

JEREMY: No. But we need to write about the illustrations, because they're an essential element of children's experience of reading the stories. It's probably easiest for you to write that section, as you know more about drawing than I do.

HELEN: Maybe, but I find it quite hard to write about. I'd be happier if you did it.

Q30

JEREMY: OK. So when do you think ...

SECTION 4

So what I'm going to talk about to you today is something called Ethnography. This is a type of research aimed at exploring the way human cultures work. It was first developed for use in anthropology, and it's also been used in sociology and communication studies. So what's it got to do with business, you may ask. Well, businesses are finding that ethnography can offer them deeper insight into the possible needs of customers, either present or future, as well as providing valuable information about their attitudes towards existing products. And ethnography can also help companies to design new products or services that customers really want.

Q31

Let's look at some examples of how ethnographic research works in business. One team of researchers did a project for a company manufacturing kitchen equipment. They watched how cooks used measuring cups to measure out things like sugar and flour. They saw that the cooks had to check and recheck the contents, because although the measuring cups had numbers inside them, the cooks couldn't see these easily. So a new design of cup was developed to overcome this problem, and it was a top seller.

Q32

Another team of ethnographic researchers looked at how cell phones were used in Uganda, in Africa. They found that people who didn't have their own phones could pay to use the phones of local entrepreneurs. Because these customers paid in advance for their calls, they were eager to know how much time they'd spent on the call so far. So the phone company designed phones for use globally with this added feature.

Q33

Ethnographic research has also been carried out in computer companies. In one company, IT systems administrators were observed for several weeks. It was found that a large amount of their work involved communicating with colleagues in order to solve problems, but that they didn't have a standard way of exchanging information from spreadsheets and so on. So the team came up with an idea for software that would help them to do this.

Q34

In another piece of research, a team observed and talked to nurses working in hospitals. This led to the recognition that the nurses needed to access the computer records of their patients, no matter where they were. This led to the development of a portable computer tablet that allowed the nurses to check records in locations throughout the hospital.

Q35

Occasionally, research can be done even in environments where the researchers can't be present. For example, in one project done for an airline, respondents used their smartphones to record information during airline trips, in a study aiming at tracking the emotions of passengers during a flight.

Q36

So what makes studies like these different from ordinary research? Let's look at some of the general principles behind ethnographic research in business. First of all, the researcher has to be completely open-minded – he or she hasn't thought up a hypothesis to be tested, as is the case in other types of research. Instead they wait for the participants in the research to inform them. As far as choosing the participants themselves is concerned, that's not really all that different from ordinary research – the criteria according to which the participants are chosen may be something as simple as the age bracket they fall into, or the researchers may select them according to their income, or they might try to find a set of people who all use a particular

Q37

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