



Interview

There's no better way to understand the hopes, desires, and aspirations of those you're designing for than by talking with them directly.

Interviews really are the crux of the Inspiration phase. Human-centered design is about getting to the people you're designing for and hearing from them in their own words. Interviews can be a bit daunting, but by following these steps below you'll unlock all kinds of insights and understanding that you'll never get sitting behind your desk. Whenever possible, conduct your Interviews in the person's space. You can learn so much about a person's mindset, behavior, and lifestyle by talking with them where they live or work.

STEPS

TIME

60-90 minutes

DIFFICULTY

Moderate

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

Pens, paper, Interview Guide worksheet p. 166

PARTICIPANTS

Design team, person you're designing for

- 01** | No more than three research team members should attend any single Interview so as to not overwhelm the participant or crowd the location. Each team member should have a clear role (i.e. interviewer, note-taker, photographer).
- 02** | Come prepared with a set of questions you'd like to ask. Start by asking broad questions about the person's life, values, and habits, before asking more specific questions that relate directly to your challenge.
- 03** | Make sure to write down exactly what the person says, not what you think they might mean. This process is premised on hearing exactly what people are saying. If you're relying on a translator, make sure he or she understands that you want direct quotes, not the gist of what the person says.
- 04** | What you hear is only one data point. Be sure to observe the person's body language and surroundings and see what you can learn from the context in which you're talking. Take pictures, provided you get permission first.

METHOD IN ACTION



Interview

One of the pillars of human-centered design is talking directly to the communities that you're looking to serve. And there's no better way to understand a person's desires, fears, and opinions on a given subject than by interviewing them.

In 2012, IDEO.org worked with the World Bank's Consultative Group to Assist the Poor (CGAP) and the bank Bancomer to identify opportunities for new and more accessible savings products to serve low-income Mexicans. The team conducted a ton of Interviews over the course of the project, each time trying to understand how people save their money. Again and again the team heard, "I don't save money." But after asking a few more questions they came to learn that low-income Mexicans may not think of their informal methods as savings in the way that a bank might, but they are certainly socking money away. And understanding how they do it was critical to the team's ultimate design.

Thanks to their Interviews, the team learned that one man stashed extra money in the pockets of his shirts when he hung them in the closet. Another woman gave money to her grandmother because she knew that she wouldn't let her spend it on something frivolous. Still another woman parcelled her money out in coffee cans dedicated to various expenses like school fees, food, and rent.

The team even talked to one man who saved his money in bricks. He was "saving" to build a house so he put his extra money in building supplies and then, after a few years, constructed the house.

A key insight that came out of these interviews was that many low-income Mexicans don't save for saving's sake, they save for particular things. This idea led directly to the team designing a project-based approach to savings, aptly dubbed "Mis Projectos" (My Projects).

Try to conduct your Interviews in the homes or offices of the people you're designing for. Put them at ease first by asking more general questions before getting specific. And be sure to ask open-ended questions instead of yes-or-no questions.

Interview Guide

Open General

What are some broad questions you can ask to open the conversation and warm people up?

What kind of job do you have?

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How are you paid?

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How do you save for the future?

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Then Go Deep

What are some questions that can help you start to understand this person's hopes, fears, and ambitions?

How do you allocate your money now?

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Where do you actually keep the money you want to

put aside?

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What helps you save money?

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If you've visited a bank, tell us about your experience.

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Group Interview



You can come to a quick understanding of a community's life, dynamics, and needs by conducting a Group Interview.

Though a Group Interview may not offer the depth of an individual Interview (p. 39) in someone's home, it can give you a compelling look at how a larger set of the people you're designing for operates. The best Group Interviews seek to hear everyone's voice, get diverse opinions, and are strategic about group makeup. For example, an all-female group might give you insight into the role of women in a society whereas a mixed group may not. If you're looking to learn quickly what is valuable to a community, Group Interviews are a great place to start.

STEPS

TIME

90-120 minutes

DIFFICULTY

Moderate

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

Pens, paper, camera

PARTICIPANTS

At least 2 members of the design team,
7-10 people you're designing for

- 01** | Identify the sort of group you want to talk with. If you're trying to learn something specific, organize the group so that they're likely to have good answers to the questions that you've got.
- 02** | Convene the Group Interview on neutral ground, perhaps a shared community space that people of all ages, races, and genders can access.
- 03** | In a Group Interview, be certain to have one person asking the questions and other team members taking notes and capturing what the group is saying.
- 04** | Come prepared with a strategy to engage the quieter members of the group. This can mean asking them questions directly or finding ways to make the more vocal members of the group recede for a moment.
- 05** | Group Interviews are a great setting to identify who you might want to go deeper with in a Co-Creation Session (p. 109).



Expert Interview

Experts can fill you in quickly on a topic, and give you key insights into relevant history, context, and innovations.

Though the crux of the Inspiration phase is talking with the people you're designing for, you can gain valuable perspective by talking to experts. Experts can often give you a systems-level view of your project area, tell you about recent innovations—successes and failures—and offer the perspectives of organizations like banks, governments, or NGOs. You might also look to experts for specific technical advice.

STEPS

TIME

60-90 minutes

DIFFICULTY

Moderate

WHAT YOU'LL NEED

Pens, camera, notebook

PARTICIPANTS

Design team, expert

- 01** | Determine what kind of expert you need. If you're working in agriculture, perhaps an agronomist. In reproductive health? A doctor or policymaker may be a good bet.
- 02** | When recruiting your experts, give them a preview of the kinds of questions you'll be asking and let them know how much of their time you'll need.
- 03** | Choose experts with varying points of view. You don't want the same opinions over and over.
- 04** | Ask smart, researched questions. Though you should come prepared with an idea of what you'd like to learn, make sure your game plan is flexible enough to allow you to pursue unexpected lines of inquiry.
- 05** | Record your Expert Interview with whatever tools you have. A pen and paper work fine.