



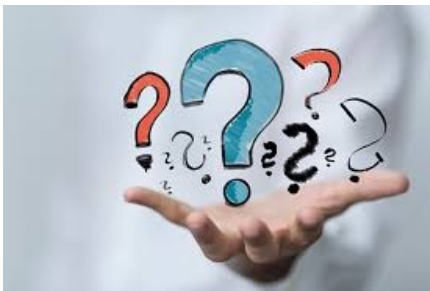
# Interviews and interviewing techniques

*Natalia Vuori, Assistant Professor in Entrepreneurial Leadership*

*May 20, 2022*

# Learning objective

**By the end of this session, you will know technics that can help you get rich data on people's thoughts and emotions**



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# Agenda

- **Arranging interviews**
- **Preparing for interviews**
- **On the day of interview**
- **During interview**
- **After interview**

# How many interviews have you conducted?



# Arranging interviews practices

# Contacting informants



Executive assistant

# Example of email to arrange interviews

Dear Lena,

I am a Professor at Aalto University. I am working on a case about Acquirer's acquisition capabilities. My goal is to identify how Acquirer can improve its integration capabilities.

I would like to ask you to share your experience about post-acquisition integration. What Acquirer did well. What could be done differently.

So far, I have discussed with two other colleagues of yours. All discussions are anonymized, and concrete examples are abstracted such that individuals or company secrets cannot be identified.

The goal is to publish the research in an top-level management journal. We are conducting this study with INSEAD's Professor Quy Huy. Our backgrounds are in management research. We have published in the main management journals. Also, our research has been awarded at the main international conferences.

Links to us: LinkedIn, Aalto people

Looking forward to hearing from you,

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Natalia Vuori

# Letter of permission from top managers

To whom it may concern,

Ilmarinen is aware about an academic research project by Professor Henri Schildt (Aalto Business School) and Dr. Natalia Vuori (Aalto Business School). Henri and Natalia are studying post-acquisition integration by interviewing employees at Ilmarinen and Etera.

You are free to give them an interview, but you do not have to if you do not want. The outcome of their research project will be an academic article. All information you provide will be treated as anonymous: your name and job will not be presented in any reports they produce.

Sincerely,



**Timo Ritakallio**  
President and CEO, Ilmarinen

Natalia Vuori

5/20/22



# Other practices

## Responding to informants' emails ASAP

## Offering multiple time options in emails

September 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> – any time

September 5<sup>th</sup> – between 13.00 and 16.00

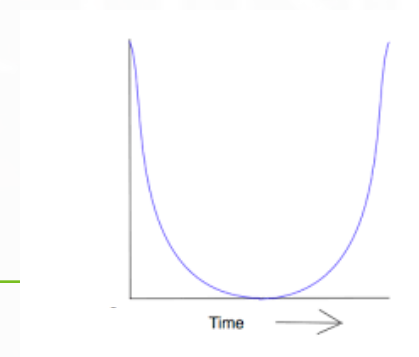
September 7<sup>th</sup> – between 9:00 and 12:00

September 15<sup>th</sup> – between 9:00 and 12:00

## Sending calendar invitation ASAP (Zoom link, location)

# Timing of interviews in research project

- **How many interviews per day to arrange?**
  - 1 - 3 (depends on your personality)
- **How frequently to arrange the interviews?**
  - It's nice to have time between interviews to reflect on interview and think about questions for next informant



# How many interviewers?

## ONE

- **better because**

- *Easier to build trust and open up a person*

## TWO

- **better because**

- *Stay close to research interest*
- *If one is tired*
- *To improve one's interviewing technique*

- Inform the informant in advance if you are not alone
- Make sure you assigned the roles (leading interviewer, secondary interviewer)

# Preparing for interview practices

# Research on company

- **How to do:**
  - Annual reports, press releases etc.
  - Recent news about the company
- **Why to do:**
  - To avoid asking questions that can be answered otherwise (how many business units you have?)
  - To gain respect of informant

# Research on person

- **How to do:**

- Social media (LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook)
- Appearances in media

- **Why to do:**

- To recognize person when you see him/her
- To prepare for small talk
- To ask questions in a better way (e.g., You said this acquisition will create value. Can you explain why do think so?)

# Preparing materials

- **Preparing questionnaire**
    - 7-10 open ended questions
    - Ask for feedback from your supervisor and peers
  - **Adjusting questions:**
    - To match the level of informants (CEO vs middle managers vs employees)
    - To ask questions that help you develop emergent concepts, model
  - **Printing**
    - Questions
    - Emergent model? (in the end of the research project)
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# On the day of interview practices



# On the day o interview

- Dressing in a way that fits situation (CEO of OP Financial Group vs game developer in Supercell)
- Arriving in advance
  - Parking
  - Registration
  - Calming down

# During the interview practices

# Practices to form first impression

## Interview starts when informant sees you

- Preparing for the small talk (research on person and company)
- Trying to match your style with style of informant
- Displaying trustworthiness and safety
  - Right smile
  - Showing your palms

# First minutes of the interview (1)

- **“Thank you for your time”**
- **Reminding about academic orientation of your research**
  - “I mean no harm to you or the company”
  - “I am looking for theoretical insights, not for dirty details for Iltalehti”
- **Emphasizing anonymity (if this is the case)**
- **Asking permission to record.**
  - You will never share it with anyone or use it against informant
  - It allows you to focus on conversation vs making notes
  - It allows you to ensure that you grasp everything right vs misinterpretation
- **Record the permission to record! (EU regulation)**

# First minutes of the interview (2)

- **Re-explaining your research goal in a way that does not influence informants' answers**
- **Being humble but professional and knowledgeable**
  - *I am here to learn from you. But I did my homework*
- **Use fluttery**
  - *I know the theory. But you are the expert in ...”*

# Ensuring richness of data (1)

- **Starting with a simple broad question to make informant talk and get relaxed**
  - “Of course, I read your LinkedIn, but do you think you could you describe your daily tasks?”
- **The go to more difficult**
  - Does the integration influence you daily tasks?
- **Keep asking until you get your answer:**
  - Me: “How does it make your feel?”
  - He: “I think, Acquirer does not understand our business”
  - Me: “I totally understand you. It must be difficult. Could you describe how does it make you feel?”
  - He: “I think Acquirer has different culture”
  - Me: “Yeah... Tell me, when your customer called you and complained, how did you feel”
  - He: I was frustrated! I felt like .....

COME BACK TO  
IT LATER!!!

COME BACK TO  
IT LATER!!!



# Ensuring richness of data (2)

**Why?**

**Give me an example!**

**Elaborate please!**

# Ensuring richness of data (3)

- **Listening**
  - *Right eye contact, nodding, show interest, using ‘Mm..’, wow‘*
- **Showing empathy**
  - *I understand you. I would feel the same*
- **Tolerating long pauses**
- **Using interesting facts from other interviews to ask questions**
- **Not revealing other informants’ name**
  - *Sorry I can not share this information*
- **“Resetting” interview if informant is reserved**



# Ending interview

- We discussed many things such as x,x,x. Do you think I am missing something important? Something that I did not ask you, but you think it is important?
  - Showing your model (in the end of research project!)
  - It's was great to discuss with you. You are the real expert. I have learned a lot.
  - May I contact you by phone or email if I have some clarifying questions?
  - May we meet again in the future?
  - Do you think there are other people to whom I should talk? May I mention that you gave their contacts?
-

# After the interview practices

# Adding missing data in case of hand notes

If you did not get permission to use voice recorder, go through the notes **right after the interview** to add missing parts

# Start analyzing data immediately!

- **Comparing answers with theories**
- **What theories would predict and how your data are different?**
- **In SMJ article, I have reviewed about 10 literatures before we found the one**

# Creating informants table for each research project

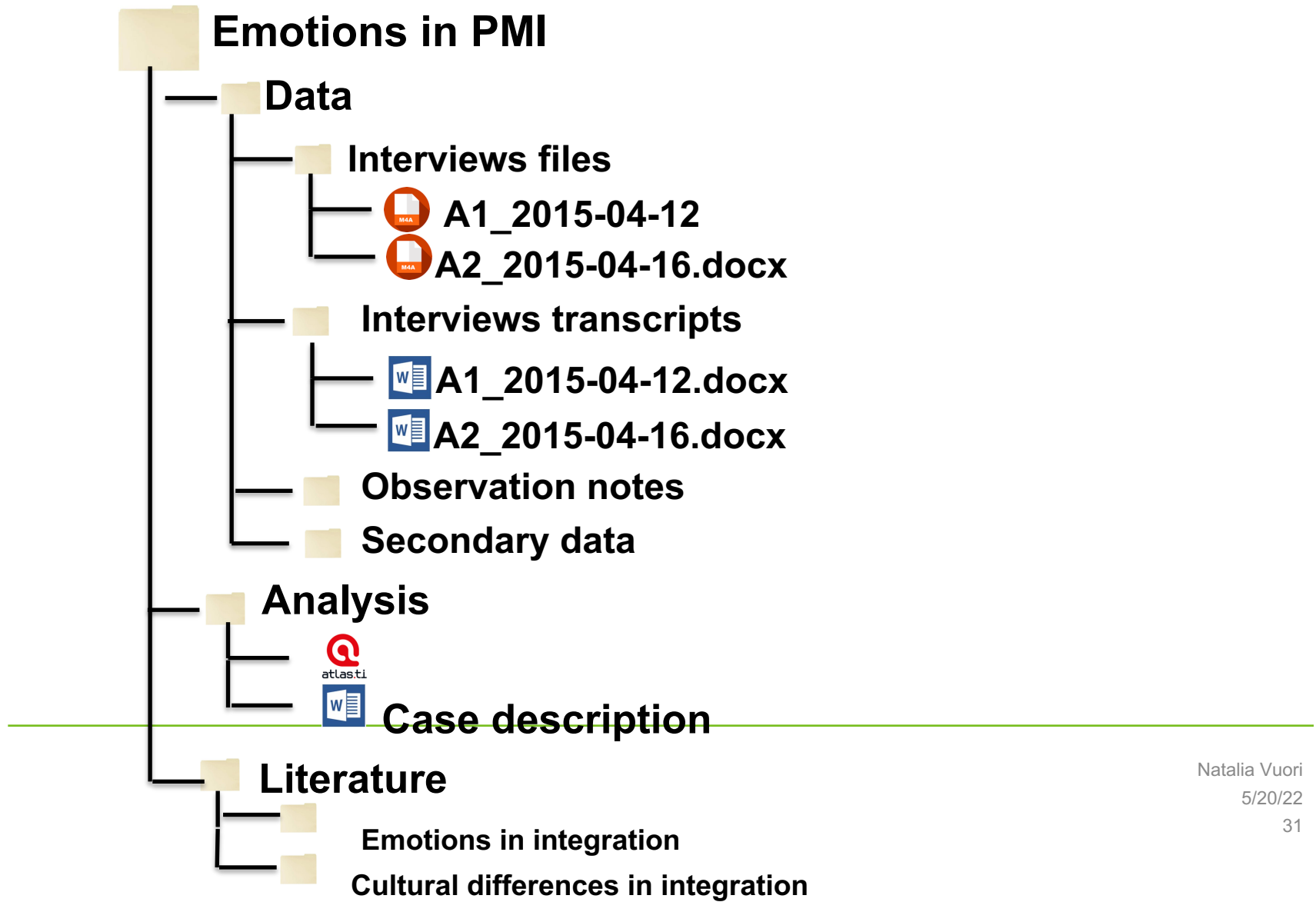
**Adding a new row into table is the first thing I do after each interview**

Code	Number of interviews	Date of interview	Level	Job title and country	Name	Contact information	Length of interview	Number of pages
A1	1	2015-12-07	TMT				69 min	17
A2	1	2015-12-08	MM				57 min	15
A3 ; A8	2	2015-12-10 2016-09-22	MM				46 min	13
A4 ; A12	2	2015-12-29 2016-11-11	SMM				106 min	21
...								
...								
<b>TOTAL NUMBER</b>	<b>25</b>							

# Transcribing the interviews

- Transcribe immediately after interview
- How to transcribe:
  - services such
    - [spoken.fi](https://www.spoken.fi); relatively expensive and sometimes not good quality)
    - Rev.com (fast,) NEW REGULATIONS!
  - transcribe yourself (time consuming, but useful because you learn your data)
  - freelancers

# Storing data: Inside one project



# Other things to do after the interview

- **Email to informant within 24 hours**
  - Thanking for the interview
  - Asking clarifying questions
- **Listen to interviews' audio records or read transcripts to improve your interviewing technique**
  - Do you interrupt too fast?
  - Do you fail to ask relevant question to elaborate?
  - Do you speak more than informant



# Think/analyze your data



**Thank you!**  
**natalia.vuori@aalto.fi**