

Protocol to be used in the interviews at startups

Tips for the interviewer

- Speak the minimum possible
- Do not give your opinion
- Avoid / minimize bias
- Do not need to follow the script 100%
- Focus on the person skills
- Avoid noisy places

Criterion for choosing interviewees

- Choose some from personal Networking
- Snowball strategy
- Try to mix different backgrounds based on different criterion
 - company size
 - role (entrep, univer, gov, etc)
 - gender
 - foreign x local
 - cultural background, religion

Email (English - NYC)

Dear XXX,

<You have been recommended by XXXX>

I am a Brazilian Entrepreneur and PhD student in the Computer Science Department at the University of São Paulo. Last year we created a research group on Technology and Digital Entrepreneurship. Now we are performing a research in the New York Startup Ecosystem. With your experience as <role> in the city, we consider you have a very important role and we will be very happy to interview you for our research, which we expect to help many startups communities worldwide

Can we schedule an informal conversation at <company>? Something between 45 or 60 minutes would be great.

Are you available in one of the time slots below?

Oct/X - 11am

Oct/X - 11pm

Oct/X - 11am

Thank you very much,

Daniel

Quick into LinkedIn

Hi <name>

I am a Brazilian Entrepreneur and PhD student in the Computer Science Department running a research in the New York Startup Ecosystem. With your experience in Vine, we consider you have a very important role and we would like to interview you for our research. Best!

Email

(pode e deve ser adaptado a cada situação e a cada destinatário)

Caro XXX,

Sou aluno de pós-graduação do IME-USP e faço parte do grupo de pesquisa de Empreendedorismo Digital coordenado pelo Prof. Fabio Kon. Estamos realizando uma pesquisa sobre o Ecossistema de Startups de São Paulo e gostaríamos muito de poder entrevistá-lo dado o <seu papel fundamental no ecossistema / a sua experiência no assunto, etc.

Poderíamos marcar um bate-papo informal na <nome da empresa>? Algo entre 60 e 90 minutos seria ótimo.

Você teria disponibilidade em algum dos horários abaixo?

10/4 - entre 9:00 e 12:00

11/4 - entre 14:00 e 18:00

(quando tiver convidando alguém ocupado, dar muitas opções).

Muito obrigado,

Monna

Monna Cleide Santos

Mestranda em Ciência da Computação

IME-USP

Preliminaries

- When the interviewee and interviewer have a lot of time:
 - in the 1st meeting, try to know the people, observe the startup environment, and try to schedule an interview with 2 or 3 members of the startup team for a few days later.
- When both have some time:
 - try to schedule a short videoconference call before to explain the research and the protocol.
- Regular case in which people are busy:
 - explain the research and the protocol in the beginning of the interview itself

Interview warm-up

- explain the overall goal of the research in general terms:
- GOAL: *Study the Startup Ecosystem from a CS/IT perspective to obtain a better understanding of the current state-of-the-practice in Software Startups in XX, identifying best practices as well as problems/difficulties and opportunities for improvement in XX.*

- explain the default protocol and ask and if it's OK (if not, adapt to fit needs)
- explain the reasons for recording and confidentiality
- explain results will be sent first hand to them
- all results will be published in an anonymous form
- except in particular cases in which it might be interesting to disclose the name of the person or company but only with explicit approval of the involved people.

Optional: Interviewer show the 4 slides presentation introducing the group and the research

Benefits for the startup:

Simply mention quickly: "We'd be open to further collaborations in the future (USP<->startup)".

During the interview:

- Depending on the profile of the interviewee, some of the questions might be skipped or adapted (e.g., for a CEO with business background, we might adapt the questions about code quality; for a developer, we probably won't ask about investment).
- The researcher (interviewer) will make a few notes on paper or computer.
- The complete audio will be recorded

After the interview:

- ask if it's OK to take a picture
- Interviewer will iteratively produce a working document (Research Question Notes) structured around the initial research questions. For each research question, he will write observations made by interviewees on related topics.
- ask suggestions of other startups/people to be interviewed. Ask for introductions.

Interviewee sample:

- Our goal is to reach around 60 interviewees and 40 startups.
- Whenever possible, we will try to seek some diversity in cultural origin, gender, race, religion, etc. in our interviewee universe.

Interview Duration: 30 to 90 minutes**The team of researchers**

- Prof. Fabio Kon, University of São Paulo, Brazil
- Daniel Cukier, PhD student, University of São Paulo & Playax Brasil
- Monna Cleide Santos, MSc student, University of São Paulo

Form on Background

(Try to collect the following information before or after the interview but don't waste interview time with this; use linkedin, for example)

Personal information (treated with confidentiality)

Name:

Email:

Age:

Degree of highest completed education:

Area:

Year degree was obtained:

Current job position:

Company (treated with confidentiality)

Name:

URL:

Domain:

Number of company employees:

How long ago was founded (age/months):

Stage of life (e.g., initial idea, self-funded startup, seed fund, VC funded, etc.):

Oral Questions

The questions below will serve as a guide to the researcher(interviewer) who will adapt the language and the direction of the interview based on the real-time feedback from the interviewee.

This is not necessarily the order in which the questions will be asked. Fabio will feel the person and adapt to what his intuition tells about it.

0) Can you tell me a little bit about your trajectory, how you started and how you got here?

0.1) Have you participated in other startups before? Did any of these startups fail?

How? Why? Did you make mistakes? Which?

(Prime objective: find out the experience of the interviewee and serve as an ice breaker. Maybe find out partners/colleagues that may be interview later.)

1) What are the factors in XXX that foster/promote entrepreneurship?

1.5) What are the factors in XXX that discourage/create barriers for entrepreneurship?

2) What are the institutional mechanisms in place in XX that promote entrepreneurship?

- legislation
- educational, scientific and technological institutions
- government (national, municipal and local) agencies/programs

- seed funds, angel investment, VC
- NGOs

3) Do you believe education has a significant role in entrepreneurship? At home? Fundamental school? Middle School? University? Self-education? Informal? Overall education or entrepreneurship-specific education? Can you think of explicit or implicit pedagogical material and mechanisms that nurtures the entrepreneurial spirit? Have you participated in any Entrepreneurship education activity (course, workshop, accelerator, incubator)? Do you believe there are elements that could be improved in Entrepreneurship education?

4) What are the characteristics of entrepreneurs? What are the characteristics of successful innovative teams? (mix of introverts and extroverts?) What are the roles of different kinds of people? Diversity is important? What is the prime motivation of the high-tech entrepreneur: wealth, fame, self-esteem, proof of technology, etc.?

5) Which and how technological aspects influence the success of software startups? In particular what is the role played by Object-Oriented Languages, Frameworks, Patterns, Models, and Architectures? Does your team has a concern for code quality? How do you promote and control that? Do you have a large technical debt? Do you manage that in any way?

(Prime objective: To discover if software practices are being used, if they help software development in startups or if they only serve to look like a “cool” enterprise)

6) Which and how methodological aspects influence the success of software startups? In particular what is the role played by Agile Methods, Lean Startup [Ries 2011], Customer Development [Blank 2012]. Which Agile methods practices do you use? Is there something in agile methods that doesn't work very well for your company? Do you consider a systemic plan or the intuition being the dominant success trigger of start-ups? Is this relation changing along the start-up life?

6.1) What you don't do very well and would like to do better? Have you identified any mistake you made in your current startup or something you should have done differently?

7) What's the relationship of your company with Open Source software? Do you use it? Do you contribute? Do you believe open source has a significant role in the startup ecosystem?

8) If you had to name 3 key elements for a healthy startup ecosystem in a country or region, what would them be?

9) for maturidade model

According to your experience, do you believe it would be possible to exist other ecosystems as developed as Silicon Valley or New York, generating tens of high growth global startups? Do you know any place that has the chance to do so? How far it is from achieving this successful stage? What is missing? How many of these could exist in the world?

9b) what would be in your opinion the minimum requirement for a place to be considered an nascent ecosystem? And the minimum requirements to be in the last stage of development?

9c) do you think it is possible for an ecosystem to regress or die? How and why?

9d) do you think people in the ecosystem can proactively make things to improve the ecosystem maturity or this is something that just happen independently from people's will?

Final question:

Do you have any question to me or see any ways in which we can collaborate?

=====

LATER:

SWOT

Online questionnaire sent to people with ≥ 10 years of work experience and who have worked in ≥ 2 startups:

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheet/viewform?usp=drive_web&formkey=dE5zWUITbFVFWHdmdS05TEd1Vku4S3c6MA#gid=0

Portuguese version:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1qTyHzCmKIkK2MWKek5XfBA7ToUEOxiIH7A28bdq-2NU/viewform?usp=send_form

CODING PROTOCOL

Every interview will be coded by at least two researchers. Each researcher will listen to the recording and extract the answers to the research questions. The first researcher will create bullet points of the main answers, tagging the answers with the name of the interviewee. The second researcher will not look at the previous answers to avoid bias. He will generate his own bullets and, after finishing, compare them with the existing points. Add to the list only the new ones and validate if those, if identified by the first researcher and that are not in the list of the second, are really present in the interviewee discourse. If the second researcher finds any conflict, she talks with the first one to solve it.