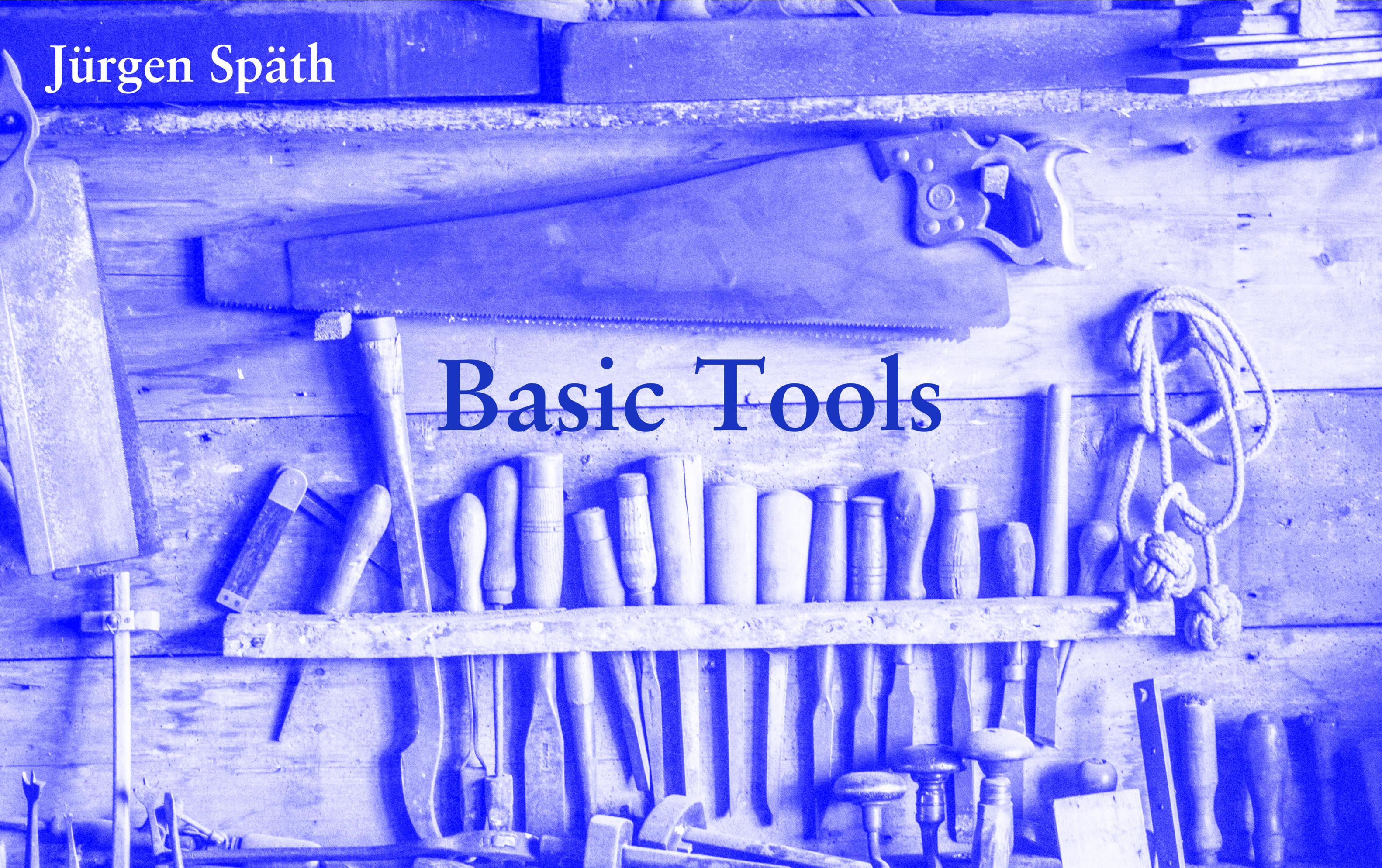


Jürgen Späth

Basic Tools



Interview Techniques

Interview Techniques

User interviews are an essential component of innovation development with the innovation board.

We also want to find out things that our interview partner does not want to or is unable to reveal.

The Five-Why Technique

„Why“ questions are an essential ingredient our interview dish.

When children set out to explore the world, they ask „why“. When we want to explore the user world, we also ask „why“. We ask not only once but several times. The guiding value is five.

The Five-Why Technique

Example: The problem is that a car will not start.

1. Why does the car not start? – The starter battery is empty.
2. Why is the starter battery empty? – The alternator does not work.
3. Why does the alternator not work? – The drive belt is torn.
4. Why is the drive belt torn? – The drive belt has never been replaced.
5. Why has the drive belt never been replaced? – The car has never undergone any maintenance.

The Five-Why Technique

The first time you repeatedly ask „why“ questions, you feel silly because you ask like little children. However, without asking further, you will never uncover the deeper insights.

It is helpful to express not all questions in the same way.

- „Why is it important for you?“
- „For what reason do you do that?“
- „On what grounds do you think this is what helps you?“

The 20:80 Technique

In 20% of the time, you ask your questions, and in 80% of the time, you listen.

The goal is to let your interviewee tell you as much as possible so that you can understand him or her and follow up if necessary.

Facial Expressions and Body Language

Communication is a complex phenomenon with many aspects. How we say something is as important as what we say.

While conducting an interview, you have to observe both.

When your interview partner, hesitates, shrugs or shakes his head, there is some sort of tension between what is said and what is meant.

Open Questions

You ask questions that your interview partner cannot simply answer with „yes“ or „no“.

These are called „open questions“ because they help us to make your interview partners open up so that they talk from the bottom of their heart and share their knowledge.

Open Questions

It is not that easy to ask open questions without practice.

You can turn any closed questions into an open question.
You simply add „why“.

Digging Deeper When Meeting Contradictions or Patterns

Sometimes you note contradictions between what the interviewees say and what they do.

Asking Concret Instead of Abstract Questions

When your interview partners fall back to commonplaces, you have to dig deeper and ask them for personal experience.

You do not only ask, „What makes you angry?“ but also „When have you been really angry the last time“ and „Why?“

The Mirror Technique

In mirroring, you repeat the statements of you interview partner in other words. You do this to have the statement confirmed.

You also mirror when you want to encourage you interview partner to tell you more.

Simple Questions

You ask simple that are properly separated from each other.

You do not use nested questions comprising several subquestions, because in that case, the interview partner could simply pick the part he or she likes to answer.

Brevity and Precision

You ask brief and precise questions. Short questions are made up of no more than ten words.

Empathy

In your interviews, you will eventually get to a point where your partner reveals personal matters or even quirks. In most case, they start to do this tentatively and only give us some hints. When you notice this, you have to dig deeper gently and empathically.

Your interview partner must feel comfortable. He must not think that you stamp him.

Real empathy is indispensable to learn about personal matter.

What's next?

What's next?

The biggest challenge is to use the right technique for the right moment and sometimes even several techniques at the same time.

With a little experience, they will become second nature.

You can test and practice the techniques in your team or with colleagues, friends or relatives.

You can also think up a set scenario that does not have anything to do with your project at hand.