

A DAY IN THE LIFE

What is it?

A Day In The Life is a type of ethnographic study where the researcher follows and observes a user through a typical day. The objective of this activity is for the researcher to understand the routine and typical activities of a user that the user performs by mere habit and that the user would perform subconsciously.

QUICK DETAILS: A DAY IN THE LIFE

Structure:

- ☐ Semi-structured or Unstructured

Preparation:

- ☐ Observational recording tools
- ☐ A respondent/subject (*The person/s who you will observe*)

Deliverables:

- ☐ Field notes, A day in the life artifacts

WHY IS 'A DAY IN THE LIFE' CONDUCTED?

The purpose of this method is to elicit the different interaction points of the user and the solution in the context of their life. A Day In The Life also helps the researcher gain insight into the needs, behaviours and goals of the user. In this method, individual participants who are representative of the users we are designing for, are followed and observed to understand how they spend their typical day and activities that make up their day.

HOW TO GO ABOUT 'A DAY IN THE LIFE'?

A preliminary interview or survey to determine the same could also help supplement the data collected during the observation by the researcher. The data collected during research can also be used in the persona descriptions of the user types.

There could be a difference in what the user says they do on a typical day versus what they actually do, and the researcher can gauge this gap after a day in the life study of the user.

The method is conducted individually with users to capture the typical day data in-depth. The research can also be summarised as A Day In The Life for a cluster of users that are similar in behaviour, needs or goals.

CREATIVE WAYS OF CONDUCTING 'A DAY IN THE LIFE'

An out-of-the-box thinking researcher may also describe A Day In The Life in the present as well as in the future context for a user or a set of users i.e. the observations of the current context can be used to draw a description of the future.

If the typical day of the user is complex, it can be split up into different time frame and those frames can be observed and described in detail during the research to gain a more focused understanding of the day. This method can prove to be highly helpful in exploring experiences and behaviours of users one is designing for. It can also help in testing prototypes or new ideas as well as explore opportunities to arrive at a solution for a problem.

WAKE UP

Wakes up for the day forward to face new challenges.

GETS READY WITH SUPPORT

Markus is helped out of bed and partially helped to get dressed. He gets frustrated as he drops items and is unable to quickly pick up. Uses his wheelchair to manoeuvre his adapted home. Brushes teeth.

WORK

Home support leaves. Starts work in his home office with full enthusiasm. Markus spends a lot of his time in his office as he works from home. Markus seems uncomfortable at times as he works from his wheelchair.

WORK

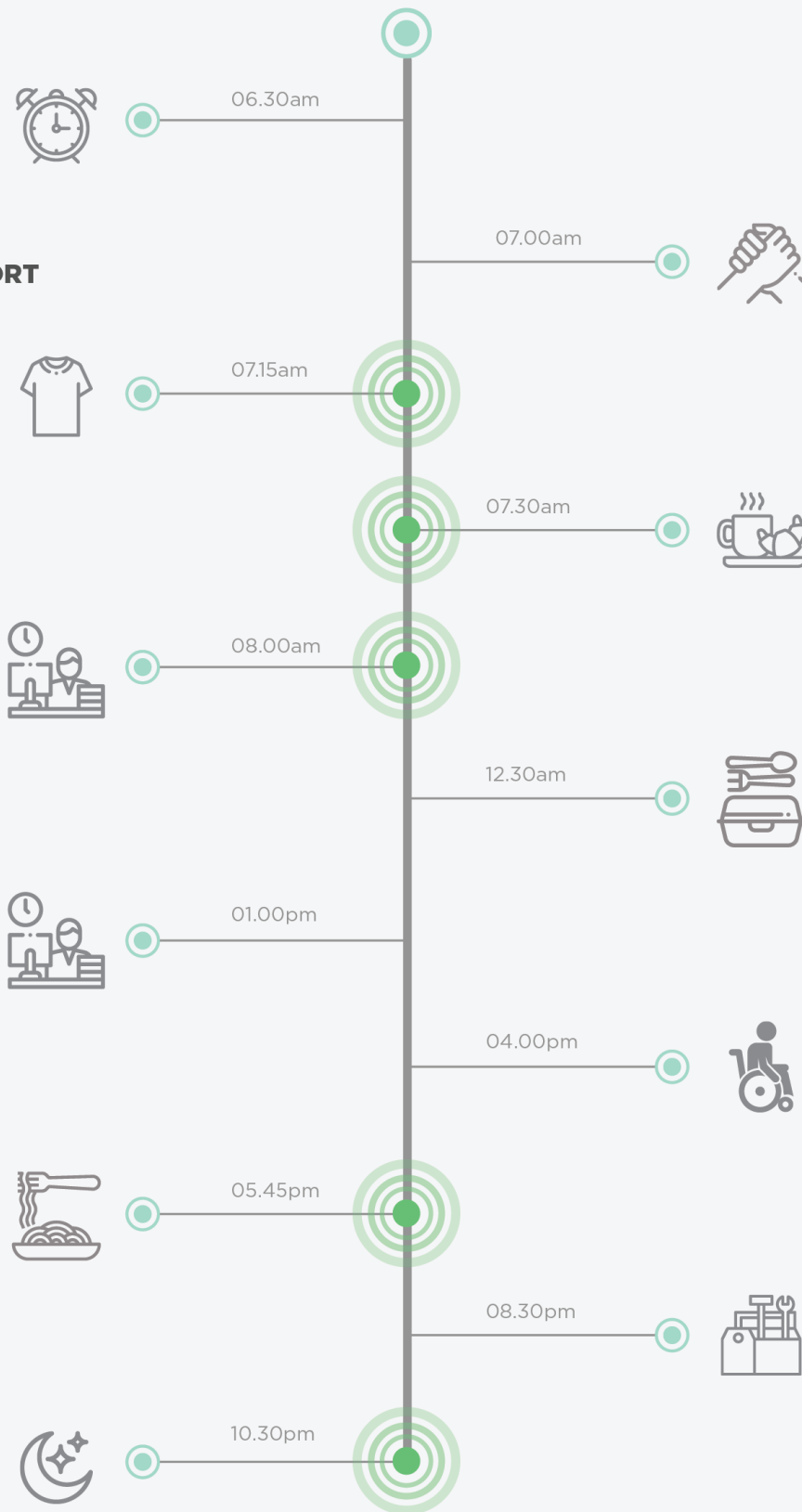
Gets back to where he left off. Again, working from his wheelchair.

MEETS UP FOR FOOD

Markus travels to meet his retired parents for lunch. There is consideration to the choice of venue due to wheelchair access being paramount. This process takes some time.

SLEEP

Gets undressed, which takes some time. Gets into bed and watches TV before falling asleep.



HOME SUPPORT

Markus has a Home Support worker who attends home frequently to help him with day-to-day tasks. Markus was reluctant at first as he wanted to retain his dignity and try to do things himself.

MAKES BREAKFAST

Markus makes himself breakfast. He struggles to reach things at height. Home support helps here. Markus would like his kitchen to be improved to give him more independence.

LUNCH

Has lunch at his desk. Markus makes pre-made meals. Meals are healthy as Markus likes to lead a healthy life.

CYCLING

Markus finishes work and drives to meet up with friends. Markus as an adapted vehicle so he can drive and has a sports type wheelchair. He loves outdoor activities and rides alongside his able-bodied friends. Showers at an outdoor activity centre.

ME TIME

Spends time reading and working on a personal project in his adapted garage. He is using his Software Development and engineering skill-sets to build a self charging sports type wheelchair.

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF: SPINAL INJURY SUFFERER



Name: Markus Silva

Age: 37

Behaviour & Lifestyle:

Thrill seeker, values life's little things, quality conscious, well organised, finds time for recreational activities, keen learner, work at home Software Developer, Earns 45k p/y, once an engineer, well versed APP user, single, loves to travel, suffered a severer spinal injury at the age of 29 in a skiing accident, gets frustrated when he cannot do things for himself and has to rely on others.

ADVANTAGES OF A 'DAY IN THE LIFE'

● 1. In-depth understanding

As the researcher observes the user, one-on-one at a pace comfortable for the user and in a space that is familiar to the user, the researcher is exposed to a clear and detailed picture of the user and their typical day including their needs, behaviours, habits and goals.

● 2. Human-centered

A Day In The Life is human/user-centered approach i.e. designed to address the need of the users.

● 3. Expert opinion

The user is considered an expert in their domain and the researcher gets to directly observe the user in their natural environment performing their daily activities without interruptions.

DISADVANTAGES OF A 'DAY IN THE LIFE'

● 1. Time-consuming

By nature – A Day In The Life can be time-consuming as it involves observing individual users through their typical day.

● 2. No probing

The researcher doesn't probe the user on the daily activities as the user could lose their natural flow of functioning and it could alter the user's behaviour in a typical day.

● 3. Diverse Viewpoints

Different users may operate differently in a typical day; therefore, A Day In The Life could lead to diverse findings.

TO CONCLUDE; 'A POWERFUL METHOD'

A Day In The Life is a powerful method that is used to understand activities, emotions, lifestyle and many other useful cues that could lead to gap identification. Generally speaking, most of the products or services we use do not take up a whole day of our time and hence, it is not a method to be used when your objective is to improve an existing product or enhance its usability. Certainly, use this method if you want to find unmet opportunities or gaps that you want to fill through your existing product or by innovating new ones.

A Day In The Life can also be used as a technique to understand unique context of the user, in order for the researcher to get an insight about the user and their environment. Say, for example, you want to create a communication tool for inmates of a prison. While you may employ interviews or surveys to get quick and cheap understanding, A Day In The Life may give you much richer insights... this is because, a prison is a unique context that you as a researcher may not have experienced, and the environment is such that it does have a profound influence on the people who live there; and how they communicate with each other.