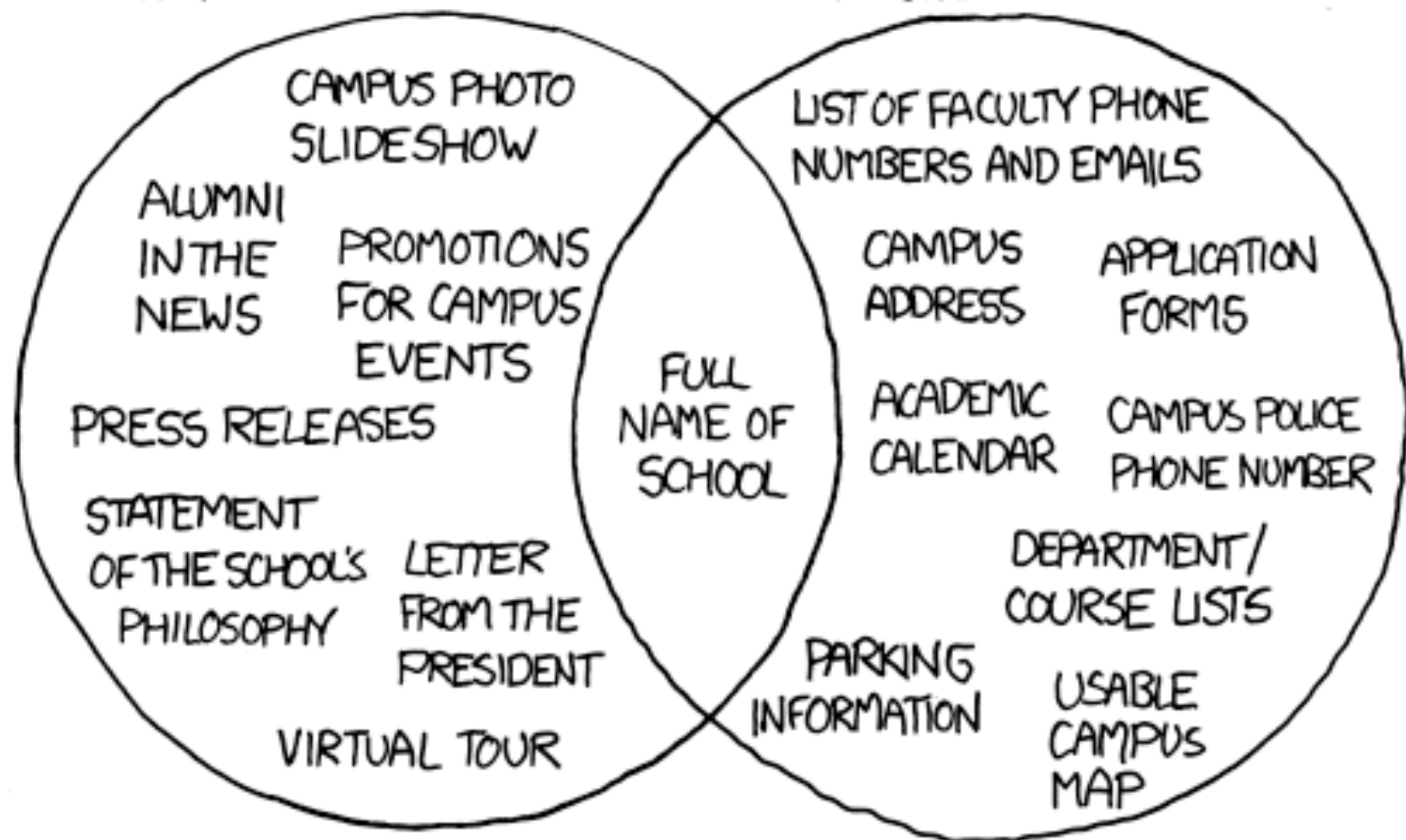
- ▶ Menu
- ▶ Specials and happy hour info
(Including social promotions such as Foursquare, Groupon, and Twitter specials)
- ▶ Address with a link to google maps
- ▶ Online reservation system that actually works
(instead of one where I make a reservation online, show up, and the hostess gives me a blank, confused stare when I tell her my name)
- ▶ Hours of operation, parking and contact info

What I get instead:



THINGS ON THE FRONT PAGE
OF A UNIVERSITY WEBSITE

THINGS PEOPLE GO TO
THE SITE LOOKING FOR



TO ALIGN THE TEAM

- › Research can align team members' understanding of the problems
- › Research can remove incorrect assumptions people may have going into a project
- › Clarifying who the users are and what the problems are helps remove personal preferences from the design



How the customer explained it



How the project leader understood it



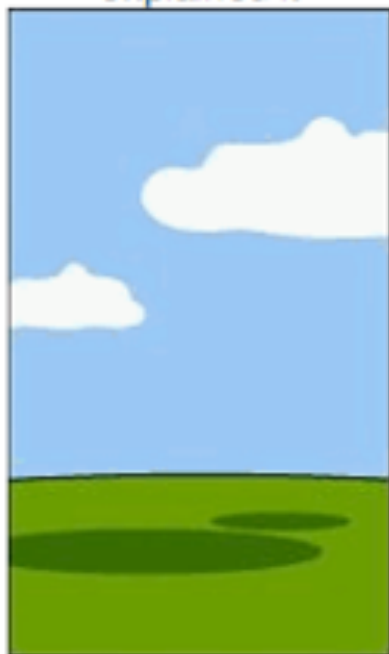
How the engineer designed it



How the programmer wrote it



How the sales executive described it



How the project was documented



What operations installed



How the customer was billed



How the helpdesk supported it



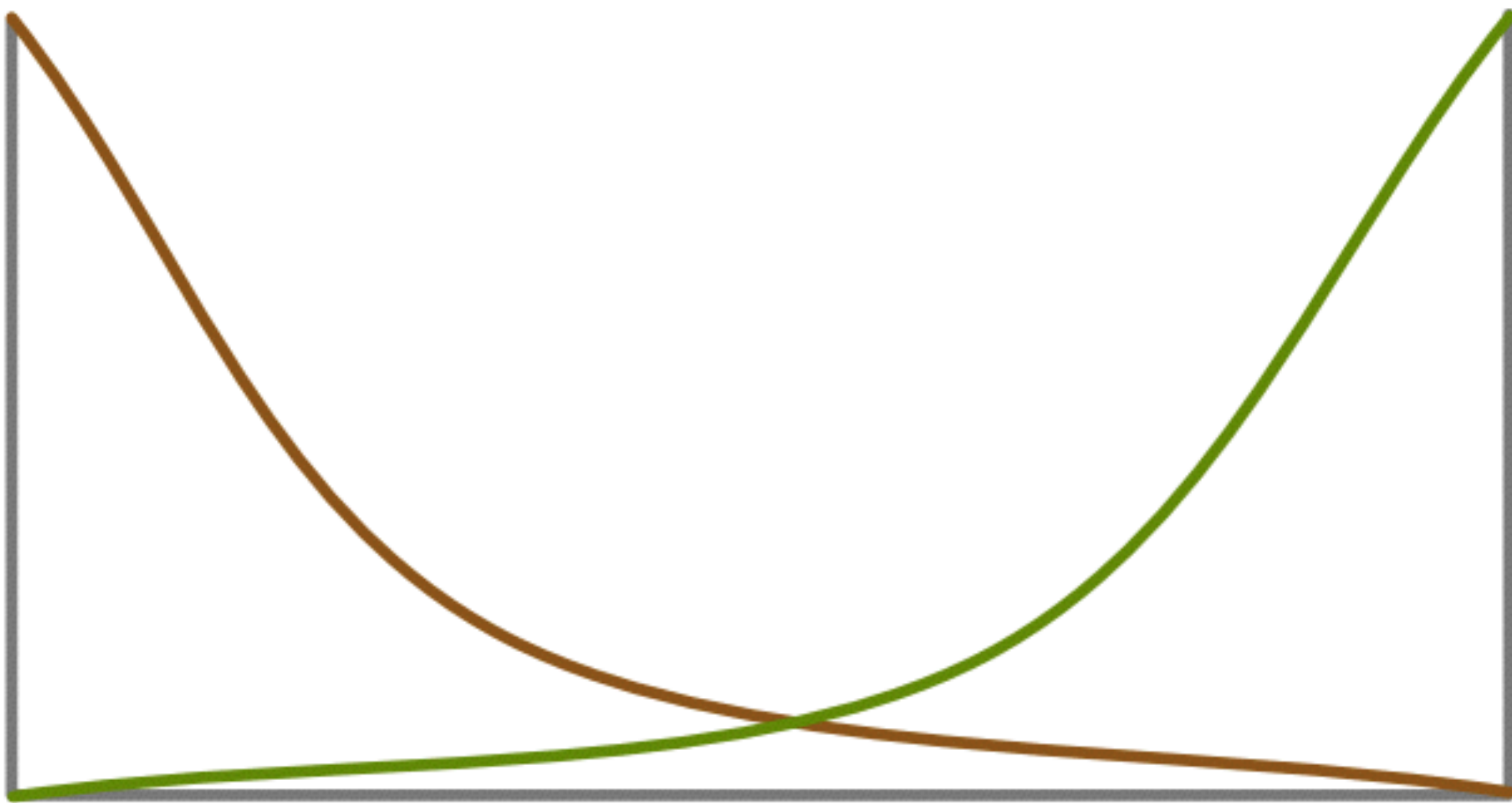
What the customer really needed

TO SAVE MONEY

- Research up-front can help you avoid designing or building things that don't matter
- Continual research can validate your ideas and save you time and money

Number of design alternatives

Cost to change your mind



**Project
definition**

**User
research**

**Design
iteration**

**Implemen-
tation**

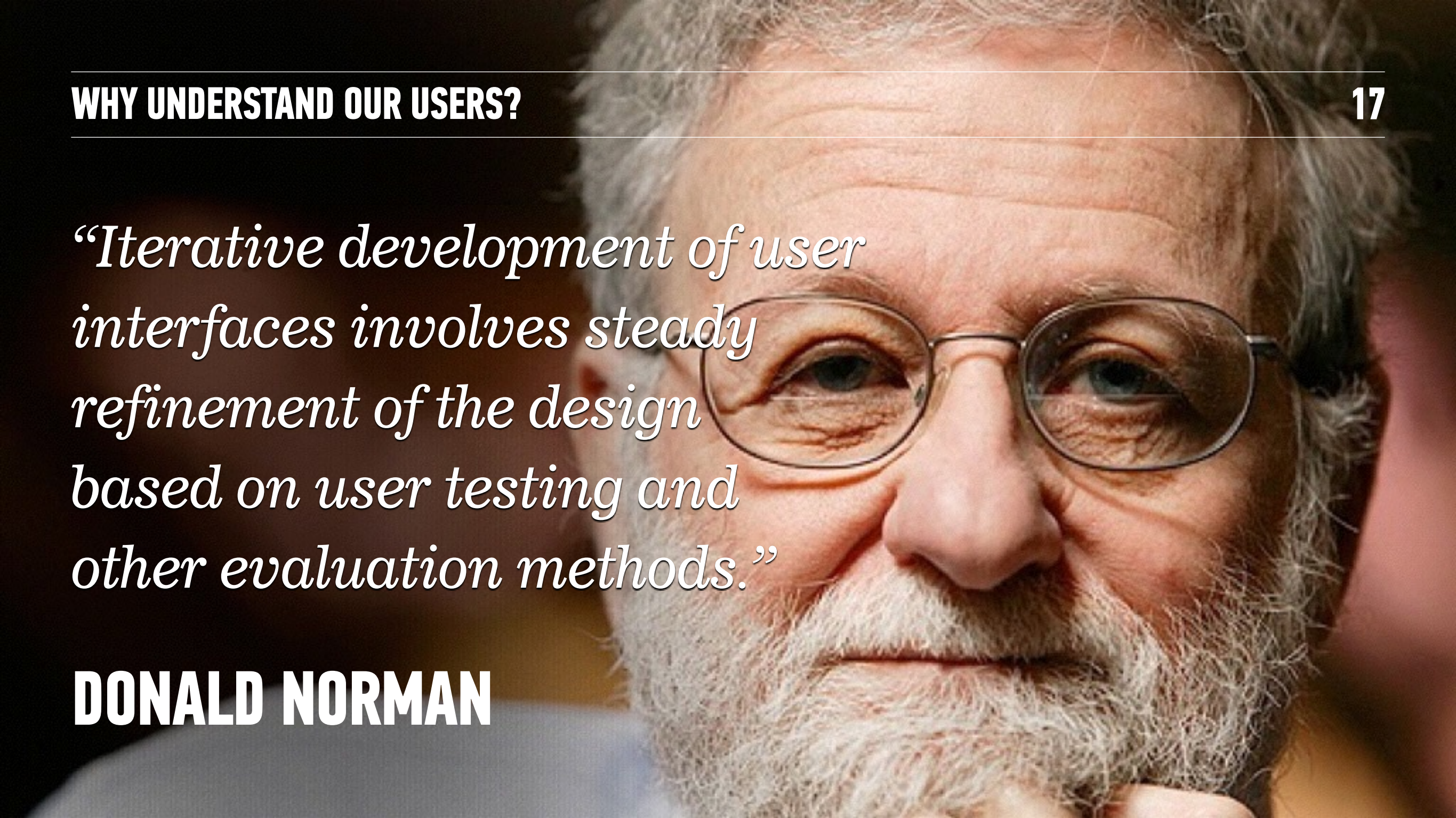
Launch

TO PRACTICE USER-CENTERED DESIGN

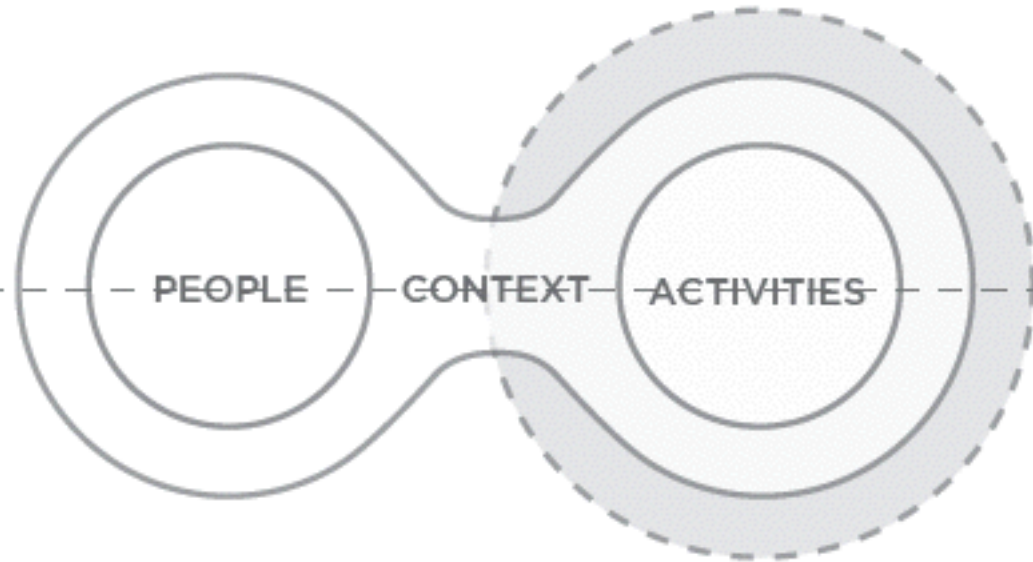
- If you're not involving your users, you are not practicing UCD
- If you're not involving your users, you are not designing a user experience

“Iterative development of user interfaces involves steady refinement of the design based on user testing and other evaluation methods.”

DONALD NORMAN



BASICS OF USER RESEARCH



“It’s all about People, their Activities, and the Context of those activities.”

STEPHEN P. ANDERSON

INTERNAL FACTORS (“PEOPLE”)

- Personal History
- Mood
- Culture
- Education

EXTERNAL FACTORS (“CONTEXT”)

- Location
- Distractions
- Devices
- Relationships (objects and people)
- Relationships (people and people)

GOALS AND TASKS (“ACTIVITIES”)

- What is the user trying to accomplish?
 - In a general sense?
 - When they might use your product?
- What tasks must the user complete to accomplish their goals?
 - Are there any pain points in the current ways they go about these tasks?

REMEMBER THE 5 WS

- Who?
- What?
- Where?
- When?
- Why?

- ...and How?

WHO ARE OUR USERS?

- Business or Consumers?
- Demographics?
- Prior knowledge of our content?
- Culture?
- Education level?

WHAT ARE THEIR HABITS?

- Do they use social networks?
- What sites and products do they use?
- Media consumers or producers
- Relationships with products?
- Relationships with people?

WHERE ARE THEY ACCESSING FROM?

- At work?
- At a library or other public setting?
- At home?
- In the car or on the road?
- Are they distracted?

WHEN ARE THEY VISITING OUR SITE OR APP?

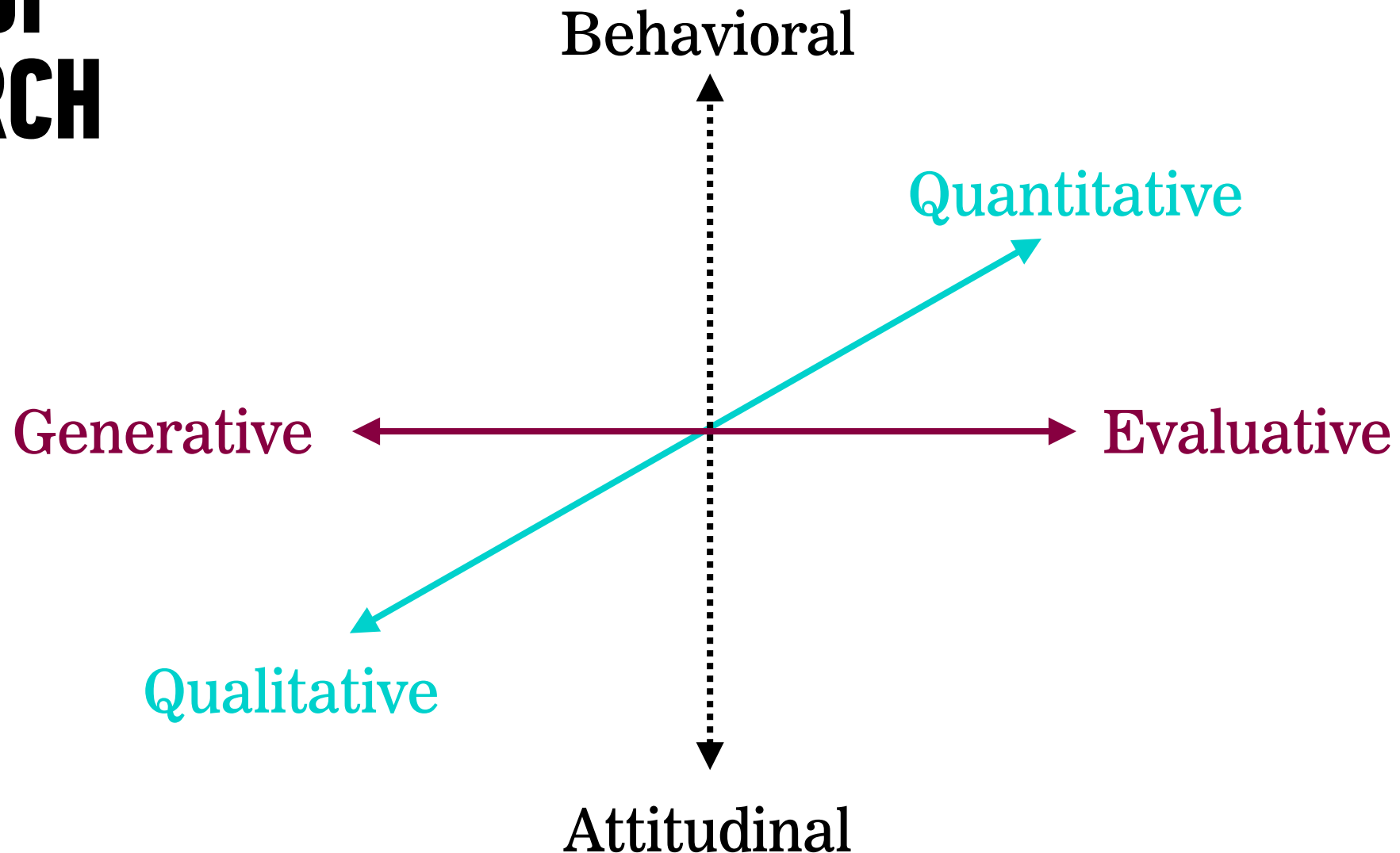
- Morning or evening?
- Routinely or occasionally?
- During a crisis or other extraordinary time?

HOW ARE THEY ACCESSING?

- What browser and/or operating system?
- Desktop, tablet, mobile, or other device?
- Broadband or slow connection?
- Proxy server or firewall?

HOW DO WE OBTAIN THIS INFORMATION?

TYPES OF RESEARCH



OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH METHODS

- Interviews
- Contextual Inquiry
- Diary Studies
- Card Sorting
- Surveys
- Eye Tracking
- Data Analysis
- A/B Testing

WHAT WE WILL FOCUS ON NOW

- Interviews
- Contextual Inquiry
- ~~Diary Studies~~
- ~~Card Sorting~~
- Surveys
- ~~Eye Tracking~~
- ~~Data Analysis~~
- ~~A/B Testing~~

USER INTERVIEWS



WHAT IS IT?

- One-on-one conversations between researcher and participant
- Qualitative
- Tends to be more evaluative than generative
- Tends to be more attitudinal than behavioral

BENEFITS OF USER INTERVIEWS

- Very personal; increases user empathy
- Produces rich qualitative information
- Enables follow-up questions

CHALLENGES OF USER INTERVIEWS

- Making participants feel comfortable
- Listening actively
- Respecting boundaries
- Avoiding leading, dead-end, and compound questions

A BAD EXAMPLE

Q: "So you feel that grilling outdoors fosters family togetherness?"

A: "Sure."

Q: "Is there anyone in your family who doesn't enjoy grilling?"

A: "My father."

Q: "But you feel it's a bonding ritual all the same?"

A: "Yeah, kinda."

Q: "How does grilling work in the text of your life? Would charcoal have interfered with the process of social bonding?"

A: "I'm not sure, really. We just prefer gas."

ASKING GOOD QUESTIONS

- Ask open-ended questions
- Ask about actual behavior, not intention
- Avoid leading questions
 - Avoid compound questions
 - Avoid pointing out specific issues

ASK OPEN-ENDED QUESTIONS

“Do you like to use free weights at the gym?”



“What types of equipment do you like to use at the gym?”



Let's try it

ASK ABOUT ACTUAL BEHAVIOR

“How many times **do you plan** to go to the gym this year?”



“Describe your gym schedule last year.”



Let's try it

AVOID LEADING QUESTIONS

“**Would you say** cardio classes are a better workout than weight lifting?”



Let's try it

“What type of exercise gives you the best workout?”



AVOID COMPOUND QUESTIONS

“When you’re at the gym, do you use free weights, **or** weight machines, **or like**, bands or straps, **or ...?**”



Rewrite this Question

AVOID POINTING OUT SPECIFIC ISSUES

“A lot of people think free weights are dangerous,
what are your thoughts on that?”



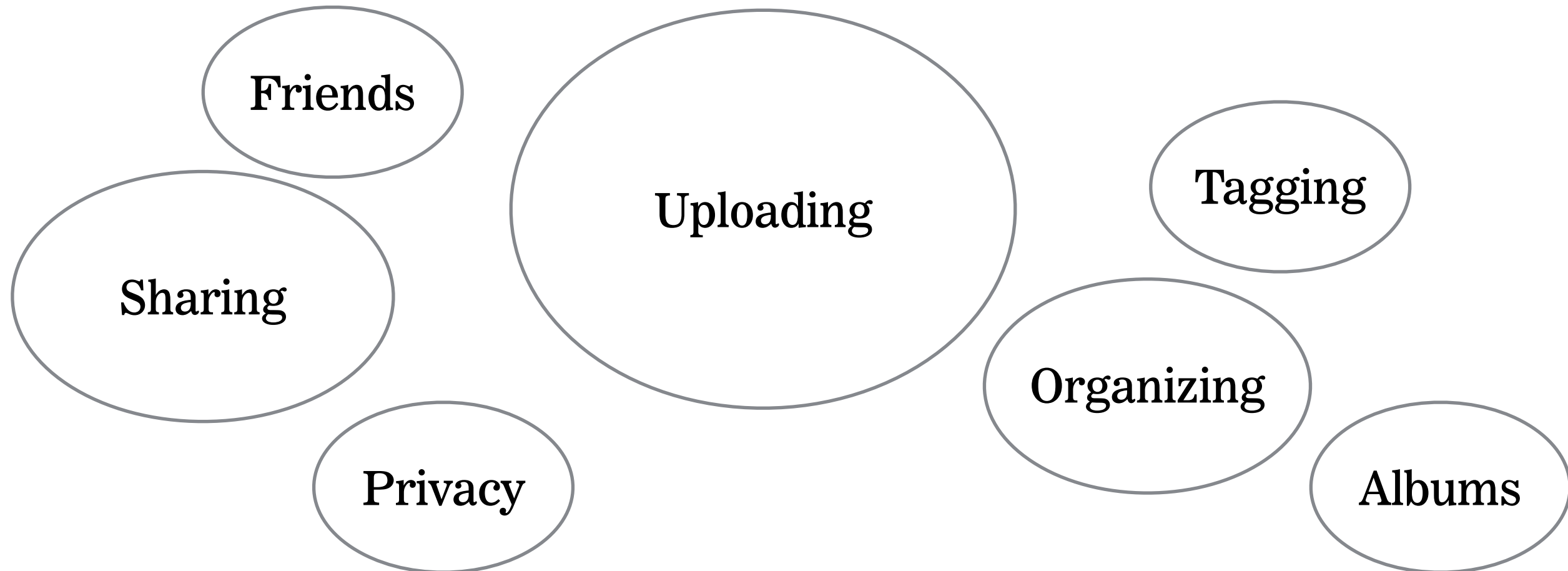
Rewrite this Question

CONDUCTING USER INTERVIEWS

HOW-TO CONDUCT A USER INTERVIEW

1. Prepare topics and questions
2. Conduct interviews
3. Analyze results

START WITH A TOPIC MAP



PREPARING QUESTIONS

- › Consider what you need to know about each topic
- › Carefully write unbiased questions
- › Consider what types of responses you might get
- › Write potential follow-up questions
- › Use your questions as a guide, not a script

MAKE PARTICIPANTS FEEL COMFORTABLE

- › Always ask for permission if you are recording
- › Explain the reason for the interview
- › Explain that their answers are confidential
- › Don't be a question robot
- › Take notes, but don't be buried in them

PRO TIPS

- Listen at least twice as much as you speak
- Don't feel the need to fill silence
- Don't interrupt
- Keep Them Talking
 - “Tell me more about...”
 - “What do you mean by...”
 - “Help me understand better...”

THE TIPPING POINT

- You'll know when you've asked a great question because the conversation will just flow.
- Smart Interviewers create space for stories to emerge. The moment a participant shifts from short answers to stories is the tipping point in an interview!
- It's much like real life. We small talk with our co-workers, but the tipping point to real honesty and openness is when we start to share our true experiences and stories. It can feel uncomfortable to probe, but the interview setting is not the time to worry about social discomfort!

EXERCISE

KEY OBJECTIVE(S)	AGENDA	
In pairs of two.	8 mins	1. Write 5 unbiased interview questions each
Create interview questions to understand a current users pain points surrounding their Kiosk experience	10 mins	2. Share your questions with your partner and narrow down to 5 final questions
DELIVERABLE	RESOURCES	
A Problem Statement.	Pencil and paper	

CONTEXTUAL INQUIRY



*“Quietly observing users is more valuable
and the real reason to go into the field”*

NIELSEN NORMAN GROUP



Driving & Working

Understanding Safety Concerns

WHEN TO USE THIS METHOD

- Before trying to change existing behavior
 - Redesigning an existing system
- When you have a finite number of potential users
 - Intranets or administrative features

WHY WE DO THIS

- Design should support and extend user's existing behavior
- Users are experts in how they do things
- More explicit than interviews, surveys, or other data

UNIQUE FEATURES OF CONTEXTUAL INQUIRY

- Conducted in context
- Participant and the researcher work together
- Researcher shares observations and asks for clarification

BENEFITS OF CONTEXTUAL INQUIRY

- Reveals tacit knowledge
- Flexible
- Focus on the right things
- Detailed

Q&A