

Translated from swedish

Ethnographic study

Introduction

According to Rönkkö (2010), ethnography is an observation of the participants' daily activities. The area I chose to study was what it is like to go from a "regular" job to working independently as a freelancer.

Methods used

According to Hanington and Martin (2012), design ethnography involves studying and understanding potential users using immersion. Methods that I have used to achieve my result are shadowing, which according to Hanington and Martin means that you follow the participants around in their daily routine to observe and note what they do to identify problems that need to be solved. Unfortunately, I only had one participant to observe, but I still think I got good material to start from. Another method I used was an interview, which Hanington and Martin say is a good way to gather personal experiences, opinions and perceptions of the participants because as an interviewer you have direct, eye-to-eye contact with them.

Presentation and analysis of collected data

I started by doing an interview with the participant to get an insight into how he works.

Some of the questions and answers from the interview:

- **What made you decide on this career path and why this instead of a “normal” job?**

He fell into it, problems with typical 9-5, looking for an alternative, streamed before and started taking it more seriously, made it a livable wage. Since parents needed help. Sponsor paid in crypto which made him start trading. Insomnia and bad sleep habits.

- **What is it like working from home, what's better, what's worse?**

Freelance: Pros - always at home, safe. Cons - always at home and always at work at the same time, don't get to leave work and come home. Lack of social interactions, lack of co workers. Mostly digital interactions. More pressure, less stability. Stressful because if you take a break you get no money.

At a normal job the cons are: you don't get to decide anything, you get punished for not working, less room for error, no free time because of long hours.

- **How much do you work now compared to before?**

Hard to tell, not keeping track. Sometimes 12 hour days, sometimes 0 hours. Not the best at managing the time.

- **How do you juggle everything that needs to be done? When do you work and what's your schedule like?**

Used to have a schedule for the stream but took a break and now is getting back into it. Wake up, check the market at certain times when it's crucial but it's hard to know when exactly that is,

checking the news. Always on the clock. His parents call at any time. Trying to cut himself slack and take breaks but it's hard.

- **How do you decide when to take a vacation or have free time in general?**

He doesn't want to take breaks bc he knows he'll lose income by doing so *gets a call in the middle of our talk at 18.30 on a sunday and received 3 tasks*, he can't relax because he's worried about how things will be when he comes back. He's always on the clock, his parents can call at any time and need something done.

- **What does your social life look like and how do you connect with people outside of work?**

He barely connects with people outside of work, always at home and always watching the markets by the computer. Always has one eye on that. He doesn't go out and the pandemic made it worse. Social interactions happen online with his community built from the stream. It's nice because he built the community and he's the glue. It gives him a place where he belongs even though he never met most of the people.

In the shadowing session, I followed the participant for about 2 hours while he worked with his various sources of income. In the meantime, I tried to talk to him and identify what problems he is experiencing now compared to when he was at a regular job.

An excerpt out of the session that lasted for about 2 hours:

- Starts by reading an email from his parents lawyer. It was forwarded by his mom. Maybe they'd benefit from having a service that makes this process easier.
- He needs to work on digitizing blueprints of his parents' new building, finding the best websites, checking the average prices for the area, posting listings. His job is to look through the data and put it all together.
- From time to time for ca 30-40 mins, he analyzes the crypto graphs, he has around 35 coins and he checks each chart for at least 20 of the coins every day. He also checks the news and social media (ex. twitter) to figure out if he should sell/buy, what's going to happen, if he should invest in something new etc. He spends a few hours on this every day.
- He keeps an eye on crypto throughout the day. He does focused work when it comes to the paperwork and when he streams he does nothing but that.

I got the feeling that there were a lot of different things to keep track of and that he was stressed by the fact that I was there and asked questions because it was another thing. When it came to "downtime", he still kept an eye on the crypto market all the time. He stated that this was because it is quite unstable and you have to stay up to date if you are to be able to make a profit.

The biggest problem that has emerged during the course of the study is that there is a lot of stress in freelance, especially if you have difficulty with planning. It seems to be very difficult to take time off, both mentally and physically. Compared with a regular job where tasks are

assigned a lot and where the salary is usually fixed, there is more instability in the job that the participant has chosen. How could these experiences be made more similar?

The social interactions that have to do with work take place mostly online and he does not meet anyone outside of work. Right now he states that he hardly meets friends outside the home, even when there is no pandemic. I believe that by creating ways that can help ease the workload, you could improve the environment for people who freelance in several places.

In what ways can you create colleagues, like a regular job? And how can you plan more free time when you do not have to keep track of work at all so you get more time to meet people in real life.