UX Interviewing: Personalized Coaching to Avoid Leaving Data on the Table

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Abstract

Ever wanted to be a better moderator? Feel like you're stuck in a rut with your current interviewing approach? Go beyond the basics of user interviews with personalized coaching that will enable you to create an individual action plan detailing your strengths, bad habits, and missed opportunities where you might be 'leaving data on the table.' There are numerous tips and tricks for managing difficult participants and troubleshooting technology. This is not that class. Working in small groups, we will review a video clip of each user researcher moderating a session, and provide feedback on behaviors that may be limiting the insights generated in the session. Our aim is to create a safe, supportive environment that allows us to turn the analytical lens on ourselves as researchers - working together to investigate patterns in our existing practice.

Author Keywords

Interview; qualitative methods; ethnography; usability study.

ACM Classification Keywords

H.5.2. Evaluation/methodology.

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Benefits

Attendees will receive:

- Personalized coaching from fellow workshop participants and a facilitator cohort of seasoned User Experience (UX) Researchers
- An individual action plan for improved interviewing and moderation
- A new model for group-based skill improvement that can be shared with colleagues and students

Content

This workshop draws on the concept of Kaizen, as famously employed by the Toyota Production System, to improve performance through participatory group oversight. Ultimately, our aim is to create a safe, supportive environment that allows us to turn the analytical lens on ourselves as researchers working together to investigate patterns in our existing practice, likely unconscious, that are:

- Bad habits that may be harmful
- Missed opportunities that 'leave data on the table'
- Good habits that are worth sustaining

The workshop begins with a 30 minute introduction establishing the rules for a safe learning environment, reviewing workshop goals and process, and introducing Kaizen and the Andon cord.

We will then break into preassigned groups to review and critique submitted participant videos.

Each workshop participant receives "10 Minutes of Fame" in which she introduces her selected clip with some brief context and the clip is viewed. During this time, anyone can 'stop the line' (i.e. stop the video) by pulling the Andon cord and providing feedback.

Being onstage and vulnerable is never easy, but we work hard to ensure that these sessions are a safe place to learn. Participants don't defend or explain; they simply receive feedback. The facilitator will provide a two minute debrief before moving to the next participant for up to four participants per group.

Participants then work individually on their action plans for 10 minutes incorporating peer feedback and their own observations into prepared facilitator notes. The larger group will then do a final 30-minute debrief and roundtable of session insights (total time: 2.5 hours or two 80 minute sessions inclusive of break).

Learning Objectives

The objectives of this workshop are to:

- Understand the basics of Kaizen and how it can be applied to skill development for UX researchers
- Explore productive ways of giving and receiving feedback

- Identify personal strengths and weaknesses for UX interviewing and session moderation

- Create a tailored, actionable improvement plan

By the end of this session, participants will have both learned a new model for group-based skill improvement and generated their own personalized action plan for improving their interviewing and moderation skills.

Audience
UX Researchers
Improved interview and moderation skills will enhance the practice of qualitative researchers engaged in usability studies and field research for enterprise, startups, nonprofits, and educational institutions. While researchers at any level can benefit from this session, we target experienced researchers with a good understanding of basic interviewing techniques, who want to take their skills to the next level through peer based critique.

Preferred audience size
24 enrolled participants. We encourage prospective participants to sign up for the waiting list, since we will need to strictly enforce mandatory pre-work to ensure the success of the course.

Prerequisites
All participants are required to submit in advance (non-confidential) video from a recent study that they have moderated. Anyone who does not submit a video at least one week prior to the workshop will not be allowed to attend. (If existing video is proprietary or unavailable, the facilitators can organize a brief user

session for prospective attendees, focusing on the evaluation of a nonprofit website).

Presentation Format
Small group discussion and critique of pre-submitted participant videos.

Instructor Background
Elizabeth Elliott Baylor is an applied anthropologist and Senior User Experience Researcher for Google's Communication organization. Based out of the Singapore office, she focuses on building messaging and communication tools for emerging markets. Elizabeth received her PhD from the University of South Florida and has previous experience at Microsoft, on the graduate faculty at the University of Alabama, and at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. Before UX, Elizabeth was a nutritional anthropologist researching foodways in Southeast Asia.

Marianne Berkovich is a qualitative user researcher who has helped teams at Google, Adobe, Lockheed Martin as well as dozens of startup social entrepreneurs understand people's needs in order to build great products. Through Marianne Berkovich Consulting, she now partners with companies working on meaningful problems, equipping them with the know-how to conduct their own user research. She holds a Masters in Human Computer Interaction from Carnegie Mellon University.

Martin Ortlieb recently left his position as a Staff User Experience Researcher at Google focusing on Privacy, sensitive data and user perceptions to become the Director of User Centered Practices at Steelcase. Before joining Google in 2008, Martin worked on both sides of

the client/consultant divide to improve services and products and their interfaces. He did his PhD at the University of Manchester, where his dissertation focused on the imagination of identity through conceptions of work.

Beverly Freeman is a UX Researcher at Google. Her research has informed shopping, payments, search, small business, social, and analytics experiences. Her favorite part about being a researcher is the opportunity to improve life for both users and product teams.

Dawn Shaikh is the User Experience Research Lead for Google's Communication organization in Kirkland, WA. Since joining Google in 2007, Dawn led research for a variety of teams including AdWords, Experimental Search efforts, Google Web Fonts, Internationalization, Chrome OS, and Google Apps for Business. She spent one year in Google's Bangalore office through the Engineering Ambassador program. Before joining the Communications org, Dawn built and managed the team of UX designers and researchers working on the Google Cloud Platform. Dawn received her PhD in human factors psychology from Wichita State University where she had numerous publications on typography.

Utkarsh Seth is a firm believer in "user-informed design" and has led a number of large scale research projects, which have enabled companies to ship a well-crafted product UX, informed by user needs, beliefs, intents and motivations. Utkarsh is currently working at Google as a Senior User Experience Researcher. Prior to joining Google, he worked at Nordstrom and Microsoft, where he gained experience researching platform level core UX on different hardware form factors. Utkarsh received his MS degree from Iowa State University majoring in HCI. His thesis was around designing interfaces to aid the design of compliant mechanisms in a VR environment.