Technology Help Assignment
& Reflection Essay

Michael Pyant

Instructions (make sure to closely review instructions IN FULL before hour session with your participant)

#1 - Find someone who self-identifies as needing technology help, of some sort or another, willing to spend an hour with you - either in person or online.

#2 - Set a time to meet in person or online via zoom, facetime, skype, etc…

#3 - Spend half an hour with that person guiding the session - focused on whatever tech help they may need or tech hurdles they're confronting.

On September 8, 2023 I interviewed the trustee chairman of my church who is a social worker by profession. She recently has become a manager within her organization and now has a more need for technology to be productive in her workplace and in other areas of life. We spent nearly an hour discussing these questions and more time working on an excel workbook for her job.

#4 - Spend half an hour asking them following questions - recording their responses on a piece of paper or in a word document

1. The first questions are about what devices you own and use. You might use something that you own or something belonging to someone else.
Interviewer recite the list slowly while the recorder enters own, use, use other's or none

> Desktop computer: *none*
> Laptop computer: *uses*
> Smart phone or cell phone: *uses*
> Tablet or e-reader: seldom   *uses*
> Gaming console: *uses*
> Voice activated internet device for instance Alexa or Echo: *owns but does not use*

2. Now, for the devices you have. Do you or others you live with use them often, or rarely?

> *" These devices are frequently used, but the laptop computer is mainly used for work and the Chromebook is used by my son for his schoolwork. My son uses the Xbox more as a*

means to view YouTube and other streaming services video services than actually play games. Everyone in the house has their own iPhone. Me my mom and son live together. "

3. Do you use any of the devices we're talking about?

  a. At work?   "*I do yes*."
  b. At school?   "*no* " (does not apply)
  c. Elsewhere? Where: "*Yes, church.*"

Working from home allows her the mobility of travel, but she rarely takes her computer with her while on the clock. She always takes her company phone with her in order to answer calls, texts, or emails.

4. Now, more generally would you say that you have enough help with using these devices we've been talking about, or would you like to have more help. (enough or more)

  " I think I have enough help. "

5. Please tell me about a time when you were stuck while trying to do something with one of these devices, and you turned to someone who helped you?

  " I was having trouble with remembering my password and got locked out of my computer for an hour. I also had trouble creating a spreadsheet required for my job. IT services at my company helped reset my password, and my pastor has recently started helping me with tech related issues. "

6. In general, who do you turn to for help with technology and how do you know them?
Recorder create a list with any description the speaker gives.

Before I became her pastor and began helping her with her tech, she would turn to IT support at her job and her son for help. It should be noted that there was not much need until recently (few months) for tech support. Technology use was mainly limited to television and cell phone use. Any problems there would be solved by calling the cell phone carrier or cable company for support.

7. Now, turning things around, have you yourself ever helped someone else with their digital devices?
Recorder enter yes or no.

  " yes "

8. (If yes) Tell me about a time when you were helping someone else. I'm hoping you can tell me a story about when this happened.

" I had to help a co-worker navigate through filling out form elements on our company's website. She felt as though I had more of a handle on inputting things on the computer than her, or she was just expecting me to do her work, maybe both. I simply walked over to her computer and showed her how I fill out the forms and answered her questions. "

9. Please tell me about when you first started using these devices. Why did you start?

" I started using the computer when in middle school. They began requiring it after primary school. "

10. Please tell me about how has your usage or access to these devices has changed over your lifetime? What caused the change or changes?

" Time changes things. Things updated each year. "

She basically stated that the use of computers/technology shifted from learning how to use computers in middle school, through needing to use them in college for homework, to presently utilizing them for tasks for work and other responsibilities in other organizations.

11. What might you like to do in the future with technology?

" I would like to open an online boutique and possibly learn how to dropship. "

12. Do you identify as Male, Female, or something else?
[ask where culturally appropriate, or note your observation]

" Female "

13. In what decade were you born?

" April 1980 "

14. Would you describe where you live as…

" A small Southern country town of a few thousand people. "

#5 After you finish the interview you will write a 2-3 page double-spaced reflection essay on what you learned. The essay should summarize what you learned from both the experience providing technology help, and from the experience of interviewing your partner.

Questions to consider:

1. If you were to do this tech help session over again, are there things you would do differently? What worked well? What was a struggle?

I would try to interview a stranger instead of someone I was already familiar with and currently assisting in some areas mentioned in the questionnaire. The interview was a success yet it may have been even more successful questioning someone else. Reflections on the experience leads me to think her answers may have been more elaborate or she may have given more detail if she did not already thin k I knew what she meant or was going to say. Because I have had some experience with her and others close to her, some of this information was already know or understood by me and perhaps she held back from giving a more detailed set of answers. Our conversation was not that long but it still was long enough to go over all the questions on the list.

Even with this in mind, I think the interview itself worked well because I did know her and have some experience assisting her already. Although she understood this to be an assignment for my class, she exhibited optimism and enthusiasm about the process and mentioned that she was enjoying learning how to make spreadsheets. We met at her home which presented a comfortable environment for her, and also gave immediate access to her workstation. I was able to give feedback and see her issues firsthand while conducting the interview. This allowed me to help her better articulate some issues she was having navigating Excel and identify other issues with her workstation/set up that could be easily adjusted for better efficiency. A few things such as; removal of a coffee maker from her desk (NO LIQUIDS AROUND THE COMPUTER!!!!), placing the printer on a table instead of the floor (to prevent dust from clogging the toner), cable management (neatly rearrange all cords to prevent tripping), and configuring the external monitor (more screen real estate) were all quick but necessary fixes to her current workspace. I did not struggle or have a noticeable struggle. The interview went along well and she answered well.

2. What was surprising in the interview you did? Did your participant share anything that surprised you?

I did not have any major surprises during the interview, again this is most likely due to us knowing each other already. It was unexpected to hear of her entrepreneurial ideas. We discussed the idea of how easy it is today to start a micro business of any kind if you have a service and a smartphone. A greater conversation then carried on when discussing the power of social media and how ideas spawn other ideas and inspiration hits when you are able to see what others are doing. She likes the idea of opening a boutique. As we discussed this idea, she continued to say she was interested in selling products but did not want to make them. That is when I suggested the term 'dropship'. This was a new term for her, but the idea was already in her heart. This part of the interview seemed to spark even more interest for her in learning how to use the technology that she currently owns. She just started using spreadsheet software and seems to be fired up to see how she can use formulas and cell references to become more productive.

3. Based on this tech help session and interview, do you have any thoughts about how we can make tech help more equitably accessible in ALL communities?

One main idea I have is first to make sure there are clearly defined uses for technologies. It makes less difference if there is access if there is no practical use for said technologies. Simply put, buying a $1,000+ cell phone just to check Facebook might not be practical. Unless one has a Facebook page to showcase artwork for potential buyers or for publicity, merely checking for status updates of celebrities or brands does not present agency to the consumer. Making sure the use of technology does what it is supposed to, which all technology is to help drive efficiency and help humanity be more proficient.

Teaching people how to see with the end in mind first is 'a help that helps'. When human necessity is the driving force, tech help would start first at identifying the need in which certain technologies may be of use. In my interviewee's case, just showing up to her doorstep with a lot of fancy new gadgets might be enticing, but not necessarily what she needed. By

understanding her needs, desires and expected results, I am better able to suggest a technology and also how to use it to achieve her needed ends. My interview helped me understand that what is needed first is an understanding of how data should be categorized and presented. It had less to do with Excel, and more to do with the process of managing data. Once this was understood, I introduced her to Google Sheets and showed how it was a viable alternative to Excel. Although still new to spreadsheets, she quickly saw that it was more intuitive and user friendly. I showed her that it was already a part of the Google ecosystem she was a member of (having Gmail accounts, and YouTube) and how some features could be easily identifiable simply because it is in the Google family. The more information I presented to her, the more interested she became. I believe it was because I was suggesting technologies to her based solely on her needs, and also because she was able to grasp the concepts of how this would help her work more efficiently and be more productive.