Rich Insights! 2010

context mapping put into practice

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Contents

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title

Preface

body

Innovating from behind a desk, or based upon technological possibilities is outdated. Through the elective Rich Insights! master students Industrial Design Engineering are taught to explore the users' daily context, to involve them in the design process and tempt them to share deep thoughts and feelings, in order to find out what people really need.

In 2009 the elective Rich Insights! was set up in order to give students practical experience with user-centered research and design techniques.
During this second edition of Rich Insights! five groups of students worked for five different clients (both large enterprises and small and medium sized enterprises), resulting in very versatile projects and results.

Reading instructions

For the elective, five groups of three students set up and executed a contextmapping study for a commercial party, analyzed the results and then translated and communicated it in a rich and inspiring way. Each student group had its own company and target group, ranging from active outdoor sportsmen to do-it-yourself painters, entrepreneurs and from SuperConnectors to parents of young children.
In this brochure the method and background of contextmapping is explained. Subsequently the different case studies are explained with commentaries of both student groups and the companies. In the final chapters the differences between working for large enterprises and small and medium sized enterprises is reflected upon and a review of the course is given.

intro

Modern technology makes it possible to produce almost anything people dream of, but what do people dream of? In addition, the digital era we live in makes it easy to reach large groups of people, but how do you involve them in an innovation process and which questions do you ask them?

author

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intro
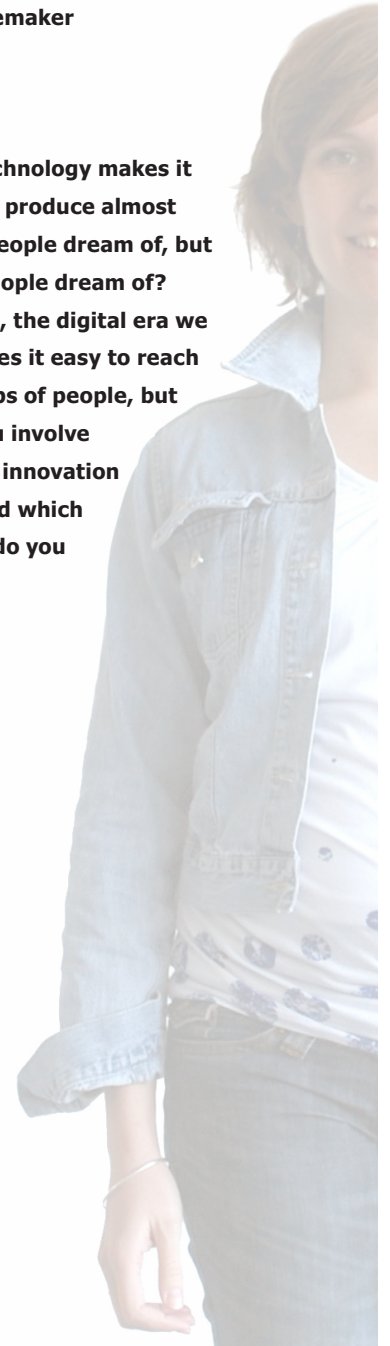
**During Rich Insights! 2010,
fifteen students of the Delft
University of Technology deepened
their knowledge and skills on
contextmapping techniques building
on the course ID4215 Context and
Conceptualization. The project was
accompanied by user-centered
design agency Muzus, supported
by the ID-Studiolab team of the
Delft University of Technology
and executed for various different
companies.**

title
Who were there?!

body

This second edition of the elective Rich Insights! was initiated by Sanne and Neele Kistemaker and Pieter Jan Stappers.
Sanne and Neele are the co-owners of user centered design agency Muzus, where contextmapping techniques are used on a daily basis for innovative product design, the development of user centered service design, and solutions to organizational problems. They love to transfer what they learn from practice to students.

Pieter Jan Stappers, professor Design Techniques at the Delft University of Technology, is convinced that it is important for master students to be able to deepen their contextmapping skills in practice.

The fifteen students participating in the elective, all have a strong interest in researching and designing user experiences. They already gained basic knowledge into the contextmapping process during their education, with practice of the analysis and communication of results. The elective Rich Insights! offers the students an opportunity to enrich practical skills in a realistic commercial setting and experience the needed nuances for executing a successful contextmapping study.

Representatives of the different companies participating all had a specific question and are inspired by the contextmapping method as an answer to their question.

references   www.id-studiolab.nl
www.muzus.nl
www.contextmapping.com

Students

Tijl Hoornstra	Freya Ruijs	Anita van Schie
Tanja Baars	Sem Carree	Frank Borsboom
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* no picture

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difrax Let's Grow   Jonathan van Veelen

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intro

In recent years concepts like 'co-creation', 'ethnography' and 'user participation' received a lot of attention in the realm of design. Companies recognize the importance of better understanding their customers; designers are looking for ways to enrich their understanding of the user's everyday life, to come up with better fitting designs.

title

Background of contextmapping

body

To achieve such understanding designers need more than the classic design brief or the usual, mostly quantitative and/or textual, marketing reports. Empathizing with the user and the context of use is equally important as to understand the functionalities of a product. This is often referred to as 'stepping into the user's shoes'. One approach to achieve this is to include users in the design team: co-creation. Another way is for the designer to immerse him/herself into the life of the user. A third possibility is to create a rich image of values and needs together with the user.

In practice time and money to really associate with users is often limited, therefore it is important to work effectively and efficiently. Simultaneously a lot of information needs to be gathered. Questions like who, what, where, when, why, how, with whom, how long, etc. instigate the process. However, there is no fully developed theory to be followed. It does not have to be complete, but a usable guide to help designers gain excess to the user's world; a map of the context, a contextmap.

Actions happen in a context: where is she, who is she calling?

"You must step into the user's shoes"

*A map as metaphor
to inform designers*

The contextmapping method builds such a map in three steps: Starting with a collection of data by using cultural probes and generative techniques. Next interpreting and structuring (analyzing) the data to develop insights, using qualitative research methods. Finally communicating the insights, focusing on both objective and subjective data.

Over the past five years the contextmapping group of ID-StudioLab has conducted research on these methods together with national and international industries and design agencies. The findings are applied in education almost immediately, like this Rich Insights! elective, but also in workshops, courses and through the website.

References

Sleeswijk Visser, F., Stappers, P.J., van der Lugt, R., Sanders, E.B.-N. (2005) Contextmapping: Experiences from practice. *CoDesign*, 1(2), 119-149

"I,m NOT INSPIRED by
your DIAGRAMS"
[R&D about marketing data]

The contextmapping process

| preparing | sensitizing | make & say | discussing | analyzing | capture & share | conceptualizing |

session

collecting user insights   share with and communicate to the design team

author(s)

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intro
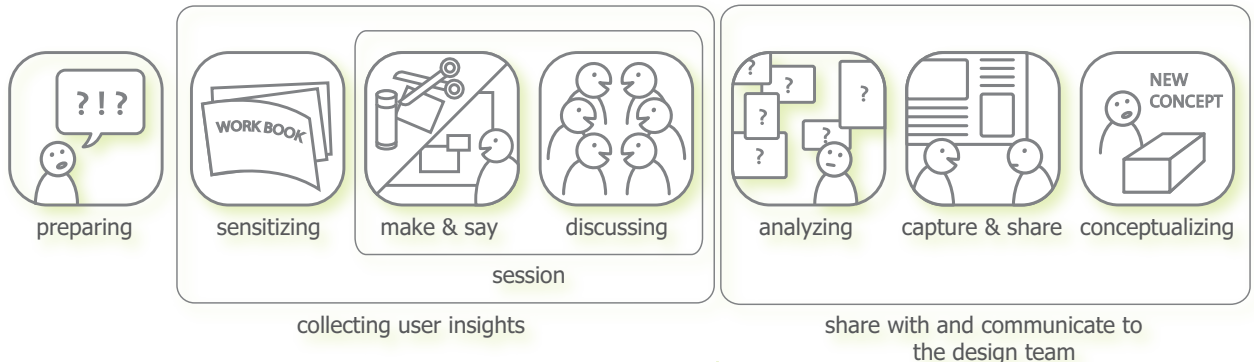
Contextmapping is a method to gain insight in the environment, emotions and needs of the real person behind the customer, enabling industries to develop products and services that complement this. In contextmapping, the user is considered to be the 'expert of his or her experiences'. Through generative techniques and intensive contact the living environment of customers is mapped. This metaphorical map shows directions and possibilities, but also threats. Developers and designers can use this map to find their way in the development process.

title

Contextmapping, the basics!

body

The techniques used are aimed at gaining the deeper-lying knowledge and values of customers, together with customers. They are a complement to more usual research methods like questionnaires, observational studies and focus groups. The techniques mentioned last focus primarily on what people are able to tell or show by doing. This provides merely explicit knowledge from the present. However, to get a better understanding of the future, surely essential with the development of products and services, it is important to dig deeper and get the needs and interests that aren't on the tip of your tongue.

This 'silent' or tacit, and latent knowledge, that people do have but which is difficult to express, or of which they are not aware, is addressed by making use of 'generative tools'. The basic principle of these tools is letting people *make* and *say*. By creating an artifact (make) and telling about it (say), a bridge is built between what people know, feel and dream. By talking about memories and stories, they get aware of their latent needs, to which one can respond with innovative designs.

Make and *Say* assignments let participants take small steps in constructing and expressing deeper levels of knowledge about their experiences.
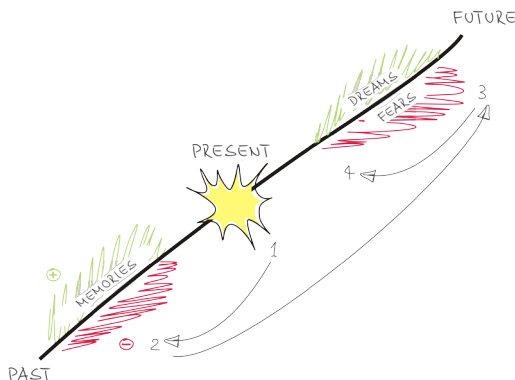
The deeper layers of people's values and needs will remain important in the future, making it a good foundation for the development of future products and services.
It is important to explore the current situation of people, gaining insight in their experiences under the condition 'here and now'. Retrieving positive and negative memories helps getting to know deeper knowledge and latent needs. Therefore it is important to start by looking back at the past with users, before gaining insights in their wishes, dreams and fears, which underlie their needs for the future.

Different research methods deliver different levels of understanding user experiences, as shown in this figure. Accepted techniques respond to 'here and now', resulting in knowledge on what people do and say. Generative techniques side with the lower parts of the diagram. What people experience can be marked as 'silent' knowledge, or difficult to express (tacit), or hidden (latent).
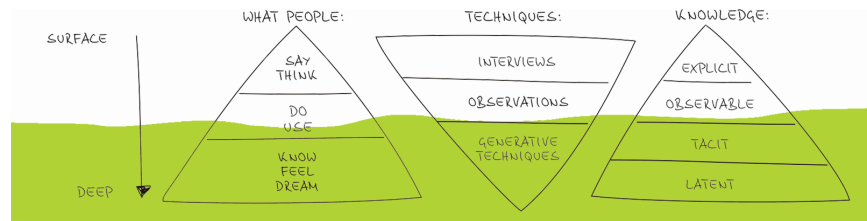
Generative techniques make it possible to retrieve these deeper-lying knowledge and needs, by helping the people articulating these needs in small steps. This is done in a generative session

by letting participants make creative assignments with rich images and words, which allow them to recapture memories and tell about associations and anecdotes concerning the subject of the study.

This opens up a hidden world of user experiences from which information and insights can be obtained. But it is more than information this method brings. Participants often become very motivated to remain involved with the project; they are curious about the results and are willing to contribute more, for instance with the evaluation of concepts. Their contribution is extremely appreciated. The personal approach makes them feel connected. Especially when they see their effort being used within a project or organization, the participants get the feeling of co-ownership and co-developer, creating support for further innovation.

With a contextmapping study, the number of participants is relatively small compared to quantitative market research, but the communication is very intensive. Instead of results shown as percentages or numbers to prove an already existing insight, conceptions and ideas of directions not previously recognized are developed.

A contextmapping study yields results at different levels:
- it creates a structural link and intensive contact between the parties involved, like company, client and design team;
- it creates a shared language and understanding between these stakeholders;
- it generates inspiration, information and empathy on different levels;
- it helps to materialize relevant questions and reveals blind spots;
- it makes it possible to invalidate or confirm prejudices about customer(groups).

Generative session, participant creating an artifact

Example of an artifact created by a participant

9

Procedure

A contextmapping study requires a mix of organisational, design and research activities; from preparation and planning, sensitizing and generative session(s) to analysis and communication.

Preceding the study, during the preparation phase, the target of the study is clearly formulated. A planning is made, participants are selected and the choice for specific research methods is made. Although generative techniques are less formal than regular research techniques, they require designer skills.
A successful implementation depends on a careful selection of the exploration areas.

'Sensitizing', is meant to prepare the participants for the session(s). In the course of one week (or more) memories are triggered by self-reflection assignments. Sensitizing gives participants insight in their experiences, enabling them to talk about this in a group session with other participants.

Analyzing the data

During the session, the participants are brought together to carry out generative assignments in which they create artifacts with the help of expressive components. By explaining their artifacts to the group, they can express their thoughts, feelings and ideas more easily.

The qualitative data retrieved from the session is rich and varied. It consists of life stories, anecdotes, quotes, photos and/or videos, created by the participants in their own world. It is customary to record the stories and anecdotes of the session, and transcribe these, to make the data suitable for analysis. The purpose of the analysis is to explore the user's world, get inspired by it and discover expected and unexpected inspirations.
The final step is communicating the data to the people

that will translate these insights to concrete solutions for innovation, which is possible on different levels. It is important that this communication takes place early in the development process, so the results can inform and inspire the team. With this, the output of the communication is important; conventional reports are rarely used by design teams. Interactive forms, like workshops and personas, are far more effective in communicating the richness of the data unlike the classical written report.

Contextmapping is a flexible process, and the steps to follow are not as strictly separated as described above. In practice, the different steps overlap, as do the roles of user, designer and researcher.

references

Sleeswijk Visser, F., Stappers, P.J., van der Lugt, R., Sanders, E.B.-N. (2005) Contextmapping: Experiences from practice. *CoDesign*, 1(2), 119-149

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www.contextmapping.nl

Clustering the data into themes
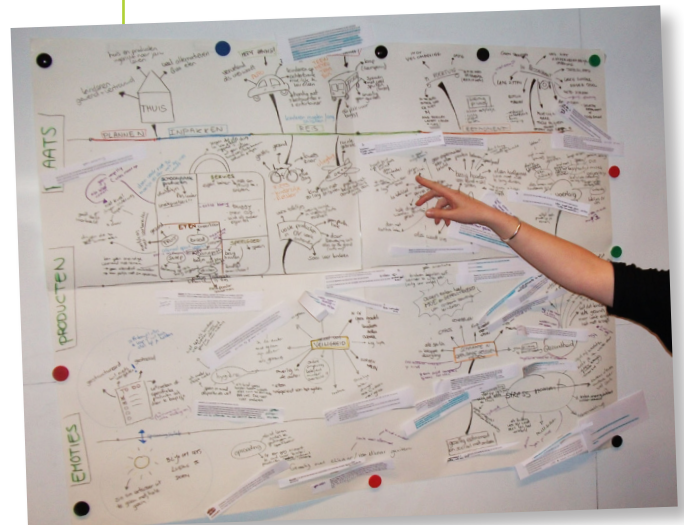
Infographic showing conclusions of the data

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intro

By means of contextmapping, different stakeholders become involved in the development process; user insights are translated to possible solutions, products and services. The theory and techniques are still under development and should not be seen as a strict set of instructions. Different methods and approaches are continuously explored and tested. Interesting starting point of this years' elective: large companies versus small sized enterprises.

title

Theory in practice - LEs versus SMEs[*]

body

Contextmapping is a qualitative research technique in which researchers, designers and participants, are involved intensively over a longer period of time. Hence this research technique is time-consuming and therefore expensive. As a result, the technique is more likely to be applied in larger companies with large research budgets in contrast to small-medium sized enterprises (SMEs). However, contextmapping can also be of great importance for the latter.

Applying user-research for SMEs is recently catching on. Amongst others, the Hogeschool Utrecht and the Delft University of Technology are researching this topic. In addition to this research, Muzus and the DUT wanted to gain insight on the effectiveness and differences of contextmapping, for both large companies and SMEs.

These differences are explored by means of five case studies. The case descriptions can be found in the following chapters. Afterwards, the projects were evaluated and compared. The final chapter presents the conclusions of this comparison.

Kickoff: participating companies introducing themselves to the students and other companies

The participating companies of this year's elective were:

Large companies
- AkzoNobel (Division DIY | Flexa),
- E.ON Benelux
- Wacom Europe GmbH

Small-medium sized enterprises
- Difrax BV
- Kenneth Veenenbos industrieel ontwerp

* According to EU legislation, small and
  medium sized enterprises are defined
  as enterprises which employ fewer than
  250 persons and whose annual turnover
  does not exceed EUR 50 million or
  whose annual balance-sheet total does
  not exceed EUR 43 million. Enterprises
  which exceed these numbers are
  defined as large enterprises.

*Deliverable: interactive workshop with
the sales and marketing department to
communicate the results.*

references

www.akzonobel.nl

www.eon-benelux.com

www.wacom.com

www.difrax.nl

www.kennethveenenbos.nl

Informal lecture on contextmapping in practice

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intro

Five groups of students were linked to the various companies. Each company proposed their own research focus and target group, which the students had to work with. Let us introduce the companies and their case studies!

Assumptions about travelling before talking to participants

title

Case studies

body

Rich Insights! on 'travelling with young children'
Case study Difrax BV

Difrax BV creates products for children between 0-4 years old, with a focus on eating and drinking. Currently, the company is looking at new products with a specific focus on mobility.

Therefore, the company wants to gain rich insights on what parents of young children experience when they are "on the move" with their children, with a focus on the eating and drinking moments during this travel. Difrax is interested in the way people travel with children. What problems do they encounter, what is the role of mother/father on this journey and how do they experience this?

The students Anita van Schie, Anna Sosinowska and Kasia Tabeau performed this research for Difrax BV. Jonathan van Veelen, senior Buyer at Difrax, represented the company.

Rich Insights! on 'the buying stage of the paint journey'
Case study AkzoNobel Nederland

AkzoNobel is the largest global paints and coatings company and a major producer of specialty chemicals, delivering products to both industries and consumers. The division Do It Yourself (DIY) focuses on the paint journey of shoppers in a DIY store, and is interested to know which details and emotions are involved when making the final selection of a paint product.

The company is interested in the barriers and considerations during this stage of the journey. How do shoppers experience choosing and buying a color, type and brand of paint, and what are their latent needs? For this, AkzoNobel | Flexa indicated two different types of shoppers (as a result of previous researches) that had to be taken into account by the student team.

The students Sem Carree, Freya Ruijs, and Nina Timmers conducted this research for Akzo Nobel | Flexa. The company was represented by Jacomijn Schram, Brand Manager Flexa at Akzo Nobel Nederland.

Students discuss their thoughts with Jacomijn Schram and Sanne Kistemaker

Rich Insights! on 'the meaning of energy for entrepreneurs'
Case study E.ON Benelux

E.ON Benelux is one of the largest energy companies in Europe. The company produces electricity and heat for the business market as well as for consumers. For the business market, the company wants to gain insight on how SMEs experience the energy business, with a specific focus on SMEs in the hospitality business, and which possible future services E.ON can offer to fit the needs of this specific target group.

The company is interested in knowing how these entrepreneurs experience their entrepreneurship and whether pre-assumptions, like a dislike of paperwork, experiencing a hassle around energy suppliers and the feeling that entrepreneurs want the supplier to take care of everything around energy, are confirmed or rejected. E.ON is keen to know what these enterprises do expect from an energy supplier and how E.ON can anticipate on these needs.

Assumptions on energy by team E.ON

The students Tanja Baars, Frank Borsboom and Claudia Latorre performed this research for E.ON Benelux. David Vlot, Manager Business Support within the division Business to Busines, represented the company.

The Wacom student team and Steffen Guldner talk about their assumptions

Students Marzieh Ghanimifard, Tijl Hoornstra and Juan Torres Bonilla conducted this research for Wacom Europe GmbH. Steffen Guldner, Market Intelligence Manager and Jörn von Ahlen, Product Marketing Manager Consumer, both at the European headquarters of Wacom, represented the company.

Rich Insights! on 'the SuperConnector'
Case study Wacom Europe GmbH

Wacom Europe GmbH is a worldwide manufacturer of pen tablets, interactive pen displays and digital interface solutions.
Together with a new product range, the company determined four user groups to target on. With three of these four groups the company is quite familiar already, but information on the fourth group, the SuperConnector, is based on prejudice mainly.

Hence, Wacom wants to focus on enriching this persona; to verify the characteristics, get insights on the motivation behind the Super Connectors' behavior and to sharpen the persona with data of real people. Wacom is interested to know how, where, why and when the SuperConnectors use their computer; what do they share and do on their computer in general, and what does their social network looks like?

Kenneth Veenenbos observing the session with participants

Students Carlijn Brinkman, Wouter Krouwel and Paul van Putten did this research for the design agency. Kenneth Veenenbos himself represented the company.

Rich Insights! on 'travelling and transporting in rainy weather'
Case study Kenneth Veenenbos Industrieel Ontwerp

Kenneth Veenenbos industrieel ontwerp is a one-person design agency creating consumer products, products for public areas and maritime products, and has developed a new concept umbrella. Concerning this new product, technical improvements already have been made. Now, Kenneth Veenenbos wants to focus on the consumers, and gain rich insights on experiences of people when travelling and transporting in rainy weather: what happens in this situation, what is experienced positively/negatively and why? What are values that matter in this context and situation and what creates added value for people in rainy circumstances?

author(s)

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intro

Difrax BV is an SME that develops baby products. The company asked us to gain insights on travelling with young children. More specifically, they were interested in the problems and irritations that parents face when feeding their children during a trip and how they cope with these problems. We decided to look at this situation from a broader perspective and analyze the whole travelling experience with children, to gain a deeper understanding of the complete situation.

title

Rich Insights! on travelling with young children
Parents on the go

body

Rich assumptions!

Our first assumptions about travelling with young children included several clusters: loads of luggage, hygiene and safety issues and different situations that lead to stress and ask for different behavior of the children. Also, new and fun experiences were included. We combined our own assumptions with the assumptions Difrax had, in order to create a rather complete overview.

Recruiting

Parents with young children were not difficult to notice in the streets of Delft. With a clear flyer we got several positive reactions, leading to a large group of participants varying in gender and with children of different ages. We decided to have the session during the evening, so one of the parents was able to participate while the other could take care of the child(ren).

Sensitizing

The sensitizing booklet mainly focused on travelling with children in general, whereas the session would focus on eating during travelling.

The booklet included exercises about a typical time line of a journey, the content of one's backpack, job division between the parents, food and transportation.
A camera was included so the participants could capture different aspects of their daily environment.

A booklet filled in by a participant

"When going to a restaurant with the children, I often think 'how am I going to survive this?', but we still want to go because it is also really nice."

The session

In addition to a collage making assignment, the participants were asked to create their own ideal product for a specific eating moment and explain why their product would be useful to them. This went smoothly, since we had just discussed different eating issues with the making of the collages. It also gave great insight into the problems participants experience as being most irritating. In addition to the group session, we organized three extra sessions at couples' homes. These were interesting, since it made it possible for us to actually observe parents in their home situation.

Analyzing

After analyzing the sessions and the booklets filled in by the participants, we created clusters of all the interesting subjects, such as 'preparation' or 'keeping the children busy'. We also made sure to look back on our first assumptions. Some assumptions were confirmed, where other assumptions proved to be less important than we first thought. We subsequently structured all the clusters on a timeline (divided in 3 levels: 'where', 'what products', 'which emotions') to gain a complete overview of the whole situation.

One of the participant expressively explains what she means

Participants creating artifacts during the session to tell about their ideal product

Scrapbook to communicate the insights

"When I open the car, it is always a surprise to see how the children left it: footprints on the windows, junk everywhere, and it almost seems like people decided that cookies just have to crumble!"

Communicate!

To communicate our findings we created a scrapbook completely based on real stories, about a family trip with difficult situations. Only photographs made with the participants' cameras and their quotes were used, making the story realistic. We specifically did not make an explicit list of problems, but provided detailed situation sketches, which allows Difrax to understand why specific problems or situations arise and how important they are.

For even more inspiration, we filled a bag with different products and attached labels with inspiring quotes about those products.

Bag containing a combination of products and inspiring quotes

author(s)

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intro

My name is Jonathan van Veelen and I work as a Senior Buyer at Difrax. Difrax is a company specialized in baby-items. We develop eating and drinking items for small children and their parents to make their lives easier. Rich Insights! was about parents and children on the go.

"Going out for dinner with children is not really relaxed but more a matter of survival"

Company's reflection

body

Expectations?
I expected to get insights on the habits, problems and surroundings of eating situations when parents are on the go with their young children.

How I experienced Rich Insights!
Rich Insights! generated lots of insights: not only for innovative new products, but also for marketing and sales.

Most surprising insights!
The situations with children in restaurants were inspiring. And that it is important not to focus on public transport, but on travelling by car.

How to continue...
Difrax will develop a few items directly from these insights. Our mindset of the situation at hand changed, that is a big plus. The opportunities for our sales expanded to other locations, like restaurants, hotels etc.

What you didn't ask, but what I'd like to share...
We learned a lot about the way respondents are treated; it really makes a big difference in the quality of the results.

"I want my children to eat healthy stuff, but it is more important that they get something in their stomach anyway"

author(s)

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intro

Akzo Nobel | Flexa has divided the customers who buy their paint into four personas. Each of these personas go through a paint journey* in a different way. We have looked at two personas specifically and on how they experience the buying stage of the paint journey. Gained insights make it possible for Akzo Nobel | Flexa to support these personas in the buying stage of the paint journey

* paint journey: route from deciding that you want to paint until the actual painting and reflecting upon it

Handing over the booklet to one of our enthusiastic participants

title

Rich Insights! on shoppers in the buying stage of their paint journey

How different types of shoppers experience buying paint

body

Rich assumptions!

Before starting the study we gathered all our assumptions. We assumed one of the personas ('A') was more likely to be a woman, where the other persona ('B') was more likely to be a man. Both painted with a different

Finding paint in a DIY store

goal according to us; for the 'A' it was more to be creative, for 'B' only the result mattered, therefore he only paints to keep the result perfect. We assumed 'B' would be very goal-oriented and practical. 'A' would need help to translate her vision to the right paint.

Recruiting

Recruiting the participants is what we struggled the most with. It seemed easy enough, since our subject was 'paint', but several visits to a DIY-store did not pay off. We underestimated the time it would take to find participants. I would advise everyone to invest time in finding the *right* participants! They are the heart of the study and without them you are nowhere.

Sensitizing

The focus of the sensitizing package was wider than buying paint, it was about Do It Yourself in general. We had exercises concerning inspiration, preparation, decision-making and tools. Though the exercises were good, I would narrow down the focus of the booklet next time.

"That's me, in the middle, and I try to get from the entrance to the paint, eventually [...] I feel very lonely at that moment."

During the session

The session

The session was held at the faculty of Industrial Design Engineering. There were five participants and two representatives from Akzo Nobel | Flexa present. During the session, we struggled to get enough depth (*"paint is just paint, what more is there?"*) in the session. However, when looking back at the data gathered, we experienced that there was more than enough material for us to work with!
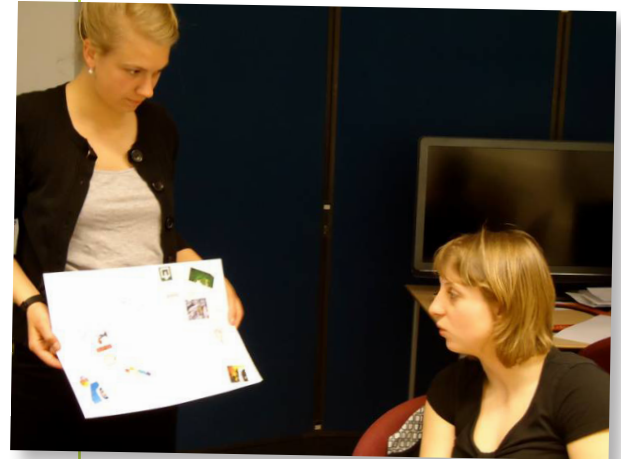
Analyzing

For the analysis, we each selected quotes from the session. To do so, we put all the quotes together on a big pile and intuitively started putting different quotes together, hereby creating categories. We discussed the quotes together in our team and shifted out doubles and quotes that were not useful, before placing them in a specific category. Clustering resulted in seven different themes we used for our infographics. These infographics are as far as we went with analyzing the data. The final step (communicating and working with the infographics) was taken together with Akzo Nobel.

One of the results: an infograhic used as input for the workshop

23
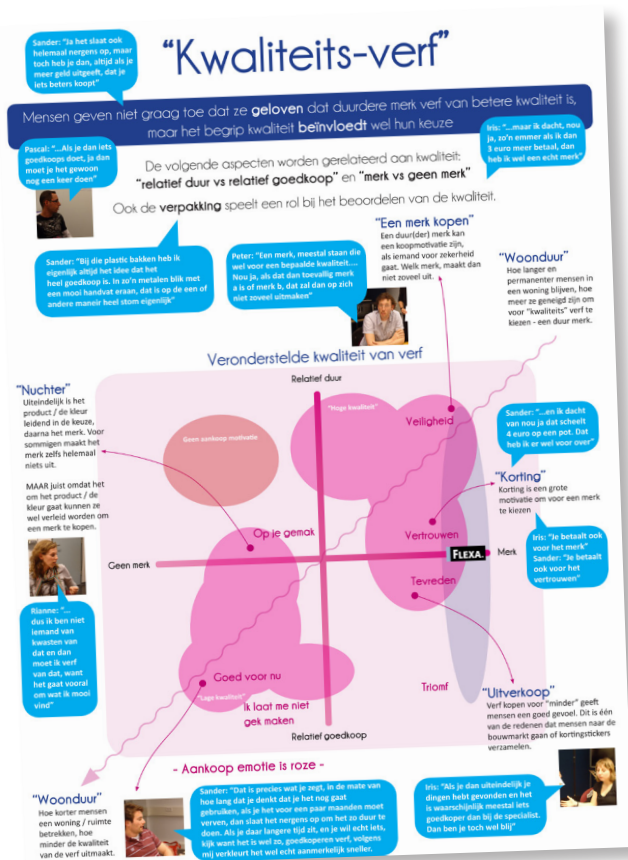
Interactive workshop at the company to communicate and explore the results

"All those different whites, champagne, fluff, I don't know. When I think champagne, I think pretty yellow. I associate it less with white, although I want very warm white."

Communicate!

To communicate the results, we organized a creative session with employees of Akzo Nobel | Flexa. We aimed that, by doing this, the results would become part of the sales & marketing department. We started this workshop with a quote game: every employee got a quote from our session and had to place it with one of the two personas stated at the beginning of the project. This was a fun and effective way to get people talking! Next, each member of our group, facilitated a group of employees in creating new ideas related to one of the infographics. Subsequently, the best of ideas were presented to the other groups and were added to a matrix, with the 'difficulty to implement' on one axe and the 'impact of the idea' on the other. This method and discussing the ideas on the matrix, provided a lot of input and inspiration for the employees.

author(s)

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intro

Jacomijn Schram, Brand Manager Flexa at Akzo Nobel, provided feedback on how she experienced the course and the results during an interview with Valérie.

title
Company's reflection

body
Expectations?

I was curious about several things. I was very interested in the technique; how it works and what it can bring. I wanted to know the specific details on the research subject and was curious for subconscious statements of the participants.

How I experienced Rich Insights!

The results were both confirming and renewing. The data was well analyzed by the students and the lively presentation, in a workshop, worked very well in the communication with our department.

Most surprising insights!

It was interesting for me to hear how people really experience a DIY-store. Their quotes on this subject are very inspiring.

How to continue...

The results have definitely put new live into different projects within the organization. Especially the quotes are interesting and imaginative and we want to use them to give more direction on how we can improve the DIY-experience.

What you didn't ask, but what I'd like to share...

It was an interesting and fun project to participate in. It is always good to have pre-assumptions confirmed, gain new insights and to share these insights with colleagues.

author(s)

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intro

E.ON asked us to gain insights on what entrepreneurs in the hospitality sector find valuable in terms of products or services. Assumptions were that practical issues, such as time pressure, would be paramount. However, it turned out that emotional subjects, like being approached in a personal manner, and the feeling that a conversation goes two ways where both parties need each other, are more important for this target group.

Rich Insights! on the meaning of energy for entrepreneurs in the hospitality sector

body

Rich assumptions!

Our main assumption was that entrepreneurs in the hospitality sector are mainly concerned about making money and practical issues. We assumed that entrepreneurs would not want to spend time arranging facilities like energy.

Recruiting

Recruiting participants from the hospitality sector turned out to be quite difficult. First of all, we discovered that it just didn't work to bring them an invitation flyer. This method was too intangible and too far off in terms of time. When we brought the sensitizing packages, named a date (within a week) and asked whether they would be available, the response was much more positive!

Sensitizing

We found it important to make the sensitizing packages fun and exciting to do. Therefore, we made a sensitizing box, painted with blackboard paint and written with white pencil. In this box we put the assignments cards, one for each day. The thought behind this, is that they would have a new surprise each day, like unwrapping a present. We also put stickers and a photo assignment in the box. A special white pencil was added to fill out the last assignment, put outside the box, saying: *"the ingredients for my ideal business"*

The sensitizing box containing various assignments on the subject

A completed assignment
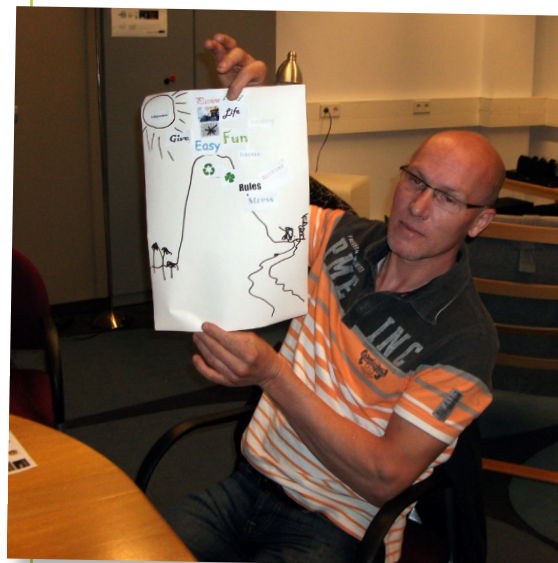
Collage created by a participant

The session

Unfortunately, only three participants showed up for our session, probably because of the ad-hoc nature of their lives. It was quite difficult for us to define what we actually wanted to find out, because of the intangible nature of the products that E.ON delivers, and because energy is of little emotional value for most entrepreneurs. During the session we tried to find out how E.ON could support the entrepreneurs in realizing their ideal business.

Analyzing

The analysis of the data and clustering the insights and information revealed many interesting insights. The data we gathered through the session gained much more value, combining inspiration and information.

Participant showing his collage during the session

"I'm a number to them, but if you sit down with someone and you can make them see the connection, it's better and then you can take them along!"

Communicate!

Also within our communication to E.ON, we felt it was important that the results were interesting and inspiring to read. In the booklet we created, the reader will first see an illustration with a summarizing sentence of the chapter. If more information is desired, the page can be opened to reveal paragraph titles, providing more depth. The final level is reading the text and quotes to get to the deeper, richer insights. This way of layering information enables the reader to choose how deep he wants to dig into the information.

"I'm a cook, 52 years old, I've been cooking for about 35 years and it's still my hobby, cooking. But running a restaurant is quite a job. Because of all rules and personnel, plus all different kinds of problems you could do without."

Impression of the session

author(s)

David Vlot
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intro

My name is David Vlot, I work as Manager Business Support for the department Business to Business at E.ON Benelux N.V.

"Being an energy company is moving away from the commodity business, towards becoming a service provider. Rich Insights! helped us make that move."

title
Company's reflection

body
Expectations?

What I expected from the Rich Insights! elective was:

- A new experience in customer relationships.
- Good interaction and results.
- A representative result, leading to new ideas on how energy products and services fit with which customers.

How I experienced Rich Insights!

I experienced the elective as an opportunity to discuss several ideas on customer involvement in the product and service development process. What I really liked was the personal nature of the resulting work. The involvement of the students seemed quite high.

Most surprising insights!

The most surprising result was that "small" restaurant owners do appreciate personal contact with a representative from the energy company. This insight is so surprising, due to the fact that the energy company connects the care/service a customer gets, to his energy usage. Restaurants use a relatively small amount of energy, so a modus operandi needs to be found, to meet this customer need, versus the revenue normally generated by these types of customers.

How to continue...

We want to increase our insights of this and other segments, by intensively involving customers in our development process. And try and develop a specific offering for different segments, in order to meet specific needs.

author(s)

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intro

Wacom defined various personas representing different customer profiles, for their product development department. The company wanted one of these personas to be detailed further, getting to know whom the actual persona is and what makes him/ her a SuperConnector. One of our main questions was how teenagers manage their personal relations.

title

Rich Insights! on the SuperConnector

body

Rich assumptions!

To define the scope of the research, the SuperConnector had to be framed within a certain age group that represented Wacoms definition of them. Wacoms definition included among others being open to new relationships, manage several of them, being technologically savvy, socially active through social-web networks. All those characteristics and some others found by our team, suit the "Generation Z" (people born between the mid-1990s and the late 2000s). Hence, our main assumption was the SuperConnector being a teenager. This determined the type of participant we had to recruit.

Recruiting

Participants were recruited with the help of the American School of the Hague. Fifty questionnaires were delivered to students between 16 and 17 years old with questions such as their number of friends on their Facebook profiles, time spent surfing the internet, favorite brands and favorite activities. We reviewed these questionnaires and eight students were chosen. The recruitment also involved asking parents for their consent with our study and having an introductory meeting explaining the content and purpose of the study.

Sensitizing

Participants were sensitized with a seven-days activity booklet. Assignments such as defining likes, dislikes and personal motto and questions about what, where and how they communicate with others, were used in the booklet to obtain individual characteristics of the SuperConnector and to elicit his/her social behaviors.

*"The first thing that I do when I wake up is checking my cell phone."*

Participants preparing their collages during the session

The session

The session included three main creative activities: After a short warm-up exercise, we asked the participants to complete an explorative collage exercise and a deepening collage exercise. After each activity, the participants presented their work and reacted on each other. The session was closed off by means of a wrap-up exercise, during which the participants were asked to give a tip on how to meet new people and make new connections.

Analyzing

The whole session was transcribed and after reviewing the quotes by the entire team, highlighted elements were clustered into different categories. With our team, we discussed all the selected quotes and tried to refine the clusters by adding related information from the participants' booklets and the collages made during the session. The next step was to create personas based on the selected information. We structured and presented the findings in several infographics.
Finally we brainstormed on how to communicate our inspiring findings.
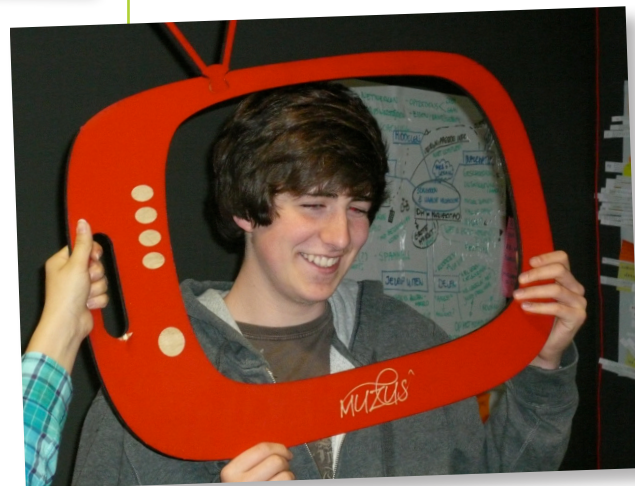
*Method used to ease on the presenting*

"Facebook is the last thing I am on! I am always talking!"

Example of the cluster cards

PURSUIT OF FUN

Enjoy your friends and the company of people that has no trouble sharing a smile.

Always find the way to laugh! Think that despite school and homework, it's almost weekend and soon you'll get to sleep 'till late.

PROVOKE THE AUDIENCE

Share your interests with all the people and give them things to talk about.

Generate reactions, laughs and entertain your audience!

Communicate!

We communicated the findings of the research to Wacom by an interactive booklet, which can be used by the company as a tool to get insights on different aspects of the SuperConnector's life. The booklet contains an introduction to the target group, the persona of the male and female SuperConnector, an infographic to give insights on their lifestyle, and clustered cards to inspire the marketing team with photos and quotes of the participants. During a presentation at the European headquarters, we let the team become familiar with the whole process and let them experience how to use the booklet.
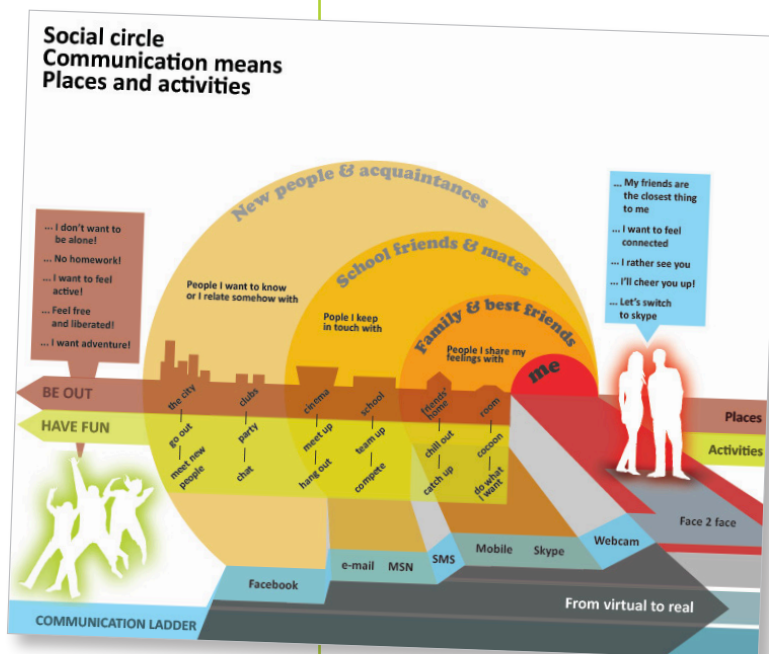
Inspirational infographic to communicate the findings

author(s)

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Jörn von Ahlen

intro

What is a SuperConnector? Our purpose of the project was to gain deeper understanding of one of our newly defined target groups for one of our product ranges.

title

Company's reflection

body

Expectations?

We wanted to get a neutral view from someone outside of our company on the so-called SuperConnector target group. The Contextmapping methodology was a promising way to approach this in a structured and systematic manner to get unbiased and new insights.

How we experienced Rich Insights!

The Rich Insights! concept is very new and refreshing to us. It was very interesting to get these fresh impulses from the students, which are so much closer to this specific target group, then we are.

Most surprising insights!

The most surprising insight we gained was that for this target group clear defined layers of personal relationships and ways of communication are manifested. For each of these layers there are clear rules how to apply the different communication tools.

How to continue...

One of the participating students will continue this insights project in his final thesis. Building on the insights we gained so far he will broaden this to some of the other segments of our consumer target groups.

"The behavior of the digital natives will considerably shape companies' communication strategies in future."

author(s)

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intro

Kenneth Veenenbos asked us to look for a target group for a new concept umbrella, and to take a look into the target group he already proposed. In this project, we wanted to gain insights on how 'outgoing active people' experience being outside, and in particular, how they experience rain. These people generally like to do outdoor activities, ranging from walking to mountainbiking and snowboarding.

title

Rich Insights! on travelling and transporting in rainy weather

Insights for an umbrella design

body

Rich assumptions!

In the assumption maps we made, the target group was divided into three groups; youngsters, midis and seniors. According to our assumptions, these groups differ in their motivations for being outside as well as their activities.
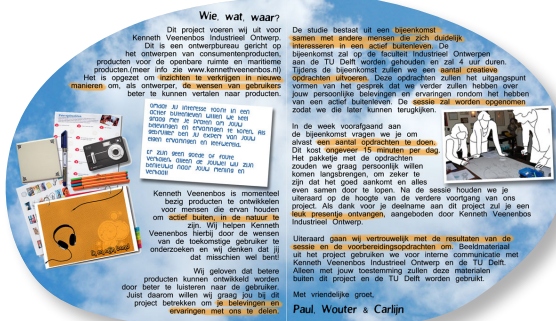
Recruiting

Recruiting the participants went fairly smooth for us. By mere coincidence, we stumbled upon a bicycle and walking event taking place at the right time for our project. This proved to be the ideal place to find outgoing and active participants. We made an invitation to give to people to take home, and called them about a week later whether they still wanted to participate. Most of them reacted positively. Furthermore, we got a participant from a Hiking-website and asked people we knew.

Invitation

Sensitizing

The sensitizing booklet consisted of a booklet with accompanying sticker sheets, together with a photo-assignment and a wooden board to write your motto on. The booklet was designed so that the focus of the assignments went from activity (describe an active day outside), to material (what do you take with you), to weather and rain (what do you do in different weather circumstances). The participants reacted very positively to the sensitizing package and most booklets were filled in nicely.

Sensitizing package

During the session

Explanation of the collage

The session

The session turned out to be a success. All the participants showed up, which was a bit of a surprise, as they had to come from all over the country. We divided the session in three main assignments, and an evaluation of Kenneth's umbrella. The first assignment was about 'Me and being outside', the second was 'Me in the rain' and the third assignment for the participants was to think of an ideal rain protection, and present it to the others. All these assignments involved making a poster with the aid of images, words and drawings. The participants were enthusiastic during this session and had interesting stories, which provided valuable insights for Kenneth and us.

Analyzing

For the analysis, we transcribed the entire session. This was a lot of work, but was also a good reminder of what was said. We highlighted the most interesting parts and quotes and clustered these, until we had a usable amount of clusters/categories. We did this, while keeping in mind what the goal of the project was and in which way we wanted to communicate the findings.

"You can't get any more wet than soaked, so then you can just keep going."

Personas for inspiration

Communicate!

We choose three personas to communicate the data, Marjolijn, the Healthy Enjoyer; Michiel, the Fanatical Sportsman and Jaap, the Functional Outside Guy. For each persona there is a booklet, which covers the themes: person, process and product, where the latter describes the features of the ideal umbrella for that person. The personas cover all insights, and provide an inspiring way of usage for Kenneth.

In addition our group had a brainstorm together with Kenneth not to communicate the results but to brainstorm on the possibilities to position the product, using the personas as input.

author(s)

Kenneth Veenenbos
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intro

My name is Kenneth Veenenbos, owner and designer of Kenneth Veenenbos Industrieel ontwerp. Currently I am developing a new concept umbrella. This umbrella uses kite-principles as a starting point, in order to protect people against rain or sunshine.

title
Company's reflection

"Products are like people, they don't like stress."

body

Expectations?
I expected to find the best way to further develop and market the product according to the potential users.

How I experienced Rich Insights!
The student team was very enthusiastic. It was a hard project for them but the outcome is very useful discussion material.

Most surprising insights!
For me, the most surprising insight was, that die-hard athletes would not use the product. Instead more common athletes could use this product for everyday or together activities.
This corresponds to discussions with Syntens pointing out that everyday/together activities are a very interesting application of the product. This application allows for a larger lightweight two-person model that is still very comfortable to carry.

How to continue...
The results of the study will be used as input for further discussions and development of the umbrella. The findings are a big help and give something to refer to during these and following discussions.

What you didn't ask, but what I'd like to share...
I found the combination of the user oriented research and the consultation on the product level very useful. I more or less already had a product when I started and was looking for the best target group. This required a bit of a modified research method.

abstract

author(s)

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intro

In the 2010 edition of Rich Insights! the participating companies varied from large international companies to small and medium sized enterprises. These clients differ on many aspects: for example on how they usually conduct research, involve their users, innovate internally or involve externals, on budget available for innovation, and many more things. All the student groups that were connected to different companies, compared their experiences from working with their specific client. Here are a few conclusions.

LEs versus SMEs: Conclusions!

body

Many companies, large and small, have realized that it is important to understand their users, know about their needs and ideally involve them in the design process. Additionally, many of them realized that studying the user goes further than usability aspects, and understanding their experiences using products serves innovation (Sleeswijk Visser, Stappers, 2007). Large international companies have taken the lead in developing and applying user-centered design techniques in their innovation processes (de Lille, Stappers, van der Lugt, 2009), whereas the majority of product development companies also recognize this need for user studies but have little means to execute them.

Differences were observed by the students during the user study, and steered the teams in different directions concerning the level of planning, communication en interactivity.

Involvement during the project

The students noticed that the involvement of their client was one of the main differences: entrepreneurs of smaller companies were highly involved in every step of the process; they were a part of the team, and communication was very direct and frequently. Larger companies were less involved during the process; the moments of contact were at the kick off and the end where the students showed the results to representatives of the company in an interactive way to inspire them.

People and departments involved

In larger companies, different departments, such as R&D, Marketing and Sales, often segment design processes. This makes communication of user experiences harder, since these insights are related to all aspects of the design process. This is not the case in smaller companies, where departments hardly exist and the entrepreneur wants to be involved in all the activities anyway. Therefore the students experienced it was harder for them to postpone the practical consequences of the outcomes and think out of the box.

Desired outcomes of this project

Another important difference that affected the students in their way of
working is the way in which results are communicated best to the client.
Different (type of) companies need different outcomes and results. A
small company prefers concrete results, for example by means of design
guidelines or directions for ideas and concepts. Large companies, on
the other hand, would like to receive more general results, that could be
used in different departments of their organization. Therefore it is very
important to consider the way of communication well: how to present
the results to the company? A good example of communication results
to small companies was provided during this edition of Rich Insights!: a
brainstorm session was organized, in which the results of the study were
translated into practical guidelines and design directions, like with Kenneth
Veenenbos. Interactive presentations work well for large companies, in
which employees get to know how they can work with the data, as shown
at Akzo Nobel | Flexa and Wacom.

What is next?

On the reserve, larger companies have the ability to enlarge the effect of
the results by acting upon it on a large scale. On the other hand, smaller
companies have the ability to quickly adapt to changes and latent needs as
a result.

'How contextmapping works' for larger and smaller companies is very
interesting. The differences in desired results, ways of communication
and useful input for follow-up projects are remarkable. It confirms the
assumption that contextmapping is a method that is applicable and useful
for a large variety of companies and organizations, provided that there is a
clear understanding of the type of company, the preferred results, and how
the company wants to continue with the results.

author(s)

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intro

Designing for and with users requires an orientation on three levels: knowledge, skills, and attitude. To develop these takes more than books, lectures, lab exercises, and a good feeling. It requires a deep dive hands-on experience, and careful reflection. Preferably in practice.

title

Looking Back [1]

body

The Rich Insights! course was set up to provide a deepening of the contextmapping methods taught in the methods course Context & Conceptualisation (C&C). In that course, each year some 200 students learn the basic theory and get a taste of techniques for user involvement. In Rich Insights!, we build on this with those students, usually about two dozen, who are looking for more in-depth experience and training. The course runs once a year, and each time the focus and companies involved changes.

In its first run, 2006, called RichViz!, the focus of the course was on communicating user experiences to a design team at Philips Design. Three years later, many students from this course returned for a one-day contextmapping symposium to share their experiences after graduation. For the edition of 2010, ID-StudioLab and Muzus worked with groups of smaller companies to explore a variety of user groups and user experiences.
As before, the course went well for all parties. Students enjoyed working with 'real' companies, and 'real' users; the companies involved enjoyed seeing the new methods at work and experiencing the potential of the user insights that emerge. And the contextmappers at ID-StudioLab and Muzus enjoyed the enthusiasm of all parties involved.

As it is a course, the main goal of Rich Insights! is the learning experience that students get. Users can turn out to be very different from your expectations and presumptions and also very knowledgeable about their needs and possible solutions. It is very valuable to gain hands-on experiences on how to reveal this type of information, just by giving them the tools to reflect and express themselves.

The insights are inspiring and informative, but they come at a price: involvement. Going through the whole process of recruiting, sensitizing, meeting, analyzing, communicating, and conceptualizing from the findings takes a lot of planning and commitment.

Doing this the first time can be an overwhelming experience, but a rewarding one. Each time you are confronted by the richness of people's everyday lives. And every so often a single anecdote helps to see how many different facets finally fit together, and can be used in designing products that better fit the users' needs. The only way to find your balance between planning, meeting, and analysing, is by doing it.

references

Stappers, P.J. (2010) Designing for, with, and from user experiences. ID-StudioLab Press, Delft.

Stappers, P.J., van der Lugt, R., Sleeswijk Visser, F, & van der Lelie, C. (2007) RichViz! Inspiring design teams with rich visualizations. TU Delft.

Both publications available for free download at www.contextmapping.com

author(s)

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title

Looking Back [2]

body

In imitation of previous experiences, this year's (2010) edition of Rich Insights! once again was really succesful. The formula of the elective seems to be really beneficial for all the stakeholders involved.

For students, Rich Insights is a great opportunity to conduct a contextmapping study for a commercial party, and thereby bringing the theoretical knowledge gained during their master programme into practise.
For companies, this elective is an opening to experience the value of a contextmapping study in a low-treshold way.
For Muzus, Rich Insights is an opportuntiy to show their expertise to both clients and students. Furthermore, Muzus can explore possibilities by addressing a different focus to each edition of the elective.

This year's edition showed Muzus that working for small and medium sized enterprises is very promising. As a result Muzus decided to start developing an SME toolkit, in order to improve Muzus' way of working for SMEs. This toolkit contains a new approach to contextmapping, adapted to the needs and wishes of SMEs. At the time of writing, the toolkit has already been used in a pilot case and soon will be put in practise!

If you like to know more about the elective, about Muzus or about the SME-toolkit, please contact Muzus at more@muzus.nl