Introduction

This method is based on three principles. It uses ground-breaking methods to gather information about an audience's needs and preferences, which can then be used to inform effective communication and engagement. The method involves the following steps:

1. Identify your audience and its purpose.
2. Conduct research to learn more about your audience.
3. Develop a strategy for communicating effectively with your audience.

Abstract

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Using Contextual Inquirery to Learn About Your Audience
Conversely, we observed an actual installation at a
site where the potential could not be overlooked.
Hence, we conducted a survey of the potential
and found that the potential was not as great as
first thought. As a result, the project was canceled.

figurative expression, this is a poetic language.

The Contextual Inquiry is based on the following three
principles:

1. Data Gathering must take place in the

context.

2. Principles are based on the following three:

3. The Contextual Inquiry is based on the following three

principles:

- Data gathering must take place in the context.
- Principles are based on the following three:
- The Contextual Inquiry is based on the following three

What is Contextual Inquiry?

Contextual Inquiry is a qualitative data-gathering and
analysis method that is used to understand how people
work with a specific product or service. It involves
conducting interviews and observations in the actual
context of use, where people are engaged in the
activities that the product or service is designed to
support. This approach helps researchers gain a
deep understanding of the users' needs, context, and
behavior, which can inform the design of new products
or services.

Using Contextual Inquiry, researchers can:
- Observe and interact with people in their natural
context.
- Collect data through structured and open-ended
methods.
- Analyze data to identify patterns and insights.
- Use findings to inform product design and development.

Contextual Inquiry is particularly useful in situations
where there is a lack of information about the user or
the context in which the product will be used. It can
provide insights that other research methods might
miss, such as understanding how people adapt and
customize products to meet their needs.

To conduct a Contextual Inquiry, researchers typically
follow these steps:

1. **Planning**: Determine the research goals and
scope, select the participants, and plan the
interviews and observations.

2. **Data Collection**: Conduct interviews and
observations in the context of use, and
collect data through various methods such as
videos, videos, and notes.

3. **Data Analysis**: Analyze the collected data
using thematic analysis, and identify patterns,
themes, and insights.

4. **Reporting**: Summarize the findings and
recommendations in a report.

Contextual Inquiry is a powerful tool for
understanding user needs and contexts of use, and
it can help researchers design products and services
that better meet user needs.
different field test site. The people at this site also
difficulty finding information. However, because we
developers were there to observe and talk with them about
their experiences, they were able to point to the ex-
tact parts of the book they were having trouble
with and make specific suggestions about organizing
sections on configuring PC options.

The People at the Inquiry Form a Partnership

Contextual inquiry differs from traditional inter-
views in that traditional interviews have an inter-
viewer who is usually in charge of the topics and
the flow of conversation. Contextual inquiry is based
on the premise that the inquirer and the participant are
equals. The inquirer may be an expert at one thing,
such as writing on the web, or the participant may be
the expert in his or her work. For example, if you are interviewing
developers in a software development department, the
people in that department may be experts in coding in C,
and the participant may be an expert in developing
software for a particular application. The inquirer
will work with the participant to gather information
about the user's context and the user's needs.

"Contextual Inquiry is based on
the premise that the inquirer
and the participant are equals."

The scope of a focus may be different depending on
the project or the stage of the development cycle. If you are at
the beginning stages of a project, the focus might
be broad, such as understanding the user's context.
If you are at the later stages of the project, the focus
might be more specific, such as understanding
the user's needs for a specific feature.

Who Conducts a Contextual Inquiry?

In our experience, a variety of team members have
conducted Contextual Inquiry. If the Contextual
Inquiry is being conducted for product development,
usually various members of the design and development
team will participate. For example, in the FORTRAN
operation team participate. For example, in the FORTRAN
project, a team of developers, designers, and analysts
from engineering, product management, and informa-
tion design participated. The focus for these
assumptions included not only the user information, but
also the addition or deletion of specific features and
improvements to the user interfaces of the products.

However, an information design team (technical
writing and documentation) can conduct its own Contextual
Inquiry. This type of inquiry is specifically designed to
conduct an information-specific focus. How
user information team for distributed computing and
reference information work, together with users.

The Inquiry Is Based on a Focus

Unlike a traditional survey, which consists of a spec-
cific set of questions that each respondent is asked
to answer, a Contextual Inquiry is based on a focus;
that is, a perspective or set of questions. Raising an
issue or concern in an interview gives the interviewee
the flexibility to follow a line of questioning that
might not have been on a list of questions.

For example, technical communicators might have
learned about a new tool for creating technical docu-
mentation. To explore that focus, the interviewer
could ask questions about the last time a partici-
pat asked the user documentation, whether they found
what they needed, and so on.

The focus of a Contextual Inquiry is based on
the types of information the inquirer needs, and what
delivery medium (online, hardcopy, interactive video,
and so on) will work best for them.
How Do You Conduct a Contextual Inquiry?

Contextual Inquiry is a methodology that has various implementations, depending on the type of project and the stage of the development cycle. Regardless of the type of implementation, the Contextual Inquiry method consists of the same basic process for conducting it. In fact, we recognize several different processes, depending on the type of project and the stage of the development cycle. These processes are compared in Table 1.

![Table 1: Various Implementations of Contextual Inquiry](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Implementation</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work-based interview</td>
<td>This is the traditional Contextual Inquiry method. Use a work-based interview when the process is being undertaken, for example, when you are observing employees at a help desk. This method is appropriate for user observation and involves asking the employees about the calls they handle. Then you would interview them about these calls after they finish with the calls, or after a certain period of time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-observation interview</td>
<td>Use post-observation interview when you cannot interrupt the user. The user engages in an activity, and you observe and interview them while they are engaged in their activity. It consists of interviewing a user while he or she does actual work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artifact walkthrough</td>
<td>Use artifact walkthroughs under the following circumstances: They probably the most common approach for studying user information. It involves asking either an individual or a team of people to recreate a specific process for you. After the team creates the process, they can then reconstruct the process used to write their latest documentation set (such as personal calenders, memos, or plans). They would bring artifacts associated with the process (such as personal calenders, memos, or plans) and tape these artifacts at the appropriate places along the timeline.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Choose three or four customers, talk to them about the problems they encounter with your product. Identify the features of your product that they use and discuss how these features benefit them. This will help you understand which customer segments are most interested in your product and which features they value most.

Identify customers and arrange visits

When interviewing customers, listen carefully to their feedback. Try to understand their needs and preferences. This will help you make informed decisions about how to improve your product and services.

Use the following tips to help you identify customers:

1. Choose three or four customers who are representative of your target market.
2. Schedule appointments with these customers to meet face-to-face.
3. Listen carefully to their feedback and take notes on their needs and preferences.

Once you have identified key markers of success, you will be able to measure the effectiveness of your marketing efforts and make informed decisions about how to optimize them for maximum impact.
clearer picture of all the possible ways your product can be used (or possible problems that people can have with it). You can find overlap among three very different sites or companies, and you can see how one site might help you fix a problem that another site solves. In the end, many other customers who visit your site will benefit from your research.

Arrange visits

Arranging the visit includes choosing specific users to visit, selecting sites to visit, and asking about site visits. You can use this technique to learn about different roles and skills that people have. You can also try to determine what kinds of people you would like to talk to at each site to get an idea of the kinds of people you should talk to at each site.

- Work with product management, marketing, and sales to identify specific people to visit.
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- Work with product management, marketing, and sales to identify specific people to visit.

Your focus should determine the specific job roles and skills you want to talk to. For example, in the case of the operating system, you might want to speak to people about improving system management user information. However, you might not know if you should talk to users about improving system management user information.

The usability engineer who was working on the client-server architecture used application development to address the large audience segment of users. Future studies will address other audiences, such as system designers, system integrators, and administrators.

The FORTRAN team placed a request for participation from the internet and found some local FORTRAN programmers willing to participate. They also found people from Sweden who were willing to participate, but there was not enough time or money in the budget to travel to those users.

- Try to choose people that are as different from each other as possible (for the same reasons that you want three sites with different types of information you need to provide, if there is a new product, or how you can improve existing information).
- Choose who attends each interview.
- When you choose who visits which customers.

Set the focus

Setting the focus is an important and sometimes difficult task, especially if you have a contextual inquiry that includes only the members of the information design group. Your focus is probably going to be the types of events you choose for the people participating. Your focus is probably going to be the types of events you choose for the people participating. Your focus is probably going to be the types of events you choose for the people participating. Your focus is probably going to be the types of events you choose for the people participating.
6. If you don't use bookreader why not

5. Copy

4. For what kinds of information do you use hard

3. Do you use bookreader to get product info

2. Build

1. Can you think of a better name for the product

---

1. Write your work on one of the products to be
done in class.

2. Develop additional statements in class.

3. Define the target audience.

4. Develop additional statements in class.

5. Define the target audience.

6. Define the target audience.

---

1. Group A

2. How do you use the product guide?

3. Do you use other information sources?

4. When using bookreader better results?

5. How do you use the product guide?

6. How would you use the product guide?

---

1. Group B

2. How useful do you find the product guide?

3. Can you think of a better name for the product guide?

4. Develop additional statements in class.

5. Write your work on one of the products to be
done in class.

6. Develop additional statements in class.

---

1. Similar questions into the following groups:

2. How do you use the product guide?

3. When using bookreader better results?

4. How do you use the product guide?

5. How would you use the product guide?

6. How useful do you find the product guide?

---

1. Delete the following names:

2. Brannon open-ended questions and write:

3. Write your work on one of the products to be
done in class.

4. Develop additional statements in class.

5. Write your work on one of the products to be
done in class.

6. Develop additional statements in class.
Conduct the interview:
Most interview questions have three parts, regardless of whether you are conducting a work-based interview, an artifact walkthrough, or another type of contextual inquiry. These parts are:

1. An introduction
2. An inquiry about the work
3. A summary of learnings and shared understandings

The following are some tips to help streamline the interview process:
- If possible, tape record or video record all three parts of the interview.
- Ask clarifying questions about what you are doing and why they are doing it.
- Generate a list of questions together.
- Record the interview.

Because it is more important to maintain the focus of the interview than to take notes, we recommend that you record the interview and ask questions later. During the interview, focus on the product and the process, not the interviewee.

For example, the distributed computing team videotaped their interviews. One person was in charge of running the equipment and taking notes; the other person was in charge of conducting the inquiry, although that person took notes as well.

An introduction

The introduction is somewhat like a traditional interview. That is, we introduce ourselves and explain the focus of the inquiry. Having disassociated many questions into two or three general focus questions allows us to state the focus of our inquiry in one or two sentences.

We also make it clear that the users are the experts at the kind of work they do, and that they should never worry about whether they are using the product properly or not. However, they use it correctly for them. We also use the introduction to make

Some people who are experienced in Contextual Inquiry have only to review the affinity diagram of the focus area and then conduct the inquiry. Others feel more confident if they have documented the focus areas, including the open-ended questions under the headings. We call this an interview template. It is acceptable to use such a template, but keep in mind that you do not have to ask every question on it.
The process of creating the steps involved in each

whether the clues are working properly.

The questions that you ask yourself about the

to provide a working definition and set a
draw the conclusion about the effectiveness of the
documentation itself.

- Be aware that not all questions are
  about the effectiveness of the
documentation. Some questions may be
  more about the clarity of the
documentation or the way it is
  presented.

- The answers to these questions will
determine the effectiveness of the
documentation.

- Remember that the goal is to make
  sure that the documentation is
  clear, concise, and easy to read.

- This will help ensure that the
  documentation is useful and
  effective.

- When evaluating the effectiveness of the
  documentation, consider the following:

- Is the documentation easy to
  understand?

- Is it clear and concise?

- Does it provide the
  information needed to
  do the job?

- Does it explain the
  concepts clearly?

- Does it include
  examples or
  illustrations?

- Is it well
  organized?

- Does it meet
  the needs of
  the reader?
Analyzing the Information From the Visit

The interview that is not in the notes. It is also a good idea to reread anything that was said during the interview to see if you missed any points. You might also want to review and read anything that you might have forgotten.

It is important to recast your notes after the interview.

A summary of learning.
- Organize similar groups into larger groups and create the concept of the group.

- Create general headings for each group that sum up the following:

Group:
- no more than four or five items per column. Posters are easy to read. If too many columns or rows per poster, the board is too crowded. Use the word "big" at the top of each column. The main idea of the column is "big." It is easier to organize similar items into groups. It is easier to organize ideas into groups. When all important ideas have been recorded,

- or so low as to make it impossible to read.

Interchange can be used as many as 200 posters.

This process is non-consumable, but improves:

1. When the rear view is not in sight, the speaker reads the notes/lean.

2. Each member of the leaning team reads the notes/lean.

3. The leaning team chooses an alternative to make each note.

4. Note: some accents that did not make it into the notes. Next, connect these notes and open ended sentences of the story of the leaning. This story usually sets the stage for the next story. This story usually sets the stage for the next story.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Heading</th>
<th>Data</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Benefit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hardware Doc Improvements</td>
<td>Make sure adequate (and the required) documentation is available</td>
<td>Make hub and cable sets with the hubs</td>
<td>User can configure (option) and use hub management tool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Document 48v UPS interface (make sure 48v is verified)</td>
<td>Make hub configuration rules simple</td>
<td>User can configure (option) and use hub management tool</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>User could not find any documentation</td>
<td>Explain why to use 4 pin wire INSOFM setup (Quick Start)</td>
<td>Easier for less-skilled users to maintain our products</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>User said that if Digital wants to sell to small account like 2, we should not assume any networking knowledge</td>
<td>User likes starter books (2)</td>
<td>Easier for user to troubleshoot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Software Doc Improvements</td>
<td>Create a Quick Reference Card</td>
<td>User can learn basics quickly</td>
<td>User can learn basics quickly</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 2: Sample Data/Action Table**

**Work Flow Diagram**

To create a work flow diagram, do the following:

1. Review the notes from each interview.
2. Create a flow chart that shows the process that each participant shares.
3. Display and compare all the flowcharts.
4. Create a composite work flow diagram of task participants share.

**Conclusion**

The strength of Contextual Inquiry lies in its ability to help teams gather direct user information. Contextual Inquiry generates specific guidelines that can be used in some cases. Contextual Inquiry provides more code examples, this Contextual Inquiry generates more code examples, this Contextual Inquiry provides more code examples, this Contextual Inquiry generates more code examples, this Contextual Inquiry generates more code examples.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>Goal of the Task</th>
<th>Kind of Information Required</th>
<th>Delivery Preference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>To learn enough technical detail about the technology to gain confidence in it and to identify potential problem areas</td>
<td>Conceptual overview of the technology, learning objectives, and high-level tasks</td>
<td>Hard copy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Design</td>
<td>To write down the high-level organization of the application, including the interactions among its components</td>
<td>Details of technical product features so developer understands what is feasible and what is not</td>
<td>Hard copy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implement</td>
<td>To write the code for the testing or module</td>
<td>Task-oriented information that describes how to perform specific tasks, that is, what the API does and how to process the return code</td>
<td>Online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debug</td>
<td>To narrow down a problem to a specific API and identify and correct errors as quickly as possible</td>
<td>Explanations of error messages, descriptions of APIs, and troubleshooting information</td>
<td>Online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Test</td>
<td>To verify that the module performs as expected</td>
<td>Descriptions of APIs, explanations of error messages, and troubleshooting information</td>
<td>Online</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrate</td>
<td>To integrate a module into a larger system</td>
<td>Descriptions of APIs, explanations of error messages, and troubleshooting information</td>
<td>Online</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

References:

Acknowledgments:
Writers who participate in Contextual Inquiries gain an in-depth understanding of their audiences that can help them provide more useful documentation that supports their work. Writers can also use Contextual Inquiry to validate the added value that documentation provides to users.

We thank John Bennett, Karen Holzblatt, Sandra Jones, Steve Kozol, and Dennis Watson for developing the initial example of the Help Message utility and Minette Bebes for sharing her examples of a multimedia study. Minette Bebes for sharing her examples of a multimedia study at Digital has contributed to our understanding and experience with Contextual Inquiry, and we thank them all.

We also thank those who participated in the various Contextual Inquiry studies and who are too numerous to mention.