

Contextual Inquiry with Eye Tracking in Call Centres – How to get deeper insights into user context and behaviour by observing and analysing subconscious eye movements

Good design requires
understanding your users.
Great design requires
understanding the
subconscious behaviour in
its own context



BACKGROUND

Whether you are designing a solution from scratch or redesigning an existing one, you need to make sure that your designs are what your users need and want. Too often, businesses jump straight into designing the solution based on business requirements before gathering the requirements from their users. This results in huge disconnects between what the business thinks the users need and what the users actually need.



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Eye tracking offers a much deeper level of insight that would not have been possible with just traditional methods of customer research such as interviews and contextual inquiry.

TRADITIONAL METHODS OF USER RESEARCH AND WHY THEY ARE NOT ENOUGH

Traditional methods of user requirements gathering include interviewing users face to face or over the phone. The researcher asks the user questions about their day-to-day activities and interactions with the current system, any problems they have encountered and any ideas for improvement. Such interviews can generate a lot of insightful data; however, it has its limitations.

First of all, the user might not necessarily be in their normal environment and context of use during the interview. Secondly, most of what they say will be based on memory recall, which might not be an accurate reflection of their experience with the system and the issues within it. Some users may find it difficult to articulate what is wrong with the systems, either because they lack the precise vocabulary or they have internalised the system and its functionalities to the point that any pertinent issues would be invisible to them.

At Objective Digital, we realise it's important not just to ask users what they do, but to watch them do it in their natural context. We go one step further by using the latest eye tracking technologies that visualises what users see while they are using the system to discover hidden insights from their 'automatic' subconscious behaviours.

WHAT IS CONTEXTUAL INQUIRY?

Contextual inquiry explores how users behave in the context the system is used (e.g. the user's workplace, home etc). We observe what users do in their context of use. We then inquire why and how they do it in order to understand and uncover working patterns and behaviours.

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Using a Tobii X1 Light Eye Tracker during contextual inquiry

It is an immersive method of user observation and interviewing that generates a richer set of data than traditional interview because:

- The user does not need to recall experiences from memory, thereby placing less mental load on them.
- The user is able to articulate their work structure and processes more accurately because they are in their context of use.
- The researcher comes with a 'fresh pair of eyes' and may notice inefficiencies in the system or workarounds that the users have become accustomed to.

EYE TRACKING DURING CONTEXTUAL INQUIRY

Eye tracking helps visualise human behaviour and adds quantitative findings to contextual inquiry. It enables the researcher to uncover subconscious eye movements of the user while using the system. The eye movements of the user are directly dictated by how the system is designed and hence any peculiar patterns of eye movements can indicate issues with the system at several different levels – navigation, findability or layout.

Eye tracking is especially helpful in complex high-speed transactional systems in which the user executes rapid micro-interactions, some of which they may not even realise themselves. We have encountered transactional systems in which the user's eyes do not follow a natural and efficient flow, which causes severe strain on the user's eyes and reduces the overall efficiency of the system. Not to mention, it stresses them out! Watch a video of a call centre operator being eye tracked.



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Eye tracking adds an extra layer of insight to traditional and contextual inquiry research methods.

HOW TO USE EYE TRACKING DURING CONTEXTUAL INQUIRY

Eye tracking can tell us where the user is looking but not why. Therefore, it is important to pair eye tracking with qualitative insights from the user as well.

To collect deeper insights, we use Retrospective Think Aloud (RTA) method. With RTA, we show the user a replay of their activity with their eye tracking gaze overlaid on it. We then ask them to think aloud while watching the replay. This helps trigger their memory and also helps them notice fallacies in the system that they might not have noticed while performing the activity as they were focused with the task at the time.

Eye trackers used to be obtrusive and clunky and required a much longer setup. The user was required to wear a headgear with sensors protruding out. This impeded the user's natural behaviour.

The new generation eye trackers that we use, however, are unobtrusive and require minimal setup. This means that users can go about their normal activity without any interference from our equipment.



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THE LEAN METHODOLOGY

During contextual inquiry, we identify pain points in the user's workflow and provide suggestions for improvement to process efficiency and effectiveness. As a deliverable, we consolidate our observations as scenarios, usage patterns and areas of improvement.

We employ lean UX methodologies to ensure shorter iterations and nimble designs that are adaptable to unforeseen but inevitable changes.

The findings from contextual inquiry become the basis for the design decisions that are made afterwards. The eye tracking results can be used to validate assumptions and get stakeholder buy-in.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT



Affinity diagramming

The qualitative findings from the contextual inquiry can be collated through affinity diagramming.



Eye tracking analysis

The eye tracking data is analysed to identify inefficiencies in the existing system and isolate the problem areas.

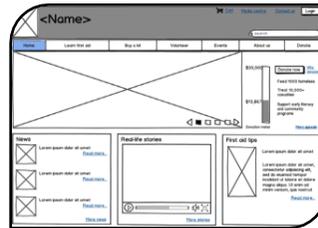


Design studio

Collaborative design workshops with stakeholders ensure everyone has a shared vision and ownership of the resulting designs.

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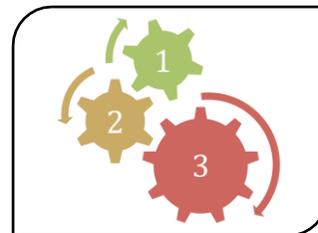
Rapid prototyping

The high-level designs produced from the design studios can be translated into interactive prototypes.



Hallway testing

Test early, test often by conducting short and cost-effective hallway tests to get early feedback from the end users.



Further iterations

Shorter iterations make it easier to rinse and repeat and further refine the user experience.

For more information on eye tracking and customer experience research with Objective Digital please contact shogan@objectivedigital.com or call us at **1300 85 80 15**