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FOR QUALITATIVE RESEARCH*

VIEWS

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WHEN ETHNOGRAPHY REALLY WORKS

Interviewing Users: How to Uncover Compelling Insights

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Rosenfeld Media, 2013

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I have followed Steve Portigal's blog, "All This ChittahChattah," for many years, and I am always fascinated by his stories from his user research experience. Excited to get my hands on his new book — *Interviewing Users: How to Uncover Compelling Insights* — I was not disappointed.

Portigal has covered, in depth, the field of conducting ethnographic interviews, referred to by some as design research, user research, site visits or contextual research. Throughout his book, Portigal simply uses the terms "interview" and "interviewing."

For anyone starting out in the field of ethnography, *Interviewing Users* is an excellent treatise on the subject. Portigal delves into all aspects of conducting ethnographic research, from developing the project with internal client users to presenting the results, and every small step in between. In the vein of Quincy

Jones telling artists, as they walked into A&M Studios to record "We Are The World," to "check their egos at the door," Portigal reminds the interviewer to remember (as he or she goes to the entrance of every interview) that the purpose is about the worldview of the respondent, not that of the interviewer or client.

The book covers, in detail, every aspect of conducting great interviews, and Portigal intersperses many personal examples to back up his points, making the book a compelling read, rather than an academic one. The first chapter starts with a strong argument for the "Importance of Interviewing in Design," after which Portigal goes through every step in the interviewing process in great depth. The remaining chapters are "A Framework for Interviewing," "Getting Ready to Conduct Your Interviews," "More than Just Asking Questions,"

"Key Stages of the Interview," "How to Ask Questions," "Documenting the Interview," "Optimizing the Interview" and a final chapter covering "Making Impact with Your Research."

From an experienced researcher's point of view, *Interviewing Users* is confirmation of the skills you have developed over the years, written from a research professional's point of view. From a corporate researcher's point of view, this book is strong armament to bring the design team into the research process with actual users, rather than thinking that they (as product users themselves) know all the issues involved.

Interviewing Users is peppered with sidebars, personal stories from Portigal, client stories and excellent graphics, all of which make the book an engaging read. Researchers of any experience level will gain something of value from delving into Portigal's *Interviewing Users*. 📖

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