



Ethnography Examples

The following represents just a small sub-set of actual ethnographic and related field interviewing studies.

| Type of Study | Subjects | Purpose | Client(s) | Actionable Insights | Interesting 'Sidebar Notes' |
|---|---|---|--|---|---|
| Immersive Ethnography (12-14 days in the operating room over many months) | Neurosurgeons at Allegheny General Hospital | Determine the latent (unvoiced) information needs of Neurosurgeons and Neuro-Radiologists | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Telecommunications & Information Technology companyNIST | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Low level of technology savvy among users (Neurosurgeons)Interaction devices must withstand extreme conditions (e.g. disinfection in an autoclave)Information content must be absolutely correct (i.e. life and death decisions based on it)Achieving trust among user is critical. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">A Doctorate in anything (it could be Art History) goes a long way towards 'breaking into' the sub-culture of Neurosurgeons.Learned the medical culture joke ("Are you an MD?" ... "No, I am a real doctor. I have a Ph.D.")Surprising level of tobacco use by surgeonsTattoos (nurses and doctors) |
| Immersive Ethnography (attending Medical School classes as an observer for week-long periods over a year) | Medical Students at the Medical College of Pennsylvania/ Hahnemann University | Find better ways of teaching neuroscience | NIST (National Institute of Standards & Technology) | <ul style="list-style-type: none">High level of technology savvy among users (Medical students)Intelligent training technologies, such as 'synthetic interviews' with online 'patients' work well with this group.Concept-mapping (use of diagrams) is used extensively in the teaching process and should be incorporated into any new training systems. | |
| Immersive Ethnography | Amateur competitive | Search for new product ideas related to rowing | Confidential (Sporting equipment manufacturer) | This study yielded many new product concepts for a rowing | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Adoption of new types of equipment, such as oars, |



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| (involved training and competing on a rowing team) | rowers | equipment | | equipment manufacturer. | is slow, partly due to U.S. Rowing Association rules governing equipment specs. |
| Immersive Ethnography (involved attendance at many fiddlers' conventions, typically 5 days in duration, and actually competing on several occasions.) | Amateur competitive fiddle players | Search for new product ideas related to new violins and accessories. | WARP3 Insights parent company, Wiederholt & Rickert Partners, LLC. | <p>Insights from this study inspired the many innovative products now manufactured and sold by Rickert & Ringholz Musical Instruments, a company solely owned by Wiederholt & Rickert Partners.</p> <p>Products can be seen at: www.RickertandRingholz.com and www.FiddleandBowStore.com.</p> <p>Many can be heard on www.YouTube.com/DoctorFiddle</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many amateurs actually have coaches to help them win competitions, as winning competitions is a prerequisite to entry into the 'Nashville' professional musician scene, which is quite lucrative. • Politics (e.g. status of your performance coach) plays a significant role. • Many older virtuosos refuse to compete due to the politics. • Dr. Rickert placed 16th in the Georgia State Fiddle Championship (without a Coach!) |
| Medium-Depth Ethnography | F-15 Technical Sergeants and Mechanics | Determine training needs and approaches | US Air Force | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical orders (printed procedures) often did not capture Master-level troubleshooting expertise • Entry-level technicians required safe practice environment (on a simulator, not actual plane). Mistakes could be costly (in terms of both life & equipment) | |
| Medium-Depth Ethnography | Grocery store service workers | Determine training needs and approaches | A Top 3 US grocery chain | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Younger workers lacked basic "people" skills | |



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| | | | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most satisfied workers were those who displayed customer services skills, regardless of department / task • Younger workers comfortable with games and computers | |
| Medium-Depth Ethnography | Nuclear plant mechanics and instructional staff | Determine training needs and approaches | Electric Power Research Institute | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hands-on training in shop hardest for staff to teach, but most beneficial to students • Teaching problem-solving skills better as individualized instruction • Master-apprentice relationship in field | |
| Medium-Depth Ethnography | Bank Tellers | Document the typical 'day-in-the-life' of Tellers to discover new product opportunities | Enterprise Software company | Numerous insights led to a complete revision of an existing product. | No recording of any kind is allowed when working with Financial Institutions—requires 'old school' methods such as detailed note taking |
| Medium-Depth Ethnography | Customer Service Representatives | Document the typical 'day-in-the-life' of CSRs to discover new product opportunities | CRM Software company | Numerous insights led to a complete revision of an existing product. | No recording of any kind is allowed when working with Financial Institutions—requires 'old school' methods such as detailed note taking |
| Medium-Depth Ethnography | Branch Bankers | Document the typical 'day-in-the-life' of Bankers to discover new product opportunities | Enterprise Software company | Numerous insights led to a complete revision of an existing product. | No recording of any kind is allowed when working with Financial Institutions—requires 'old school' methods such as detailed note taking. |
| Medium-Depth Ethnography | Broadband Cable Installers | Get to the root of large numbers of complaints of malfunctioning remote control devices | Telecommunications company | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discovered that Installers were not properly installing batteries nor were they entering the | Reading manuals is not high on the list of priorities for the group we studied. |



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| | | | | correct codes. <ul style="list-style-type: none">Better training needed (actually, no training at all had been given) | |
| 'Ethnography Lite' | Small business owners | <ul style="list-style-type: none">How online banking services fit into the lives of small business owners.What are the key questions for marketing research and usability testing? | Large Financial Services Provider (Confidential) | Over 50 discoveries now included in the new version of Small Business Banking, used by 1000s of small businesses. | |