

Contextual Inquiry and Success Metrics

MIT Class 6.811/Principles and Practice of Assistive Technology

This document directs you to organize your findings about your client, using the framework of the human-activity-assistive technology-context (HAAT) model. (Note: This was previously adapted from a 6-10 page long written assignment on contextual inquiry)

Start with describing your client (age, gender), his/her living situation (independent, alone, in group etc.) and general level and type of activity, including occupational status. State where you met your client. Describe your client's disability. How is this individual representative of others with this kind of disability? In what ways is this individual distinctive or unique? Describe any "meta"-issues (e.g. about communication or assumptions or fatigue) that arose during your meeting.

Discuss the activity you identified that the client wishes to do (but currently cannot), or that the client wishes to do more of, do more independently, do faster or better or more reliably, or do in more places than s/he can currently manage. Describe how the client's disability manifests as a functional deficit in the client's performance of the activity of interest. Describe your client's psychosocial affect with respect to the activity.

Describe the strategies that the client has used or tried in the past to perform the activity of interest. What assistive technology or technologies, if any, has the client used or tried? In what way have those strategies or assistive technologies failed or only partially succeeded? Briefly describe what you understand to be the cause of this failure in terms of the disability, the activity, and/or the context.

What is the client's physical, social, cultural, and institutional context? How do elements of the context (including availability, or unavailability, of assistance) relate to or contribute to the functional impairment? What contextual aspects are salient in consideration of this client's situation, and how?

This final paragraph about success metrics will be addressed at a later lab: Define a "success metric" for this client. The metric can have both qualitative and quantitative aspects. Define a monotonic scale (low to high) for each aspect of your metric, and evaluate the client's current level of ability with respect to the scale you have defined for that aspect. Keep in mind that you will use your metric(s) as design constraints in the next phase of the class, and will evaluate them repeatedly during the term; define the metric(s) so as to facilitate this kind of engineering use.

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