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2c: Contextual Inquiry Check-In

Contextual Inquiry #1 (Ethan)

Brad, our first participant, is a principal product manager at Concur Technologies. His working schedule is packed with meetings, phone-calls, and conferences. Although he is very busy with his work, he still cares a lot about his health and his body. Brad is a big fan of biking, and usually gets up at 6 in the morning to bike for around an hour (15 miles per day). Also, Brad cares a lot about his diet, in that he would usually avoid eating food with carbohydrates, and would eat plenty of fruits, vegetables, and foods high in protein.

The night before I conducted contextual inquiry, I asked him to take notes about the all the liquid (coffee, tea, soda, water, etc.) he consumed that day and email me a copy of the notes by the end of the day. I scheduled a meeting with him at his office at 4:30 pm in the afternoon, and we met at his office to do the contextual inquiry.

After the interview, I learned some facts about Brad's drinking habits and his drinking preference. Brad drinks a lot of water during the day (10-12 glasses), and does a very good job of keeping himself hydrated. Although he doesn't have a planner or schedule for water-intake, Brad drinks a glass of water about every two hours during the day, which can be observed from his liquid-intake notes. Brad prefers seltzer water over plain water because he likes the bubbly taste of it, and he usually drinks 4 glasses (or cans) of seltzer water in a day. Brad never drinks coffee or sugary sodas because those drinks contain a lot of sugar and calories and he knows they are bad for your health.

After conducting this contextual inquiry, I realized that there are many people who are very good at keeping themselves hydrated throughout the day. For these individuals, they might not need reminders to drink water but could be more interested in tracking their liquid consumption over a long period of time. This gives opportunities for more analysis work on water consumption, beyond simple reminders.

There were a couple difficulties that arose during the contextual inquiry. It was hard to follow the apprentice/master approach and the inquiry soon became an interview. Also, participants may either mark their water bottle to remind themselves to record how much they are drinking, or they have to retrace their steps for the day to remember what they drank, which takes time and is prone to error and bias.

For remaining contextual inquiries, we are going to ask participants in advance to log their liquid intake for a day and walk us through the whole day, discussing what, where, when, why, and how they were drinking water. After the first contextual inquiry, we realized that there are many people who are very good at keeping themselves hydrated. Based on that understanding, we are going to address questions about long-term liquid intake tracking, and ask participants about their opinions on that.