Contextual Design Work Modeling (2 pages)

Modeling involves formalizing research data and insights in a concise, systematic and visual manner in the form of a model.

### Activity Details:

**Before starting this activity:**

- **Required:** Participants must have conducted a research activity, such as a contextual inquiry, and have transcripts from the full inquiry or session.

**Define Roles and Conduct an Interpretation Session**

Roles include:

- **Interviewer:** Describes what happened (reads transcript)
- **Recorder:** Takes notes of ideas and key points
- **Modelers:** One for each type of model

**Activity Details:**

1. **Setting up an Interpretation Session**
   
   In an interpretation session, an inquiry/research session is visualized in its entirety. The research team (and any other interested parties) go through the research transcript step-by-step, drawing work models, recording breakdowns and ideas and asking questions.

   - **Prep for Work Models**
     
     Set up large sheets of paper on the walls, one for each model. A large whiteboard can work, as well.

   - **Distribute Transcripts**
     
     Be certain that each person participating has a copy of your full transcript.

   - **Review your Focus & Approach**
     
     Restate to the full group the focus of your research, and discuss how you went about conducting your research. Where did you go? What did you see?

   - **Assign Roles**
     
     Each person participating in the session should have a role.

     | Role       | Description                                                                 |
     |------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
     | **Interviewer** | Describes what happened (reads transcript) Answers questions |
     | **Modelers (5)** | One each for Flow, Physical, Sequence, Artifact and Cultural Models |
     | **Recorder** | Takes note of any design ideas, breakdowns and key points |
     | **Participants** | Listen to the story and ask questions Propose interpretations to the team |

2. **Create Work Models**

   Patiently, go through each line of the transcript and document all activity in the appropriate model or models. (See specific instructions for each model on the following page).

   Images below show AC4D students and faculty doing an Interpretation Session. Notice the fidelity of the drawings - this is a very rough process. Final models on the following page represent 2-3 iterations of refinement.

**Materials required (per model):**

- Transcript
- Sharpies
- Large piece of butcher paper (at least 36” x 60”) OR Large whiteboard
The Flow Model
How work is divided and coordinated, without regard for time
Making a Flow Model:
• Individuals who do the work are drawn as circles
• Groups (sets of people) are also drawn as circles
• Flow of communication are drawn as arrows and lines between individuals or groups
• Communication topics are written as labels on the flow lines
• Artifacts are drawn as small boxes on a flow
• Places are drawn as large boxes
• Draw breakdowns in communication or coordination as a red lightning bolt and annotate them

Sequence Model
The order of work tasks over time
Making a Sequence Model:
• Write Triggers as sentences or blurbs
• Write Intents as sentences or blurbs
• Write Actions as sentences or blurbs
• Draw breakdowns as a red lightning bolt and annotate if necessary

Cultural Model
The influencers which define expectations, desires, values and the overall approach people take to their work
Making a Cultural Model:
• Influences are drawn as circles - the size of the circle illustrates the extent of their influence
• The influence is drawn as an arrow pointing from one influencer to another, and described in text
• Breakdowns in cultural influence are drawn as a red lightning bolt and annotated if necessary

Artifact Model
The tangible items people create and use to help them get their work accomplished
Making an Artifact Model:
• Draw or find a photo of each object used
• Make sure that all key physical and informational characteristics are shown
• Breakdowns are drawn as a red lightning bolt and annotated if necessary

Physical Model
The physical environment in which work is accomplished
Making a Physical Model:
• Draw a birds-eye/plan view of the places that work occurs and annotate them
• Draw physical structures that define the space as geometric shapes
• Draw hardware, software and tools that are present as appropriate
• Draw movement throughout the space as arrows and annotated lines
• Breakdowns in the physical space are drawn as a red lightning bolt and annotated if necessary

Iterate and Refine Models
Remove redundant or irrelevant items - begin to make judgements about what’s important based on the patterns that present themselves. Put your model into a digital medium after refining once again either on a white board or large piece of paper.