Effective Observation & Interview Techniques

Conversations about Design
Learning Objectives

By the end of this lecture, you will be able to:

• Explain the purpose of interviewing or observing others for design.
• Identify strategies for creating the space for a successful interview.
• Explain how to translate information from an interview into design specifications.
... do you know?
... do you not know?
... do you (all) have?
... do you not know that you do not know?
Problem
People with big problems?
People with Expert Knowledge and Resources.
... is affected by or is affecting the design focus?
... do you have access to?
... do you not have access to?
... do you not know that you need access to?
Student

Translator

Problem

Partner/Translator

Other Stakeholders
Knows about Stakeholder Setting

Student

Problem

Translator

Partner/Translator

Other Stakeholders

Subject Matter Expert
How?

... do you obtain the information you need?
... do you approach some challenge with the resources you (all) have?
Approach #1: Questionnaire?
Approach #2: Listen to experts

Student

Partner/Translator

Other Stakeholders
Create the space to listen: Interview
Tell me about X? What do others think about X? Why do they think that? If you do not know about X, tell me about something similar. How would you go about solving this problem involving X?

Ask the same question in multiple ways
Ask multiple people the same question

Tell me about X? What do others think about X? Why do they think that? If you do not know about X, tell me about something similar. How would you go about solving this problem involving X?
Ask multiple people the same question

Tell me about X? What do others think about X? Why do they think that? If you do not know about X, tell me about something similar. How would you go about solving this problem involving X?
Get connected to your global partners!

1.) Set up a plan (budget) to call via internet. (e.g., Skype, Google Voice)

2.) Record all conversations with permission from the partner (e.g., Pamela for Skype).
Use prototypes to get information.

Oh! I see!
Use the design to develop a relationship.

How is your family? How are you? Tell me about your work. Tell me about the people you represent. Let me tell you about my family.
Strategies to Create the Space for Listening

- Ask the same question in multiple ways
- Ask multiple people the same question
- Get connected to your global partners!
- Elicit information through prototypes when you can.
- Use the design to develop a relationship.
Street Crossing Design Scenario*

College campuses are often overcrowded with pedestrians crossing streets, since walking is a popular form of transportation for college students. One busy intersection on the Purdue campus is at Stadium and Northwestern outside Armstrong Hall (see diagram below). This is a high traffic area (cars, busses, bicyclists, pedestrians, etc.) due to its central location to campus, neighborhood dining establishments (e.g., Café Royale, McDonald’s, etc.), a gas station with a convenience store, and nearby construction on both sides of Northwestern. Often, people will not follow traffic rules when crossing the street (i.e., “jaywalking”). Sometimes, drivers will cut across Stadium to enter the gas station (see the car in the figure below). While the traffic signals limit certain activity (e.g., turning right on a red light from Stadium to Northwestern), accidents have happened and people have been seriously injured.

The President of the University has asked your team (among others) to design a cost effective method to cross Northwestern which would reduce the possibility of accidents at this intersection.

*Design task scenario adapted from Prof. Robin S. Adams.
Street Crossing Design Scenario

*Design task scenario adapted from Prof. Robin S. Adams.*
Your Job Today is To...

• Write down 2-3 questions that you would ask someone to better understand their experience with the intersection. (5 min.)

• In groups of 3, have one person interview the other two using their questions. (5 min.)

• Reflect: How would you approach the interview in your own project? Who would you need to interview? Who would you need to observe?
Additional Resources

- Stanford D-School
- IDEO Human-Centered Design Toolkit
- EPICS Project Partner Visit Guidelines