

Course C10

Top Field Interview Mistakes: Recognizing and Preventing Them

1 unit

Instructor:

Karen Holtzblatt, InContext Enterprises

Benefits:

Conducting interviews with customers and end users is now considered to be a standard practice. Few organizations argue against interviewing customers, the battle has been won that we must be able to talk to our customers. However, finding the time and human resources to go out to the customer isn't easy, so we must be sure that we are getting as much as possible out of those interviews.

But what makes for an effective interview? Is it even worth doing a field interview if it is a traditional question and answer interview with a set of prepared questions to ask in advance? And even if you've been trained in an interview method like Contextual Inquiry that relies on observation, not prepared questions, it can be easy to fall back into old interview patterns that are not Contextual Inquiry. You are asking questions and the user is answering you, but you aren't seeing him or her do their real work. The user is either giving you one-word answers, or long explanations about what the he or she "typically" does. You sense you've fallen into an unproductive interview pattern but you can't seem to get out of it.

The Top Mistakes format serve as a framework to explain the underlying principles of Contextual Inquiry interviewing and point out the most common or problematic pitfalls that interviewers can fall into. Attendees will learn tested techniques for getting the most out of interviews with users, which they can both use for improving their own skills and as a framework for assisting others in their organizations. The course also provides practical Dos and Don'ts tips for interviewing, and interviewing style characterizations that illustrate ineffective styles.

Origins:

The course is based on material previously presented InContext's Understanding Your Customer and Rapid Contextual Design workshops, which have been taught in public and on-site classes. It was presented as a 90-minute course for the first time at CHI 2006 as "Top 10 Interview Mistakes" and was highly rated. This year's course includes selected material from the 2006 version, plus more examples and video clips from a sample interview.

Features:

Participants will learn:

- Principles that underlie good customer interviews, how to behave, what to look for during an interview
- Interview styles to be avoided, such as "Court Reporter" and "Police Interrogator"

- Techniques for avoiding mistakes and how to take corrective steps when mistakes occur

Intended Audience:

No specific background is required. It is appropriate for all roles.

Presentation Style:

Lecture and group discussion, video

Instructor's Background:

Karen Holtzblatt is the co-developer of the customer-centered process Contextual Design. She co-authored “Contextual Design: Defining Customer-Centered Systems” and “Rapid Contextual Design: A How-to Guide to Key Techniques for User-Centered Design”. Karen is the President and CEO of InContext Enterprises, an industry-leading design firm.

Website for more information about the instructor: www.incontextdesign.com