

Observation Example

Staff explanation:

Observation Quantity: 5

Observation Quality: 4

In the following example, the student does a great job at describing breakdowns for each user. Please also note that this student was not able to observe the participants directly in real time of the actions (given the scenario he chose is a time that is difficult to observe) and only asked them to replay the events. While sometimes this is necessary if you are finding needs in more private or inaccessible scenarios, we recommend observing directly because users will not always be able to recall their events exactly as they happened. In this case, the student could have used a diary study to augment his interview.

Student submission:

My observations center around the design brief for **Time** although it also merges slightly into **Glance**. I wanted to learn about the habits of people around sleep--just before going to bed and then awaking the next morning. I asked my 3 participants to walk me through their daily routines in relation to some sort of an alarm (using whichever alarm each participant normally used). I assumed that I would find at least one participant who used a traditional, radio alarm clock, but I was surprised to find that each used his or her cell phone.

Summer

Summer is an HR professional who often travels for her job. Her phone is provided to her by her company and is extremely important to her work. I found that she uses her phone for at least 50% of her work (the other 50% she is at her desk using a laptop). At night she uses her phone to check work email and to surf her various social networks.

As her work does not require an early arrival, she is usually awoken naturally or by her 1-year-old child. However, whenever she travels, she uses her alarm clock on her iPhone. Because she doesn't always arise at the same time, she usually sets her alarm just before she falls asleep. Setting the alarm didn't seem at all difficult to her.

In the morning, when the alarm goes off, Summer will snooze at least twice (by pressing the snooze button on her home screen). After the second snooze, she will actually open the app and go to the appropriate alarm to turn it off. This is where I noticed the first breakdown--Summer had to actually open the clock app to turn off her alarm. Opening the app takes a few extra steps and, mind you, she's doing this while still groggy.

After turning off her alarm, she will remain in bed and scan her latest email and instagram for a few minutes. This is where I noticed the second breakdown. She spent a lot of time "glancing" at various items right after turning off her alarm. Merging both her latest notifications with her alarm may help her

to get a better idea of any new information (new emails) that came in while she was asleep.

Myller

Myller is a QA engineer at a tech startup. He has recently purchased an iPhone 5S and uses it almost every day for his personal alarm clock. He too, does not use a traditional, radio alarm clock.

Myller sets his alarm clock using Siri. For example, just before going to sleep, he'll turn on Siri and say, "Wake me up at 6:00 AM tomorrow." He does this while laying in bed without even looking at the screen.

In the morning, Myller's main breakdown comes when the alarm actually goes off. Because Myller arises quite early, he is usually in a deep sleep and the alarm startles him. At this point, Myller frantically presses buttons on the phone just to get the alarm to turn off. He doesn't care where the snooze button is or where any other button is--he just wants the sound to turn off. This raises some problems because sometimes he may turn the alarm off when he meant to snooze and vice versa.

The other issue is that the snooze isn't quite smart enough for him. During a recent morning, Myller awoke at 6:00 AM, planning to go to the gym. However, when the alarm went off, he had a headache and was extremely tired. He decided that he would skip the gym and sleep for 30 more minutes. Unfortunately, though, the alarm only snoozes for a predetermined amount of time. Myller had to open up the clock app and change the alarm to a later time. He was also tired, so selecting a time exactly 30 minutes in the future was frustrating with iOS's scroll wheel functionality. He first spun too fast and went past 6:40, so he had to spin the other way. Consequently, he finally landed on 6:37 AM left it because the work required to get exactly 6:30 wasn't worth it.

Frederik

Frederik is different from the other two participants because he doesn't have a smartphone. Frederik is a masters student who is trying to live on a very small budget. Consequently, he only has a basic phone for calling and texting. Fortunately, his phone also has a rudimentary alarm clock.

Despite having a basic phone, Frederik uses the alarm clock extensively. He can only have up to 5 alarms and he uses these constantly. Two of the alarms he uses to remind him of medication he must take in the morning and evening. These alarms use a different ringtone from his other alarms thus training him to associate a certain ringtone with his medication.

When Frederik's alarm goes off in the morning, he is given two options, "Ok" and "Snooze". He said he never snoozes, but always pushes the "ok" button and then arises shortly thereafter.

His breakdown occurs when setting the repeat schedule for an alarm. The interface requires that he select specific days that the alarm should go off (e.g., weekdays). The alarm will remember these settings even if he turns the alarm off. This caused him a problem at one point when he turned a

particular alarm on to awake him for an early Saturday activity. Unfortunately, the alarm had been set to go ring on weekdays, and therefore, the alarm never rang on Saturday morning.