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# Scrappy User Research: How to Get Feedback in 24 Hours or Less

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**ACM Classification Keywords**

Human-centered computing~HCI design and evaluation methods.

**Abstract**

Demands of the fast paced tech industry can leave little time for rigorous UX research. Some teams may not even have dedicated UX researchers or access to users. This workshop will focus on teaching various research methods to apply in 24 hours or less, at any phase of the product life cycle. We will demonstrate how to

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MobileHCI '19, October 1–4, 2019, Taipei, Taiwan  
© 2019 Copyright is held by the owner/author(s).  
ACM ISBN 978-1-4503-6825-4/19/10.  
<https://doi.org/10.1145/3338286.3344426>

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apply four methods: heuristic evaluations, cafe studies, surveys and remote user testing. These methods have been successfully used to provide immediately actionable results for our teams.

**Background**

User research can help uncover user behaviors, needs and motivations. However, due to aggressive product or project timelines, time is not always allotted for in-depth user research. While scrappy methods should not be the end-all for user research in the product development process, it can often help provide key findings in a time crunch.

For example, a team developed a new checkout flow for their website that is scheduled to launch in 2 weeks. There is a concern that some fields in the form are confusing. Instead of delaying the timeline or proceeding without feedback, scrappy user research can gather the quick feedback they need with spare time to fix any outstanding usability issues.

In addition to method, scrappiness can also stem from creativity with research artifacts (e.g. storyboards) and venue. Valuable insights can be gathered with low-fidelity prototypes. An empirical study by Seflin et al. establishes that paper prototypes can gather comparable feedback to computer-based prototypes [6]. They are faster and cheaper to develop, can be a favorable option depending on the subject. Pawson et

al. capitalized on a trade show to gather quick feedback from a large number of people [5].

Thinking beyond a tight timeline, these methods are also solutions to additional constraints, such as lack of research labs, participants, and budget. For example, heuristic evaluations don't require participants and incentives for their time. Intercepts and remote research don't require a research lab or dedicated space. These methods will help provide teams with the tools to tackle a variety of limitations.

In this workshop we will highlight a range of methods in multiple stages of the product lifecycle that can be utilized in a short timeline, often 24 hours or less: heuristic evaluation, remote user studies, intercepts, and surveys. Some of these can be applied by other product team members.

### **Goals of the Workshop**

This workshop will synthesize best practices and considerations for conducting research on a shortened timeline (even if you don't have a UX researcher!) across various mobile experiences. Attendees will learn the strengths and limitations of each method, as well as best practices from experienced UX research professionals. Workshop materials will be provided as a toolkit to attendees for gathering feedback on a short timeline and with additional constraints.

### **Audience**

Novice UX researchers or industry practitioners who are interested in learning about how to quickly get quality user feedback will be the target audience. Attendance can be up to 20 people, as hands-on activities will be a major component of the class. To reach out to the community and recruit participants, there will be a website with information on the class and facilitators.

The workshop will be promoted on various social media channels, targeting relevant audiences.

### **Workshop Structure**

The workshop will center around hands-on activities and discussion. Where possible, participants will conduct a modified version of these methods such as conducting intercepts or participating in a heuristic evaluation to immediately apply learnings. This will also provide fodder and experience for the group discussion. Facilitators will be available to interact with participants during the activities and answer questions.

For each method, facilitators will provide an overview of the method based on their industry experiences. This will also include best practices and considerations.

#### *Heuristic evaluation*

Heuristic evaluations are conducted across a team of up to 5 experts to review a product against a set of usability principles [4]. This method can uncover the majority of usability issues in a product. Benefits of this method include; cheap to apply, requires little planning and no participant recruiting.

#### *Intercepts*

Intercepts provide quick, in-person feedback without recruiting logistics. Recruiting is done onsite, so picking a populated location is crucial. Examples of intercept locations are an outdoor shopping area, park, or community college campus. These tend to have high foot traffic and people with extra time. A cafe study is a specific type of intercept at a cafeteria (or similar location) where potential participants typically eat lunch. Conducting it during lunch provides a good variety and amount of participants. This can be easily set up at a large company and allow for gathering feedback from coworkers unrelated to the project or visitors.

These methods are short, often 10-15 minute sessions. A variety of stimuli can be used for the study, such as paper prototypes, concept storyboards, or comparative existing solutions. Having participants sketch their ideal design of the interface will provide more reflective feedback that will generate ideas and can be quick to analyze [7].

#### *Surveys*

Platforms such as Amazon Mechanical Turk and Google Surveys can sometimes field surveys in 24 hours depending on the audience and screening criteria [2]. In addition to understanding attitudes, such as satisfaction with an existing product, surveys can be adapted to gather usability feedback at scale. For example, you could evaluate what looks tappable in the prototype UI. Surveys can also help evaluate which feature names or icons are the best fit. These will most likely not have the context and deeper insights compared to qualitative research, so it is recommended to combine with an additional method in the future.

#### *Remote user studies*

Unmoderated remote studies via a remote testing platform are useful when your participants are distributed geographically, when you'd like to get quick feedback "in the wild" on various devices and network connectivity [3, 1]. Alternatively, moderated remote testing on mobile devices can be done with little testing infrastructure. We'll share best practices to guide your remote participants through how to setup their laptop or webcam to show the moderator their mobile device screen.

#### *Proposed Schedule*

Time	Description
09:00-10:15	<p>Introductions and brief overview</p> <p>Method 1: No participants, no problem!</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Heuristic evaluations</li> <li>- Immersive Activity</li> </ul> <p>Group Activity + Discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Conduct a Heuristic Eval in a group</li> </ul>
10:15-10:30	Coffee Break
10:30-12:00	<p>Method 2: Cafe... in half a day</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Intercept studies, cafe studies, incentives</li> </ul> <p>Group Activity + Discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Go outside and get feedback</li> </ul>
12:00-13:30	Lunch
13:30-15:00	<p>Method 3: Surveys</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- mTurk, Google Surveys</li> </ul> <p>Group Activity + Discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Make your own live survey</li> </ul>
15:00-15:15	Break
15:15-16:45	<p>Method 4: Remote Testing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Unmoderated, moderated</li> </ul> <p>Group Activity + Discussion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- See what it's like to be a remote tester</li> <li>- Laptop hugging</li> </ul> <p>Wrap up</p>

### **Planned Outcomes**

The intended outcome of this workshop is for researchers and practitioners to gain a deeper, hands-on understanding of rapid research techniques commonly used in the fast-paced tech industry. This toolkit of 4 methods and best practices can be implemented immediately and will provide highly sought after research results for teams on tight timelines.

### **Organizers**

Megan Torkildson is a UX Researcher at Google on Chrome. She focuses on understanding web usage in local, international, and emerging markets. Previously, she worked on communication apps such as Hangouts and Allo. Before joining Google, she studied Human Centered Design and Engineering at the University of Washington.

Denise Su is a UX researcher at Google. She focuses on creating amazing mobile app experiences in US and emerging markets. In past work, she has consulted for several large companies that have spanned tech industries including medical, gaming, and voice. Denise holds a doctorate in Developmental Psychology from the University of California Santa Cruz, where she focused on culture and access to information.

Heidi Toussaint leads research across enterprise and consumer spaces at Google. She enjoys mentoring students in STEM and is an active member of local UX community and Diversity & Inclusion efforts in Seattle, WA. Heidi holds a Masters in Human Centered Design & Engineering from the University of Washington.

Evelyn Tio is a UX researcher at Google who currently focuses on understanding how users around the world access and manage their mobile services (calls, texts, data). Evelyn holds a bachelor's degree in Mechanical

Engineering from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where she focused on product design and product development.

Aditi Bhargava is a UX researcher at Google who currently focuses on understanding how mobile phone users in the US and emerging markets use their phone to communicate (phone calling, messaging, video calling) to drive product strategy. Aditi holds a Masters in UX Design from the University of Toronto.

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