

# The Interview Bible

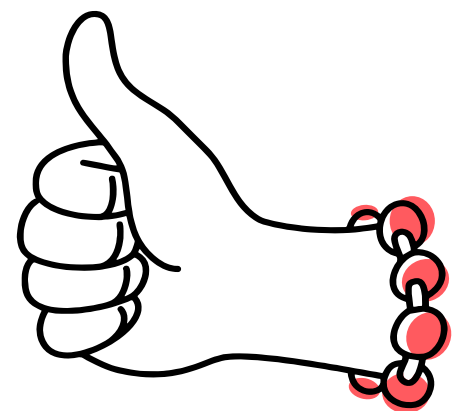
Gaining insights that matter

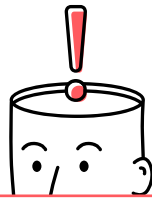
*There's no better way to understand people's fears, ambitions, hopes, desires or drivers than talking to them yourself. No research report can beat this.*

I am pretty straightforward in my advice when talking to the people you're trying to influence: DO IT YOURSELF. You need to be interested in people to make them do what you want them to do. You need to want to get to know them and their peculiar wishes, hopes and dreams. Making an idea work isn't about what you want; it is what your target wants (and needs).

**Doing interviews is not just standard qualitative research. We aren't looking for significance or representative samples; we are looking for interesting problems and accurate human insights.**

Traditional research considers non-coherent answers or stupid decisions as deviants of the research sample; we as human-centred thinkers start to wake up when this happens. It's there where the human comes popping up. Sometimes it is a sentence or word someone uses that can spark a whole new idea. You don't find this if you just read research reports. And that's why those reports will never help you understand why someone doesn't buy your solution, even if they said they would in research. We, as human-centred researchers, look for the human behind the client and therefore start to understand why someone shows specific behaviour or has specific barriers.

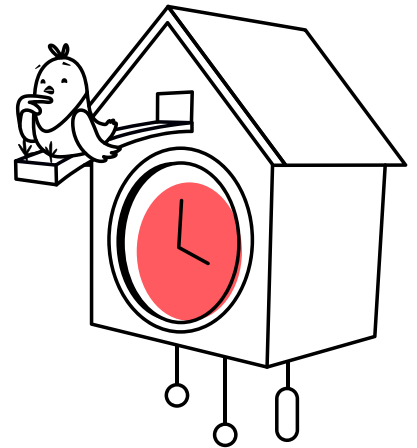




## *But tell me why!*

You need to get the EXPOSURE HOURS in. I use capitals (again). I am that serious about it. The minimum effective dose is **two hours every six weeks** talking to an actual person that's your target. That isn't too bad, is it? So, go ahead, be a human anthropologist: It's so much fun next to it is crucial to the success of your ideas.

*“Exposure hours are the best protection against yourself. We're all full of assumptions about people and their behaviour. We project our own beliefs on other people all the time. By talking to people, you hear what they really think, feel and say.”*



Why do I keep harassing you about doing interviews yourself? I have some excellent reasons, but the most important is that I know this step is crucial to getting you the success you want or making the impact you're after. But let's give you the reasons.

- 1 The most important reason is that I want to **protect you from yourself**. A behavioural designer knows that they are full of assumptions about people and their behaviour, but these assumptions primarily represent their ideas, beliefs, and worldview.

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- 2 The second reason is **bandwidth**. The time you spent doing interviews is not just research time but also ideation time. Every sentence, every word, every jump of the mind that a respondent uses or makes can potentially trigger an idea or hypothesis, can bring a piece of the puzzle you're trying to solve or can break a prejudice. Every interview is a potential gold mine for those who are prepared to listen carefully and non-judgmentally.

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- 3 The third reason is **infatuation**. I know from experience interviews help you fall in love with a problem. Every conversation teaches you to emerge yourself in the world of your target group. You learn to appreciate their struggles, fears, pains, hardship to reach goals, brave and failing attempts to make something of their life, their fight to resist comforts, etc. The better you learn to understand this, the easier it gets to look at your strategy or creative concept to solve a real human problem. That's what makes behavioural design thinking so fun and rewarding.

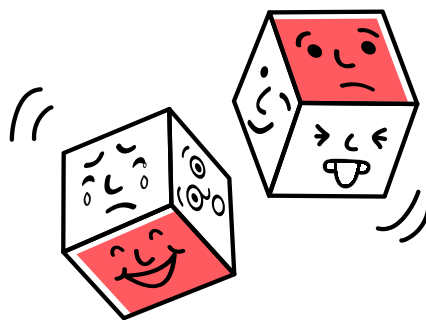


## *But tell me how!*

I admit: Doing interviews can be a bit challenging, but remember that you'll unlock all kinds of insights and understanding that you'll never get sitting behind your desk. Oh, by the way, observing someone in his surroundings (or in the field) can be very useful too. If you want to become a good anthropologist, that's how you can up your insights - just saying.



But before I set you off with our practical tips for every stage of the interview, I'd like to give you some more insider tips from our work experience. How can you make sure you don't end up stuck during your interview that either doesn't go in the direction you were looking for or makes you work so hard to keep the conversation going that you're not harvesting any valuable insights?

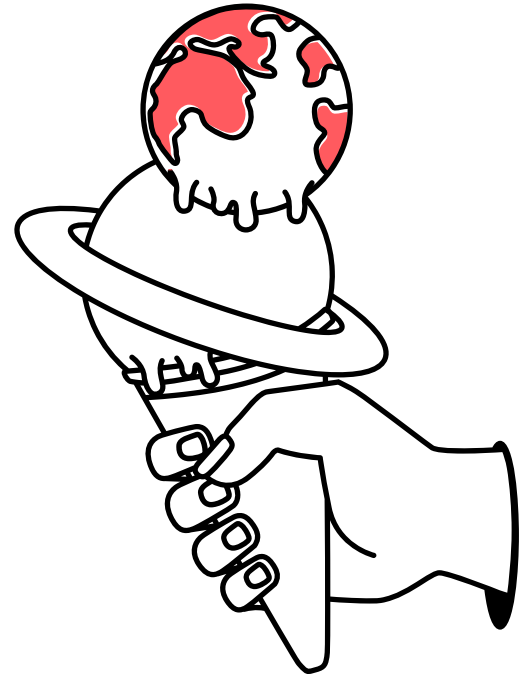


I have two straightforward rules of thumb:

**1** *be curious*

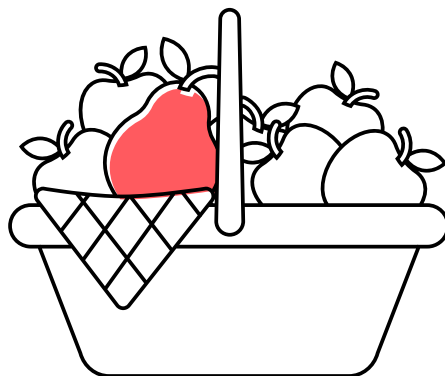
**2** *be dumb*

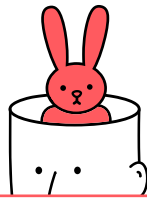
Try to be as interested as possible in trying to get to know and understand the person sitting in front of us. And we try to force ourselves to stay dumb: push yourself not to be satisfied with the first answer you get. Sometimes you have the urge to say that you understand what the respondent is saying. But you will notice that if you ask questions like "I don't quite get this, can you help me explain this?" or "I don't understand how that works at all. Can you explain this to me?" you will get to surprising answers and insights.



**Curiosity and genuine interest is the basis of every good conversation.**

As your respondent experiences your sincere interest, they will start talking more quickly, even if it is only to help you understand something. Try always to ask open questions.

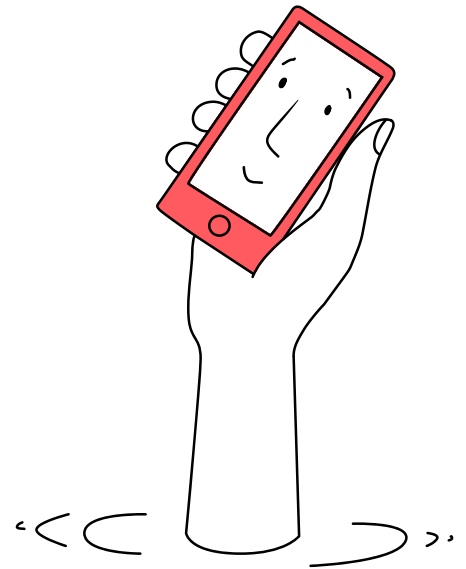




## *Some more how*

Together with this attitude of being dumb and curious comes an **absolute embargo on trying to sell your strategy and ideas**. Your interview has one objective only: getting to know the human behind the customer. You want to get to know their world, their emotions and their drivers. Trying to come up with solutions is the second stage. That is the difference between customer-centric and human-centred thinking. To put it bluntly: human-centred thinkers are looking for problems they can solve; customer-centric thinkers are looking to find a better way to sell their solutions.

***“Your task is not to pitch or sell. Your objective is to try to understand the jobs-to-be-done and pains, comforts and anxieties of the people you’re designing for.”***



And yes, at the end of a conversation, you can show some ideas you already have to get their first impression. But even if they don't get or want your idea, the value of the interview is getting to understand the jobs-to-be-done, their current behaviour and the forces that make them persist in current behaviour or influence this behaviour (pains, gains, comforts, anxieties).



**TIP:** Try also to dig up the beliefs of people. Beliefs aren't a behaviour, but some persistent convictions of people explain why they are always holding on to patterns (or comforts) and why they have so little willingness to change. We know we teach you to search for actual behaviour, but sometimes irrational beliefs make up for some excellent explanations for behaviour.

# The Preparation

# 1

Make people  
feel at home

We know from behavioural psychology that within the first five minutes of arriving somewhere, people's system 1 decides whether they like it there or not. System II kicks in after that in search of confirmation of this first impression. In other words, make sure you make people feel at home within the first five minutes. Be kind, offer them a drink, chit chat a bit. They will take this positive impression into the interview. Trusting you and being more willing to open up.

# 2

Don't put people  
in front of a jury

Make sure you don't overwhelm your interview candidate. We like to be in an interview with two people maximum. That way, the person you'd like to know about as much as possible can feel at ease instead of feeling to stand at trial.

# 3

Clearly divide roles

Make sure that before you step into the interview, you've divided the interview roles: There should be one interviewer and one notetaker. Notetakers can ask questions if they feel they miss crucial information but should never override or overtake the interviewer.

# 4

Prepare a script

Although it may seem you're having a relaxed conversation with your candidate - and they should indeed feel this comfortable - it isn't. Make sure you come prepared. Nothing is more stressful (or a waste of interview time) if you have to come up with questions as you go. By preparing questions, you know what you can and want to ask. You don't have to follow the script rigorously. If an exciting angle comes up, you should go and strike gold. It is meant to have questions ready and to have thought about what you would like to research. Suggested interview time: 60 - 90 minutes.



# The Questions

## 1

Start by asking broad questions

Start by asking broad questions about the person's life, values, and comforts before asking more specific questions that relate directly to your challenge. Go from wide to deep.

## 2

Research past behaviour, not intentions

Intentions aren't actual behaviour. People will tell you anything you would like to hear. We're social animals. People can have opinions about everything. Past behaviour is true. It really happened. This is where you find the answers and insight about behaviour.

## 3

First ask how and then ask why

How questions help to describe real behaviour. Why questions provide deep insights and reveal motivations.

## 4

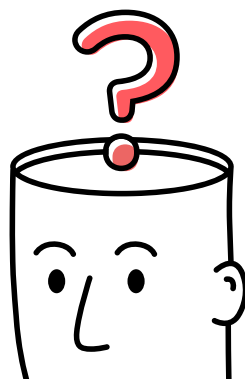
Don't look for affirmation

One of the hardest things to do during interviewing is not looking for confirmation of your hypothesis, or looking for an appraisal or positive feedback. Be aware you'll be tended to do so. Try to keep an open frame of mind. The interview is to find things to make your idea or strategy better, not to get approval.

## 5

Avoid leading questions

Don't lead questions looking for answers. Leading questions will keep a respondent from telling their truth. Questions like: 'Do you have kitchen appliances like for instance mixers, blenders, juicers' is a leading question. 'Don't you also think that'. 'Do you recognise the feeling'.



# The Interview

# 1

Take notes

Make sure to write down precisely what the person says, not what you think they might mean. This process is all about hearing exactly what people are saying. Sometimes a word or a sentence someone uses can make the difference for the success of your communication campaign.

# 2

Plot the  
SUE | Influence  
Framework®

During the interview, it saves time to make notes in the SUE | Influence Framework® as a listener or notetaker. It has two advantages. Firstly, you can listen actively, hunting for the right ideas. And you can see much quicker if you missed specific forces you want to get your grip on.

# 3

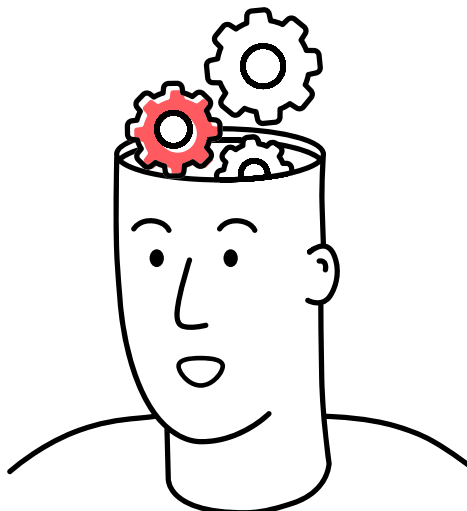
Don't be afraid of  
awkward silence

Silence forces a respondent to overthink a topic. This will produce insights that would not be discovered otherwise. Leave a pause after everything a candidate says and everything you say. It works miracles.

# 4

Read body  
language

What the person says is only one data point. Be sure to observe your interviewee's body language and the context in which you're talking.





## The Interview II

# 5

Highlight  
interesting quotes

# 6

Play it dumb

# 7

Don't sell

# 8

Be super  
specific

In selling your solution in a later stadium, the best argument that what you've created is smart is showing that it is based on what the target group said themselves. It isn't your opinion anymore; it's the opinion of the people who have to show behaviour. It will shift you from a position in which you sell the beauty of your idea to selling the most intelligent solution to a real problem.

Be stupid and curious. Ask questions like 'I don't understand, can you help me understand how that works or what you do'. People like to help and will start talking more if you take this position.

We are all inclined to sell our solution. Your interview has one objective only: getting to know the human behind the customer. You want to get to know their world, their emotions and their drivers. Trying to come up with solutions is the second stage.

Ask for specifics, so you will genuinely really understand behaviour. Don't ask 'How do you usually', but ask 'Can you describe to me step by step how you made your dinner last night?'



# The Epilogue

# 1

Walk to the exit  
with your candidate

Often in the walk to someone's coat or the exit, a spontaneous conversation starts that often reveals fascinating insights. So, never miss the walk. It may be a very insightful talk.

# 2

Be confidential with  
data and notes

Make sure data gets saved anonymously. Tell people if they are being filmed or taped and tell them this is for internal use only. Don't use full names in your reports.

# 3

Be honest

You don't do interviews to be right; you interview to find the truth. Not your reality, but the reality of your target group. Interviews are meaningless if you skew the data. Don't leave out points of attention or negatives. Most of the time, these are the most valuable insights: By addressing those, you'll increase your success rate.

# 4

Fill in the  
SUE | Influence  
Framework®

After the interview, your analysis phase starts. Write down every exciting insight on a separate post-it and stick this in the right place in the SUE | Influence Framework®.

