

# Interview Summary Memo

## The Ceramics Studio

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I interviewed [the female studio representative 1], [the male studio representative] (He wanted his last name off record) and [the studio manager]. [the female studio representative 1] and [the male studio representative] are representatives/assistants at the studio and [the studio manager] is the studio manager. Although initially I had wanted [the female studio representative 1], [the studio manager] and [the studio owner] (the studio owner) to interview, [the studio owner] was out of state and couldn't find the time to meet me these past ten days. [the male studio representative] made himself available at the last minute (although we only had 30 minutes to get the interview done) because I couldn't lock in [the studio owner].

*NOTE: Location specific information has been removed for client privacy.  
Transcripts available on request.*

### **INTERVIEWEES & THEIR ROLE IN THE BUSINESS:**

The hierarchy of the studio (from bottom to top) is: studio reps/assistants ([the female studio representative 1], [the male studio representative], [the female studio representative 2], and 2 new hires, [the female studio representative 3] & [the female studio representative 4]) studio manager ([the studio manager]), owner ([the studio owner]). Amongst the representatives, [the female studio representative 2] has been working at the studio the longest (4 years), [the female studio representative 1] (2 years) [the male studio representative] (1 year) and [the female studio representative 3] and [the female studio representative 4] (less than a month). [the studio manager] has worked at the studio for three years. [the studio owner] has founded and run the studio for six years. [the female studio representative 2] was in San Francisco so I couldn't ask her to interview with me.

### **PROJECT FOCUS:**

Although the artistic aspects and data flow of the studio were compelling, I focused on the power dynamics, the trust network and the motivations of the key players in the studio.

### **INSIGHTS & CHALLENGES:**

There are several interesting insights that I got from the interviewing process. First of all, setting up interviews are an ordeal. When I had proposed the project to [the studio owner], the studio owner, she seemed warm and inviting regarding the proposition. However, because she has been going through some personal problems (according to [the studio manager]), she seems closed off to participating in the

project currently. Apart from that, my interviewees were welcoming and open to participate and with a little bit of logistic efforts, I was able to get everyone's schedules sorted to have them come in to interview at the studio. The compensation provided definitely strengthened my legitimacy and gave them something to look forward to for the effort. Here are some detailed learnings from individual interviews:

**[the female studio representative 1]:** [the female studio representative 1] was the first person I interviewed on Tuesday, 7th at 2:30PM. She is currently a student at Saddleback so only had this day off. [the female studio representative 1] is 21 years old and this was her first "formal interview", so she was slightly nervous. She requested that I give her an overview of the questions so she wouldn't blank and fumble with the questions. So, I decided to provide her with the outline of the question types and the points I would ask her to reflect on. As per her worry, she was stumped by a couple of question stems and was grateful to have the opportunity to think on them prior to the recording. I am unsure if that compromised the data but it was her only request.

Our interview was a breeze and felt natural. I was able to engage her got decent quality and quantity of data regarding my inquiry, although she tended to keep things superficial. I asked her followup questions where I found fit but she kept her observations and experience precise and concise. [the female studio representative 1] was open, available and kept her body language open. She laughed and used her hands a lot.

It is evident that [the female studio representative 1] is at the bottom of the hierarchy. Her scope resides in her daily to-do's and is only concerned with doing her job well, which is to greet customers, provide customer service, teach young students, keep the studio in good shape and allow her managers to focus on the deeper actions. She doesn't seem that involved or even curious about the inner workings of the studio. She doesn't prepare for the role outside of the studio but she does appreciate the artistic space that it provides. With technology, she mostly uses POS which allows her to check a customer out. Apart from that she uses Pandora for music. It appears she works largely with [the studio manager]. She seems to have a good relationship with both [the studio manager] and [the studio owner].

She observes that the hierarchy of power revolves around [the studio owner], who is the owner and heart of the organization, followed by [the studio manager] and then the representatives. She recognizes that Patti ([the studio owner]'s wife), [the studio owner]'s family and Norma (a student who frequents the studio) and Jen ([the studio owner]'s roommate) all hold power of the studio. Patti and [the studio owner]'s family possess a stronghold due to nepotism and material and time contributions to the studio whereas Norma and Jen hold arbitrary power due to personal bonds with the owner.

[Personal note, I felt like I used a lot of “awesome!” “great!” and other exclamation to boost her energy. In retrospect, I don’t believe that I needed to. She was motivated enough during the process but I fed off her energy and instinctively wanted to keep the energy on a high. I am unsure if this is conducting to proper interview processes.]

**[the male studio representative]:** [the male studio representative] was the last person I interviewed on Sunday, 12th at 10 AM. His interview was less than 25 minutes long due to his time constraint and in my opinion, felt the most superficial of the three interviews. [the male studio representative] seemed, for the lack of a more polite way of putting this, high. His eyes were glassy but he was coherent and spoke coherently (with uh’s and um’s that I eliminated during the transcript). He was polite, very calm and barely moved his body except for occasionally stretching his left leg which seemed to be giving him some problem. He dove right into the interview without any reservation because he had limited time.

Even though [the female studio representative 1] was less inclined to get deep into the workings of the studio, [the male studio representative] definitely doesn’t feel any urge to dig into his surrounding or job push past his job requirement. He kept his thoughts short and somehow, I wasn’t inclined to ask him to dig deeper. Even in his limited knowledge, he still stated that [the studio owner] was the main source of power in the hierarchy and also, just like [the female studio representative 1], signified [the studio manager]’s impact to the studio.

[Personal note, I was more focused for this interview, having learned from the previous two. I egged [the male studio representative] on lesser than the other two. However, the fact that he was high affected my personal motivation.]

**[the studio manager]:** [the studio manager] was the second person I interviewed on Friday, 10th at 7:30PM. When I met her she had already had a long day at work. She informed me that the studio was having its 6th anniversary celebration and that it involved her making a lot of marketing efforts to remind their audience to come into the studio. She asked me what the interview was about and I told her that it involved understanding the flow of power in the business. She understood that and after having some water, a snack of cottage cheese and yogurt (which we had a conversation over) and some tea, we started our interview. [the studio manager] was not still during the interview (thats why I had jumbled audio) during her session. She has had knee surgery recently and had to keep elevating and icing her leg. We also had to pause a couple of times because she got very emotional about her leaving the studio in December. She is deeply involved with the studio and considers [the studio owner] a close friend.

[the studio manager] rambled a lot, which I loved for the details she provided, but upon inspection, I think that sometimes, it did a disservice to the flow of questions. I barely had any follow-up questions because her answers were so detailed that I

would sometimes lose my way trying to comprehend the magnitude of data. But that was the only setback.

Overall, I feel that the information she provided showed in great big golden letters, that she loves the studio and [the studio owner] and feels a huge responsibility for its growth over the time of her involvement. It is clear that she is a nurturer and took tremendous pleasure in tending to the needs of the business. It also felt like she disciplined [the studio owner], saying “but we’ve worked on that” or “we’ve talked about that”. It is apparent that she has questionable faith about the studio’s well-being once she leaves.

Although this studio is [the studio owner]’s vision, it is clear that [the studio manager] is the beating heart of the studio. She is involved with the details of every operation in the studio and has great creative prowess. She is loved by the employees, and according to [the female studio representative 1] and [the male studio representative] (and herself), by the customers too. She is fearful of [the studio owner]’s lack of social abilities and as evidenced by her script, doesn’t feel like anyone could replace her in being able to support and balance [the studio owner] like she did.

*[Personal Note: This interview was over an hour long and personally, I felt drained by the end. It was emotionally loaded because of the crying and the intensity with which [the studio manager] approached the business and her role in it. I was very satisfied by this interview however because it was really able to give me a strong foothold into the operation. It would only have been amped up had I got [the studio owner]’s interview.]*

### **PROJECT FOCUS CHANGE:**

Initially, I had wanted to pose questions regarding the technology of the studio, however, due to having to restructure my interview questions (I had posed too many for my protocols), I had to decide what I wanted to focus on. Although I am not regretful, I do wonder if I could have utilized this opportunity to come up with a comprehensive studio solution for the technological needs of the business. If I were to have the opportunity, I wouldn’t mind getting into understanding the data flow in the organization.