Conducting an Interview with Empathy

Preparing for an Interview

To make the most out of your interviews, you should sufficiently prepare your team before each one. Having a plan for your interview will make it much more smoother and make sure you cover all the important areas in one sitting.

Use these steps to help you prepare and plan for an interview:

1 Brainstorm with your team the questions you can ask. To maximise the spread of potential questions, remember to build on one another's ideas.

2 After the brainstorming session, group the potential questions into areas or themes. After you have identified all the themes your questions belong to, try to figure out the best order of themes that would ensure a smooth flow of conversation. Are there themes that are slightly more probing? Then put them towards the middle of the interview. Additionally, if one theme builds on another, it would be good for them to follow one after another.

3 The last step to preparing your interview is to polish the questions. Remove repeated questions, and consolidate or separate questions where necessary. Make sure your questions allow you to tap into the emotions of your interviewee.

Conducting an Interview

Here are some tips you can use when conducting your interviews with users:

- Ask why, even if you think you know the answer. Don't assume to know what users are thinking or feeling — sometimes, their answer might surprise you.

- Ask for anecdotes. When asking users about their experiences, try to tease out stories of what they did in the recent past, rather than asking about generic experiences. For example, ask them about the last time they used a recipe app, instead of asking about their experience with recipe apps in general.

- Observe for body language — they often tell us more than what was spoken!

- Don't lead the question. When asking a question, frame it to be as neutral as possible. Rather than asking "Do you think it's very troublesome to find recipes?", try "What do you think of the process of finding recipes?" instead.

- Have an interview partner. It's impossible to take notes while listening to what your interviewee is saying at the same time. If you can't find a partner, use an audio recording app while you interview so you can be focused on following up and asking questions.

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Design Thinking: The Beginner's Guide

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