

Trends Expert Interview

Speaking with experts who stay on top of what is happening in specific topic area, can very quickly reveal valuable insights

BENEFITS	INPUT	OUTPUT
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Facilitates quick and early discovery• Brings in new perspectives• Captures knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Project's topic• Pool of trend experts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understanding of trends and growth factors• Areas for further research

A Trends Expert Interview helps one quickly learn about trends related to a topic. Speaking with experts like futurists, economists, professors, authors, and researchers, who stay on top of what is happening in specific topic area, can very quickly reveal valuable insights. Speaking with them also provides guidance for where to look for additional information. It is very helpful to use frameworks during the interviews to guide the conversation and to comprehensively cover the topic. For example, the conversations may proceed in a structured way by focusing on various types of trends technology, business, people, culture, policy, or others.

HOW IT WORKS

STEP 1: Determine the topics to be understood.

The prompts for this often come from the project brief.

However, review the topics and types of trends that you are interested in learning more about. Which topics should we focus on-technology, business, people, culture, policy, or other project-specific topics?

STEP 2: Identify experts.

Through a combination of Internet searches, conversations with colleagues, literature searches, or other means, pull together a list of people who are recognized experts in the identified topics. Ask people working in those topics for their recommendations of experts. Look to conduct interviews with more than one expert in each topic.

STEP 3: Make preparations for the interview.

Read articles, books, or anything the expert might have authored to understand his or her point of view. Prepare a set of questions to help guide the interview session. For example, you might use a "plant" metaphor as away to ask questions during the interview and structure the conversation:

- (1) *Seeds-What are the early, emerging trends and innovations?*
- (2) *Soil-How are the fundamentals affecting growth?*
- (3) *Atmosphere-How are the surrounding conditions affecting growth?*
- (4) *Plant-How do innovations grow to become robust?*
- (5) *Water-How are the catalysts affecting growth?*

STEP 4: Conduct the interview.

Carefully thought-through interviews make the most of limited time available with the expert. Use prepared questions to guide the conversation and perhaps not ask them directly. From references during the conversation remember to list resources that you can tap into for additional interviews.

STEP 5: Listen, capture, and follow up.

Interviewing requires active listening. If allowed, use a recording device to capture the conversation. As the conversation unfolds take copious notes and keep track of clarifying questions you may want to ask later.

STEP 6: Transcribe and summarize.

Have the recorded conversation transcribed so that key phrases or interesting insights can be extracted. Summarize the findings and add them to documents to be shared with the rest of the team.