

**Montreal, Paris, Dakar**

**Conducting an International Intranet Needs Analysis**

Isabelle Peyrichoux

IA Summit 2006, Vancouver

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**CESART**

# Who am I?



**Consultant, Ergonomics & Information Architecture**  
CESART, a Canadian Web Agency based in Montreal (Canada)

## **5 years experience in IA & UCD – Canada, France and UK**

- Both as a consultant and as an internal staff member
- Yellow Pages Canada, Bell Canada, French Atomic Energy Commission, The French-Speaking University Agency, etc.

## **Masters degree in Information Science**

Conservatoire national des arts et métiers – Paris (France)

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## Why this presentation?

In 2002, I had to design an international intranet site from scratch

I conducted a needs analysis in three continents

I succeeded in collecting valuable needs to build the intranet site

- **How?**
- **What were the success factors?**
- **What learnings did I gain from this experience?**

# Context

# The French-Speaking University Agency

Agence universitaire de la Francophonie ([www.auf.org](http://www.auf.org))



- International organization
- An organization dedicated to the cooperation between French-speaking universities
- Around 400 employees in 35 offices and on 5 continents

MONTREAL

BUCAREST

BEYROUTH

PARIS

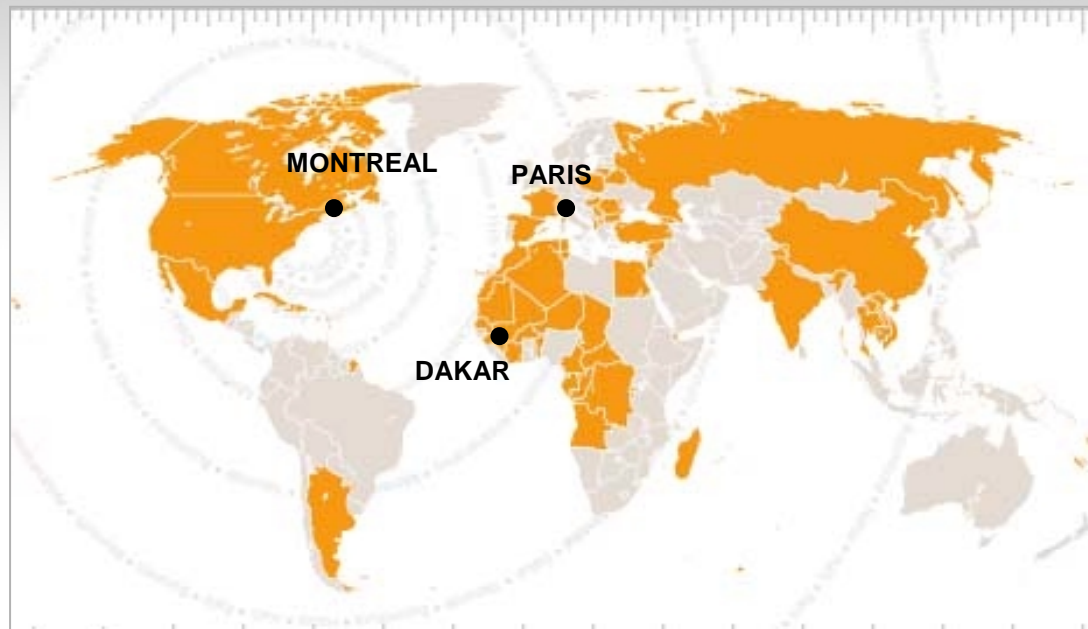
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# Information Access and Intranet



## The situation

- Basic internal information not readily available
  - > transmitted by email or word of mouth
- No central place for the 400 employees to access basic information

## My job

Build a USEFUL intranet site

i.e. that provides all employees with basic information and tools **they need in their day to day work**

→ I decided to conduct a needs analysis

# Strategy

# Step 1: Choosing & designing the method

## Requirements

- Go to Montreal – Paris – Dakar
- Gather day-to-day information needs

## Method chosen

~~OBSERVATION~~

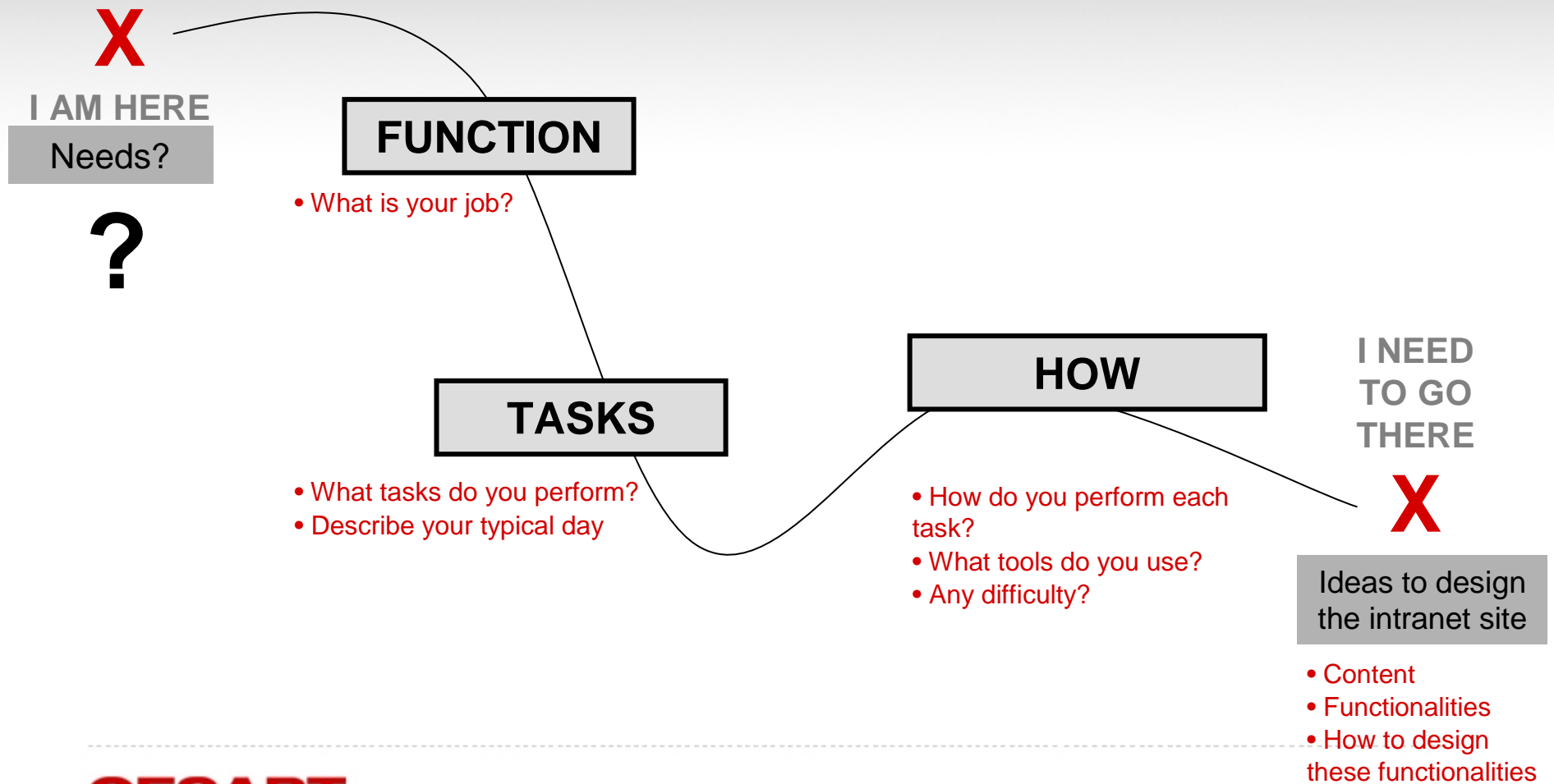
~~FOCUS GROUPS~~

**INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEW**



**Make employees  
« relive » their day-to-  
day tasks**

# Step 1: Choosing & designing the method



## Step 2: Contacting people before the interview

Importance of a good first contact via email, etc.

- **How**

- Ask for advice from experienced employees in the company
- Collect information about people, offices, organizational context
- Respect cultural differences
- Be transparent
- Be flexible and patient

- **Results**

- Received valuable help from heads of Paris and Dakar offices
- These managers provided important support along my journey

## Step 3: Conducting the interview

It's not only a question of technique....

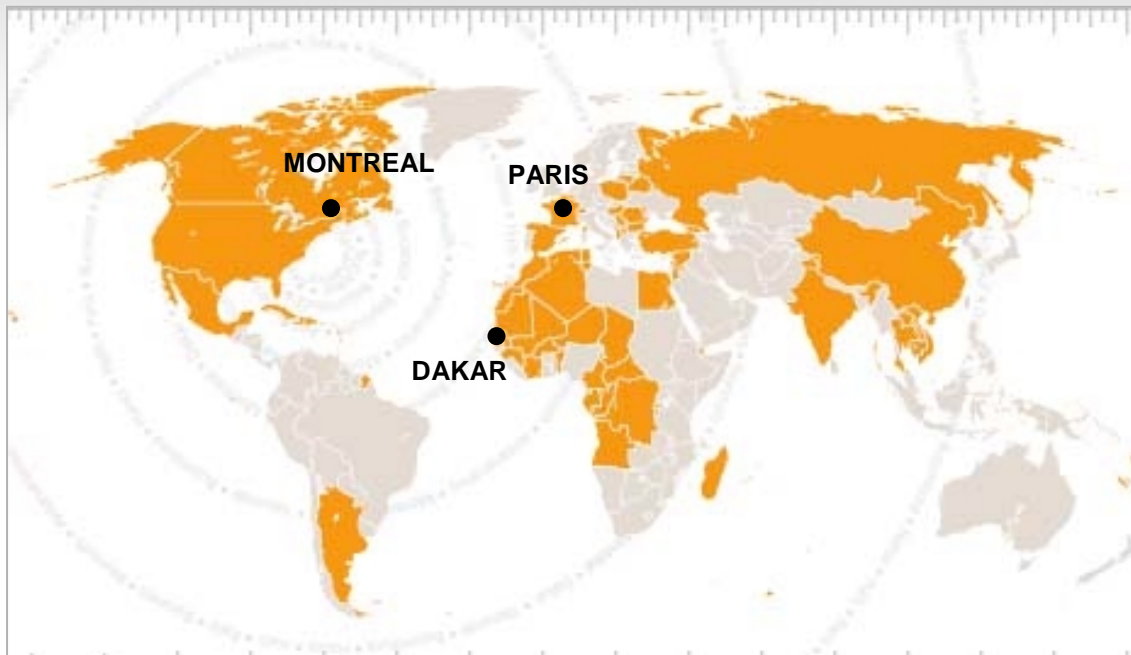
- **Be transparent** - *introduce yourself*
- **Be non judgemental** – *empathy*
- **Be flexible** - *follow the person's flow*
- **Be confident in the process & take risks** - *follow your intuition*
- **Shut up!** – *Let the person speak (speak to yourself if necessary)*
- **Listen carefully and memorize** – *Go back to what was previously said*

## Step 3: Conducting the interview

Some technical tips....

- **Reformulate vs asking direct questions**
- **Start from what the employee says**
  - It's easier for the employee to rely on his or her own experience
- **Don't ask the employee to design the intranet for you**
- **Ensure to have all necessary data for each employee task**
  - How, why, when, how often, etc
  - When asking the questions, start designing the intranet in your mind and ask yourself what information you will need to complete the design

## Step 4: Facing the cultural differences



- Africa vs. Western countries?
- Paris vs. Montreal
  - cultural stereotypes
  - organizational vs. cultural differences
  - time differences
- No direct impact on the findings
- Stereotypes require discretion & distance

## Step 5: Going back to Montreal...



Dakar, March 2002



Montréal, two days later...

# Results

## A success...

A lot of information that surpassed the intranet project:

- Most useful content & applications
- How to design these applications

## ...but difficult to apply in reality

### Able to implement only 15 % of my recommendations:

- Organizational constraints
- Content not accessible or not formatted according to specifications
- Limited executive buy-in and involvement in the intranet project

### Nevertheless, a small “revolution” for the Agency:

- The first intranet containing basic information accessible to all
- An employee directory that included pictures!! (THE killer app)
- Some changes still to come

## A selection of references

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**Joshua Porter: “Information Architecture the Adaptive Path Way: An Interview with Indi Young”** – Originally published: Feb 05, 2003

[http://www.ue.com/articles/young\\_interview/](http://www.ue.com/articles/young_interview/)

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**Indi Young: “Mental Model Building: Step by Step”** – August 12, 2005

<http://www.ok-cancel.com/archives/article/2005/08/mental-model-building-step-by-step.html>

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**Thank you!**

**Questions or comments?**

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