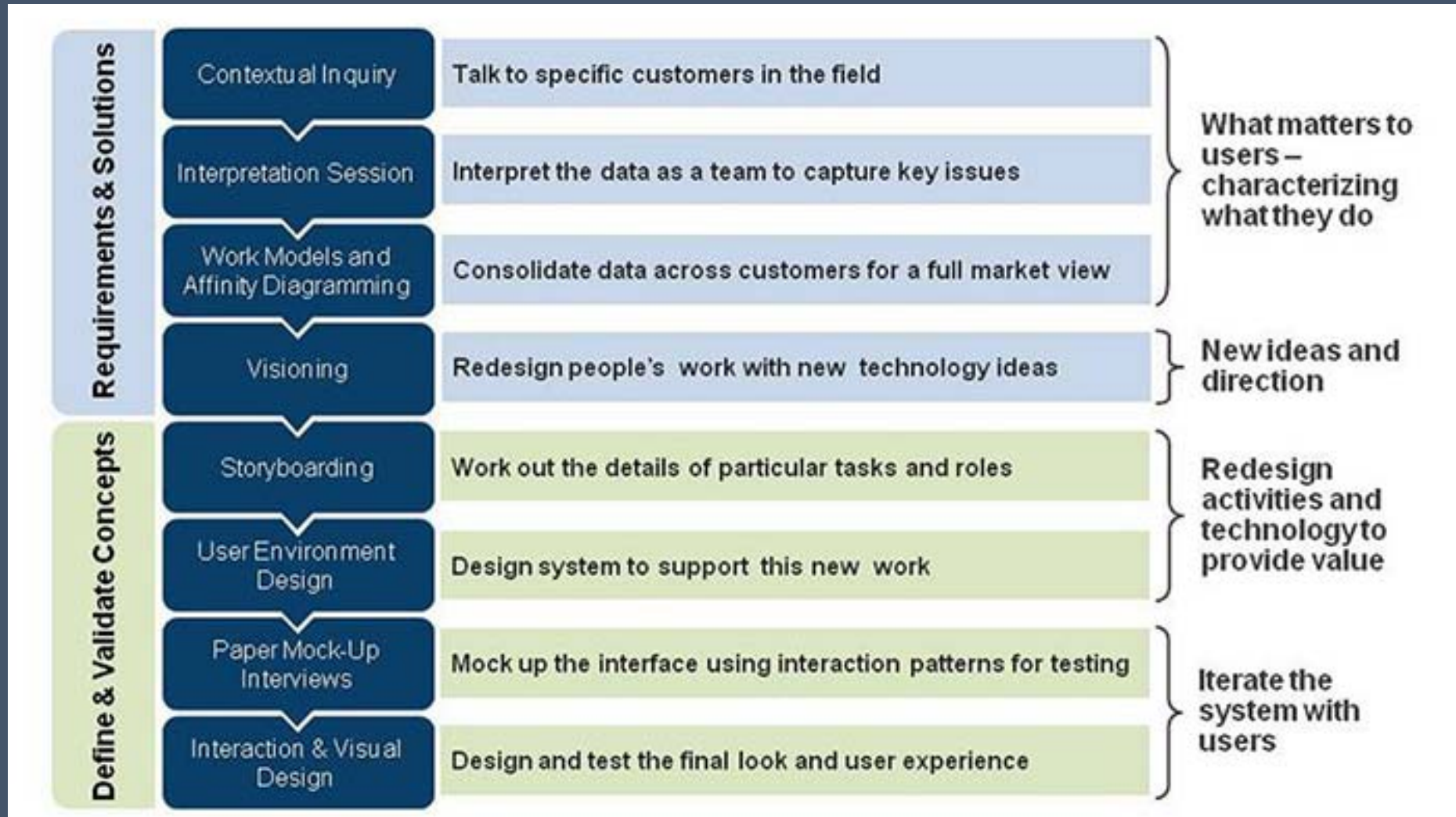


Contextual Inquiry

Contextual Inquiry

- Similar to an interview, but done in the “context” where the participant is likely to interact with the technology.
- Greater partnership with the participant, working together to figure out how a workflow actually happens.
- Pros
 - Rich data similar to a normal unstructured or semi-structured interview
 - Get to see the space where users normally interact with your technology
 - Opportunity to identify “obvious” things that users don’t mention
- Cons
 - More involved, travel to location, 1-3 hour inquiry
 - Less structured data is harder to analyze
 - May require special permission to visit and record space

Contextual design



“Principle: People are experts at what they do - but are unable to articulate their own work practice.”

<https://www.interaction-design.org/literature/book/the-encyclopedia-of-human-computer-interaction-2nd-ed/contextual-design>

Example Contextual Inquiry

- I: “I noticed that after putting the order into the system you called the stocking room and told them about the order. Why did you do that?”
- P: “I just wanted to let them know that the order is coming.”
- I: “Why do they need to know that the order is coming?”
- P: “They can’t see the order system and it takes them a few minutes to find items in the stocking room. So when the customer shows up we look unprepared, so I always call down and tell them. Order from this department always look fast!”

Contextual Inquiry

- Ethnographic interviews
- Pros
 - Strong understanding of how a particular user works
 - Deep understanding of the context in which your software will be used
 - Opportunity to build a relationship with a user
 - Ability to observe context and understand “obvious” elements of environment
- Cons
 - Harder to use on infrequent tasks (like app installs)
 - Limited sample size

At a prior university the library decided to figure out why researchers were not backing up data. They tried surveying, but people left out important information. So they sent someone around to various research labs to do a contextual inquiry.