Needfinding

Prof. James A. Landay
Computer Science Department
Stanford University
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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

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. Interviews typically share the same basic structure as a story.

Closed-ended questions / What
Open-ended questions / Why

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 – Reflection

- Point to Their Reaction – “Why do you roll your eyes when you say that?”
- Suggestive Opinion – “Some people have very negative feelings about emotional sales pitches. What are your feelings about it?”
- Contradictions – “You tell me you can sell ice cubes to Eskimos but you also tell me you have a deep concern for your customers. How do these two work together?”

Interview

Autumn 2019
Design Thinking for User Experience Design, Prototyping & Evaluation

Closed-ended questions / What
Open-ended questions / Why

You mentioned you were focused on a calm year, but I hear you say you have no time to plan a vacation...

Adapted from Michael Barry

Keep recording...the last five minutes of an interview are often the best

A few last tips

- Remember that people make sense (to themselves)
- Your job is to be able to explain how they make sense - get to the bottom of things & understand the what & why
- Create a discussion guide with lots of questions (themes), but be ready to veer to pull threads

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???

Types of Questions to Avoid

- What they would do / like / want in hypothetical scenarios
- How often they do things
- How much they like things on an absolute scale
- Avoid binary questions
- “Tell me a story about yourself”

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

(a little bit of)
Silence is Golden

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?”

- Ask about events & things that actually happened/exists
- Get their 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.)