Needfinding

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* some slides based on those of Julie Stanford, Stanford & Sliced Bread Design

Outline
- Needfinding
- Exercise
- Unpacking

Design Thinking Process

Empathy: Feel what they feel

Principles
1) Immerse
2) Observe
3) Engage

Technique: Active Observation

“You Can Observe a Lot Just by Watching”
—Yogi Berra

“Observe & interview without knowing what you are looking for

You can observe a lot just by watching”
—Yogi Berra
Needs gaps within a system

Needfinding: discovering opportunities by recognizing those gaps

Figure out the story of what and why...

And tell a new one

Pay attention to all the artifacts
Look for workarounds & hacks
“Errors” are a goldmine

Getting to Why

Needfinding starts with basic questions of everyday experiences
But moves from
- closed ended questions to open ended questions
- “whats” to “whys”
- actions to feelings

Engage people in their environment
A needfinding interview is….

One in which the interviewee speaks 90% of the time. Be ready to hear something new and be changed by it.

Defer your agenda & unlock their world

Step into the interviewee's shoes

Be curious

Have a "beginners mindset"

Good interviews require a broad set of questions – but be prepared to veer.

Interview Questions – Background

- **Background** — “Tell me about what you do here.”
- **Sequence** — “Walk me through your day yesterday…then what do you do next?”
- **Physical tour** — “Take me on a tour of how you build the panels…”
- **Virtual tour** — “Walk me through your sales process from the beginning…”
- **Participation** — “Can you show me exactly how you prepare a customer bid?”
- **Exhaustive List** — “What are all the different municipalities where you sell?”
Interview Questions – Build Rapport

- **Naïve Outsider Perspective** — “I’m not from LA, how does the housing market work here?”
- **Changes Over Time** — “How are things different than they were last year?”
- **Reflecting Back** — “So, what I hear you saying is….. is that right?”
- **Quantity** — “How many of your competitors fall into that category?”
- **Tasks and organizational structures** — “Can you draw me a diagram of your org. chart?”
- **Native Language** — “Why do you call your office the command post?”

Interview Questions – Stories & Emotions

- **Clarification** — “and when you say ‘I’m a closer,’ what do you mean exactly?”
- **Success and Failure** — “Describe your most successful sales call. Now tell me about a sales call that was an absolute disaster.”
- **Peer Comparison** — “Do your colleagues share your sales techniques?”
- **Other Viewpoint Comparison** — “What would other solar owners think about that?”
- **Characterization and Comparison** — “Could you characterize your sales style and compare it to Mike’s?”

Follow up and pull that thread

- Adjust your questions to their previous answers
- Ask questions in language they use / understand
- Pick up on/ask for examples
- Be flexible
Choosing Participants

- Representative of target users (current or future users)
  - usually not Stanford students
- Interview people on both sides of an interaction
- Experts good for background but aren’t substitute for users
- Consider interviewing extreme users
  - e.g., airport design: flies every week vs. never flown
- Typically interview 6-12 people individually for 30-90 min
- Note: interviewing children may require permission

Where to Recruit

- Depends on target audience…
- Nextdoor.com
- Facebook / wechat groups
- Craig’s List
- Local email lists (e.g., parents, etc.)
- Snowball sampling – when you recruit someone ask them to pass it on to others they think would be good…
- What’s worked for you????
**Common Pitfalls – Suggesting Answers**

- How was that decision reached? Was there a big meeting? Did your boss decide without you?…
- Let the informant paint his or her own categories of meaning
- Avoid suggesting answers
- Trust the question – ask it & stop talking

*Let there be silence*

**Common Pitfalls – Hypothetical Situations**

- What if I designed something that wasn’t as round and soft and annoying as your current thing and instead bounced up and down. Would that work for you?
- What about your friends? What would they do?

*Ask about events & things that actually happened/exists*
*Focus on getting the user’s point of view, not what they think someone else might do*

**There is More Than One Way to Ask “Why?”**

- Tell me more about that
- Tell me what you mean when you say XXX
- [last phrase the person said]?

**What are the gems?**

- You’ve uncovered a **surprise** found what is **missing**
- You can explain why people **do unusual things**
- You **want to tell others** about what you learned

**Share with your team**

- Stories
- Photos
- Sketches
- Quotes
Getting Started on Unpacking

one color PostIt per participant, take notes with a sharpie, write down snippets of everything

Using the Data Collected in the Field

• Figure out what is important
• Affinity diagramming
  – group info & find relations between groups
  – Post-Its on large surfaces

Users: Unique or One of Many?

“Take the attitude that nothing any person does is done for no reason; if you think it’s for no reason, you don’t yet understand the point of view from which it makes sense.

Take the attitude that nothing any person does is unique to them, it always represents an important class of customers whose needs will not be met if you don’t figure out what’s going on.”

(p. 63, Contextual Design)

Ethical Considerations in Needfinding

Testing/fieldwork can be coercive if there is a power imbalance (e.g., in under resourced communities)

People may feel no option but to speak to you or give you their time even though they may not get anything of value in return.

Needfinding Summary

• Build empathy with customers

• Listen to them to discover interesting insights

Next Time

• Lecture
  – 1) Define: define the problem/domain of interest
  – 2) Ideate: How might we solve the problem?

• Readings
  – d.school’s Empathy Fieldguide

• Watch
  – Unpacking/Journey Mapping (17 min.)