

Qualitative Research: Using Primary Data

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**Abstract**

The purpose of this report is to provide a qualitative analysis of 10 interviews conducted as part of Lifehacker's "How I work series" (Lifehacker.com). From the interviews representing different demographics, the first broad criterion is successful women. Entrepreneurial traits are the next characteristic during the selection process. This content analysis will present common themes, limitations of the study, and will attempt to address the question: What are the behaviors of entrepreneurial women?

### **Data Collection**

The 10 interviews retrieved from Liferhacker.com represent women entrepreneurs. There is a four-year range across the sample, from March 2013 to June 2017, which may or may not have any significance in the analysis. The coding process identifying common themes attempts to explore if there is a common trait or work process in addition to any similarities amongst their lives. The subjects are Katia Beauchamp, Belle Beth Cooper, Jane Ni Dhulchaointigh, Anna Holmes, Susan Kare, Kathryn Minshew, Jane McGonigal, Lauren McGoodwin, Tina Roth Eisenberg, and Alexa von Tobel (see Appendix A for the coding methodology based on the questions and initial analysis). Guiding the coding process is the grounded theory approach and the recommendations from the Taylor and Gibbs (2010) article.

### **Data Analysis**

The following broad categories were identified, workplace settings, personal habits, technological/communication tools, profession, and relationships. Under the main categories, there are common themes from the responses to the following interview questions:

- current mobile device;
- current computer;
- favorite to-do list manager;
- current gig;
- sleep routine; and
- location.

One common theme is the use of Apple products among all 10 women in the sample. All use iPhones and all have Mac laptops with slight variations of the model: 80% use a MacBook Air model while one uses the iMac and the other, a MacBook Pro. Considering the other options

on the market, all the women use Apple products. Although the 10 interviewees represent a small sample from Lifehacker.com, future research may be interesting to explore if there is a correlation between entrepreneurs and the use of Apple products.

All interview subjects use a method to record a to-do list and to prioritize tasks. Seven women use paper and pen to script or write daily tasks, and the other three women exclusively use apps and digital tools to prioritize tasks. The digital forms of note taking include Evernote, the Stickies, and the TeuxDeux apps. The traditional pen and paper note takers mention experimenting with computer applications for to-do lists but then returned to using pen and paper. The women who prefer pen and paper had different products on where to write notes from a particular Moleskin notebook to printing a computerized list as Susan Kare likes to “...draw fat lines through completed items” (Orin, 10/15/14). A conclusion based on this sample is all of the women interviewed use some proven method for creating lists to get things done in a way that supports their work productivity. There is not enough diversity in the sample to make any conclusions that all women entrepreneurs use pen and paper to organize their tasks. However, based on this sample of entrepreneurial women, more than half of the women use pen and paper to organize their tasks.

The majority of the respondents have regular sleep habits. Four respondents classify themselves as “early risers,” another four women try to get seven to eight hours sleep with one from that group stating she is not an early riser. There is one woman who does not get the same amount of sleep as the others. In her interview, Susan Kare mentioned that she “skims on sleep,” (Orin, 10/15/14). Whether they classified themselves as early risers or not, the common theme is all the women have a sleep routine that fits and supports their high-powered positions.

All the women in this sample are entrepreneurs. The majority of the interviewees hold the title of CEO, Founder and or Co-Founder. The women's roles are rooted in creative fields such as graphic designer, game design, an inventor, bloggers and content creators. Two women provide services: Alexa von Tobel founder of LearnVest, a company that offers online tools to stay financially organized matching users with Certified Financial Planners (Orin, 2/16/14). The other service is career counseling by Lauren McGoodwin, CEO of Career Contessa, which offers career advice and guidance to young women (Orin,12/15/15). One product inventor, Jane Ni Dhulchaointigh, is an inventor of the product, Sugru, which is moldable glue (Orin, 11/11/15). Katia Beauchamp, Birchbox Co-Founder and CEO launched a successful e-commerce company in the saturated beauty market (Bradley, 6/7/17).

The women have various workspaces, much different from the traditional office. Four of the women work exclusively from home, and the other six women work in an open or co-working office space. There are no universal themes, the only conclusion is the size of the organization, and the nature and scale of the work dictate the work location. Of those who work onsite, the women also work remotely from home when not in the company workspace. The women in the more creative fields of game design, graphic design, and writing (bloggers) work exclusively from home offices.

The women all work in or near a major city with five women based in New York City (four in Manhattan and one in Brooklyn), three in California (San Francisco, Oakland, Los Angeles) one from London, England and the other from Melbourne, Australia. The only relationship found based on location is the respondents with offices in New York either are early risers or have regular sleep patterns getting up to eight hours of sleep and are awake before 8:00 a.m.

Overall, there is little or no mention of family. Five of the women mention family during the interviews, with three of the five women who mention children.

### **Composite Profile**

Creativity in business is the common bond that weaves the women's lives. Across the sample of interviews, there is mention of the use and influence of technology. The women are writers to some degree with two of the women with published books. Many of the women are thankful for either a person's advice or support. No two women have the same word to describe how they work. Some examples of how the women describe how they work include passionately, efficiently, and enthusiastically. Based on the interview data, a composite profile would be a focused, confident, creative technologically savvy woman with an entrepreneurial spirit. The woman leads a productive lifestyle because of her mastery of streamlining everyday tasks.

### **Limitations and Observations**

The limitations of this qualitative analysis include the small sample and the selection process. The "How I work" series is several years old, and the samples in the analysis represent interviews over a span of four years. The amount of social media analytics is a trend to study depending on the research question. For example, Anna Holmes' profile has over 47,300 visitors and 172 comments (Miller, 11/6/13) while the most recent profile is Katia Beauchamp's from June 7, 2017 (Bradley, 6/7/17), with 22,000 visitors and no comments as of August 4, 2017. Based on the themes discovered during the analysis, further research is recommended to identify correlations of daily behaviors and entrepreneurship.

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Appendix A

The coding methodology based on the questions and initial analysis. Guiding the coding process are recommendations from the Taylor and Gibbs (2010) article.

Subject ID	Subject Name	Title	Self-description	Industry	Tools		Settings			Behaviors/Habits		Relationships
			How you work?		Phone	Computer	Location	Workspace	Music while working	Notes/ to do list	Sleep Pattern	Family
1	Katia Beauchamp	Co-Founder, CEO	Curiously	Beauty e commerce	Phone	Macbook Air	NYC	Open	Silence	Evernote for to do list -Voice Notes	Early Riser	husband & twin boys
2	Belle Beth Cooper	Co-Founder, Writer, Entrepreneur	Intermittently	Tech	Phone	MacBook Air	Melbourne, Australia	Home	Music	Paper notebook/ &App	Early Riser	
3	Anna Holmes	Founder	Chaotically	Tech	Phone	MacBook Air	NYC	Home	Silence	"Stickies" app on desktop	8 hrs.; gets up by 7 or 8	
4	Susan Kare	Partner Game Designer, Author	Intensely	Artist/ Tech Graphic Design	Phone	MacBook Pro	San Francisco, CA	Home	Silence mostly	Printed form	night owl/ not much sleep	mentions family vacations
5	Jane McGonigal	Game Designer, Author	Exuberantly	Artist/ Tech Game Design	Phone	MacBook Air	Oakland, CA	Home	Tennis ESPN	(Moleskin)	6AM/ Regular sleep patterns	Kids & husband
6	Lauren McGoodwin	CEO	Efficiently	Service	Phone	MacBook Air	Los Angeles, CA	Cowork	Silence	Written/ mini books	Early Riser	
7	Kathryn Minshew	CEO, Co Founder	Adventurously	Online Content	Phone	MacBook Air	NYC	Desk	Ambient noise	3x3 system post it notes	tries for 7.5 hrs.	
8	Jane Ni Dhulchaointínigh	CEO, Inventor	Intuitively	Product	Phone	MacBook Air	London	open office space	Sometimes music	notebooks	Not so much of an early riser	visits sisters in Ireland
9	Tina Roth Eisenberg	Founder	Enthusiastically	Online Content	Phone	iMac	Brooklyn, NY	Cowork	2 tracks (ambient/focus)	TeuxDeux (App)	tries for 8 hrs.	Kids & husband
10	Alexa von Tobel	Founder	Passionately	Service	Phone	MacBook Air	NYC	Office	office noise/ music at home	Writes notes	Early Riser	mentioned mom