

Design Sprint Activity #3: Guerilla User Research

What concerns are top of mind for users? How do they really behave? How are people using similar products/solutions today?

There is one key requirement of user research, and it's simple but not always easy: You have to actually talk to users. It doesn't have to be a lot of them. Even just two or three is better than none at all. In guerilla user research, you make a priority to talk to and learn from at least a few users, firsthand and by whatever means necessary. It can take any number of forms, from making a phone call to approaching someone in a coffee shop.

When Should you use this:

- When you're forming goals and priorities for design and feel that you need to get grounded on your understanding of what user's want
- You are making decisions about the design of your solution and don't have any firsthand knowledge of user needs or preferences.

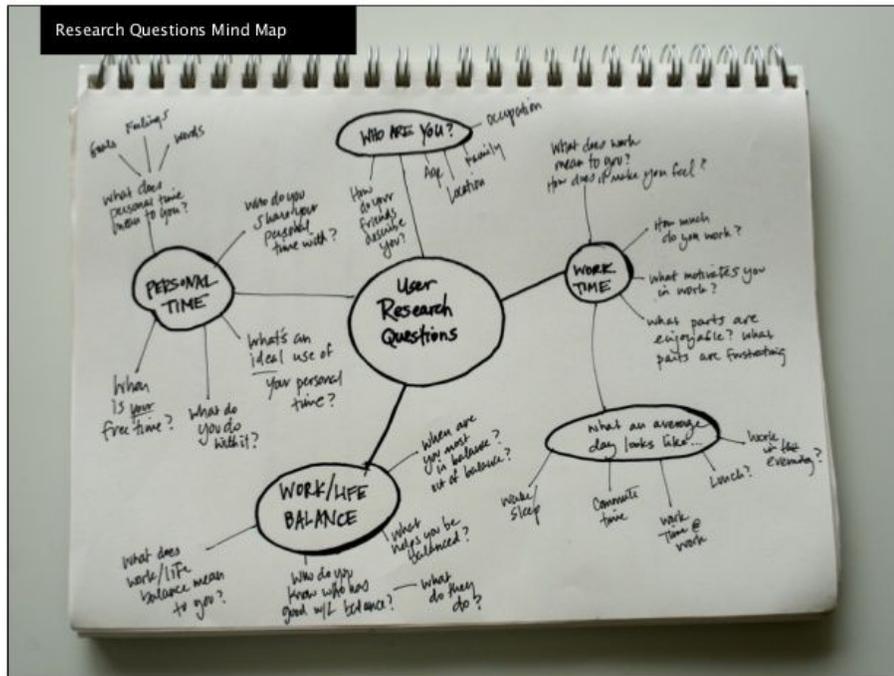
Here's What You Do:

1) Think about your target users.

Start by asking yourself whom you'd like to talk to and how. Think about what characterizes your users. How old are they, on average? What kinds of behaviors and interests might they have? Where might they live and work? How do they spend their free time? Think about where they might spend their time. If that place is easy to access, go there and ask the random people you meet if they'd like to participate in a short study. For example, let's say your target user is a creative freelancer. Creative freelancers are known to spend a lot of time working in coffee shops. So you would plan to spend an afternoon in a coffee shop, politely asking people you see working on their laptops if they would be interested in doing a short user study.

2) List your research questions.

Think about what you're trying to learn from your users and list your questions (perhaps you could consult your Innovation Learning Plan from the previous activity bundle!) Articulate why you're doing this work and what you're trying to learn from it. Do a mind map to get your questions out of your head and onto paper or a whiteboard (see the example below). To do a mind map, start by writing the topic in the middle (in this case, "user research questions"). Now, when you think about your user research questions, what are the first things that come to mind? Write those around the central topic and connect them to the center with a line. For each branch, repeat this process until you can't think of anything else that you want to learn from your users.



3) Go into the field.

For the research session, ideally meet with the user in their own environment: work, home, or somewhere they spend a lot of time. Ask them to show you as much as possible about what is relevant and important to them in this environment. If they are okay with it, take pictures or videos to document what you see as visceral artifacts to remind you of this person and the things you learned about them. During your conversation, be sure to hit all of the research questions you came up with in step 2.

Quick tips for the field:

- Tap your network to find participants
- Get consent and let them know how you'll be using the information
- Ask open-ended questions
- Ask about past events and ask for a step-by-step retelling

4) Mine for data.

After you are done with your research interviews, spend some time reviewing your notes from all the interviews and looking for the answer to those questions you listed at the beginning.

Activity adapted from *The User Experience Team of One: A Research and Design Survival Guide*, by Leah Buley