

Interview Transcript #2

Adam – Moderator

James – Notetaker

Jordana – Transcriber

Zara – Interviewee (Name changed for confidentiality)

[Note: Interview has been coded by category with three categories: Attendee Characteristics, Opinions on the Conference, and Reasons for Coming.]

Adam: Thanks for coming to the interview! Let's get started. So, in regards to the Support Driven conference, did you go last year?

Zara: [Coded: Attendee Characteristics begin] **No, this is my first time at the Support Driven event.** [Coded: Attendee Characteristics end] Though some of our company have been attending the Support Driven Expo for the last two years, this is my first time at the event. And I wanted to speak once so I made sure I submitted a proposal and did workshops so I'd get a chance to attend the event, [unintelligible] at my work who gets to attend the event because I think only 3 or 4 people are allowed, so I thought I'd have more chance if I were to speak and then I made a case for it.

Adam: So, there are three or four people from your company coming?

Zara: Yes.

Adam: OK. And since they've been coming for it sounds like two years, what kinds of things have you heard from them about the conference -- either good or bad?

Zara: [Coded: Opinions of the Conference begin] **So some things I've heard from them is when it comes to giving a presentation, a talk or workshop, something that is basic is what generally the audience tends to like.** [Coded: Opinions of the Conference end] If I go deeper into talking about metrics and NPS, people are very resistant to consume that information because a lot of teams that come there are just starting off, or are too small of a team to relate to such a high level topic. So any topic that talks about customer support in general and which is slightly basic is loved by people. [Coded: Opinions of the Conference begin] **The other thing that I heard which I really loved was that the conference embraces process over tools,** which is amazing because it has to be a Support Driven event at the end of the day, **not a marketing or sales event where people come there and pitch their tools and products,** [Coded: Opinions of the Conference end] which this is something that I really love. I've got great feedback from my team saying people come, even our company does talk about process over tools, that is very strong feedback I have received and something that makes them stand apart from other conference is them embracing process over tools. The other thing, which I'm not sure because this is my first time at any conference and it happens to be the first conference I'm going to

attend is Support Driven, The number of people that turn up for workshop, we kinda don't know how many people are going to turn up. But I understand we have an app, I don't know how that was done last year, I'm sorry I don't have information about that, but I understand since we have an app we kinda know how many people are filling up for the workshop and it has more insight... [Coded: Opinions of the Conference begin] basically we can just expect that so many people will turn up for the workshop, I need to have enough material, [Coded: Opinions of the Conference end] I need to have enough pens, paper. Pencils, clips, etc. to make sure that it's interactive, and also it would be great if, recordings , post the event, I believe that workshops are not being recorded but talks are being recorded. So that was a request thing. It would be great if workshops are recorded because it's a great way to share it and inspire people in that space as well. I think only talks are recorded and we haven't gotten access to the talks so we're not quite sure what happens after the workshop, that's one feedback that I wanted to inform you guys, and we also talked to scott about this. After the event we quite don't know what happens to all the videos, recordings, etc. and yeah, that's about it.

Adam: Great, thank you, that's helpful. So, you're coming from quite a large team, it sounds like?

Zara: Yeah, exactly. Freshworks is a mighty product company. We have muchly products. But almost every year always we send only people from Freshdesk because Freshdesk is the customer support software and the Freshdesk BU is also like quite huge -- a few hundred people, including the product, engineering, marketing and support team, so, as a company, Freshworks is more than 1800 people, but the Freshdesk BU is is about maybe 500-600, i[m not quite sure about the number, so we're from a huge company. [Coded: Attendee Characteristics begin] So, our support team, Freshdesk support team, amongst up to 80 to 100 people, and the marketing team is about 15-20. So typically, from this 100-150 people, we make sure that only 3-4 people attend the event. [Coded: Attendee Characteristics end]

Adam: So where are you traveling from?

Zara: [Coded: Attendee Characteristics begin] We are traveling from Chennai, India. I'm from India. [Coded: Attendee Characteristics end]

Adam: Oh wow! That's a long way.

Zara: Yes, yes it is!

Adam: So, since you haven't been to the conference, maybe this is something you couldn't answer, but from what you've heard from other people, do they tend to meet other people from India, from Asia in general or from outside the United States, or does their experience tend to be more Americas?

Zara: Well, I'm not sure, but one thing I can definitely say, there is a great networking opportunity, but I'm quite not sure about the region because I have not been to the event so I

don't know whether people are from the US or UK or if there is a large audience from Asia or India, I'm not quite sure about that. Maybe I can get back to you with an answer if you'd like me to.

Adam: It's ok. These may be questions that you can answer, and they may be questions you can't answer, and that's fine. Another question that I'm just curious about, and you may not know, but do you or anybody on your team have any accessibility challenges related to vision or hearing or mobility or learning style that might affect the way you experience the conference?

Zara: [Coded: Attendee Characteristics begin] No, I don't think anyone on our team has any disability of that sort, physically or any learning challenge. [Coded: Attendee Characteristics end] We're all kind of in the same place, I don't think anyone who's attended on my team would have an answer to this.

Adam: OK. That's fine. So what are your expectations going into this year's conference?

Zara: [Coded: Attendee Characteristics begin] I've been in this community, technically a member of the Slack group, for the last two or three years. I've been interacting with a lot of people, so this is the first time that I will meet them in person and I am really excited about that. And also I see this as a very good networking opportunity for me because I am actually technically beginning my career. So I only have four years of work experience. I worked in an agency for a year, and for the last three years I've been with Freshworks, a SaaS product-based company. [Coded: Attendee Characteristics end] The kind of people who I see in Support Driven, the variety of experiences that they have with them, and I'm quite excited to see how much I can learn with them, because almost everyone, whoever I meet, they tend to have a customer support job, but they also tend to freelance for various companies, they write, they speak in [unintelligible], they host webinars, I only do a bit of it, so [Coded: Reasons for Coming begin] I'm trying to see how this can help me grow professionally and I've got quite a few mentors on Support Driven community as well and I'm excited to meet them and see, because all the last few months they've been helping me to speak, to speak better in workshops, hone my presentation skills, etc., etc., so I look forward to this event as a networking and a learning opportunity for me. [Coded: Reasons for Coming end] because, like I told you, I have only four years experience and I have a long, long way to go in my area, so this will really help me see how actual customer support folks work, because I'm really surprised to see the kind of work that comes out by customer support folks, because [Coded: Reasons for Coming begin] I always thought support people, they face customers, they solve problems, but I really didn't think they would come out, share their experiences, share the kinds of process they took it, and all of that, so that's the kind of learning I want to get from them, because as working professionals we all want to share our experiences, but the way we want to share, it makes all the difference, right? [Coded: Reasons for Coming end] So, I want to see how I can break through on that.

Adam: So it sounds like working, that's very important to you. Beyond that, are there any particular talks or workshops or activities that you are really looking forward to?

Zara: Yes, there are a bunch of workshops that I wanted to attend. I haven't planned my schedule yet, but since we're going as a company and we're going as a team of three or four, we're not sure whether we're a team of three or four yet, we'll be deciding in a couple of days, we'll be fine with that, but I want to attend a bunch of talks and workshops as well. I haven't made my list, but I've told my colleagues that let's take turns and stand in the booth while others are away at workshops because I don't want to be in the booth all day, I want to meet some people, talk about Freshworks, introduce Freshtest to them, introduce myself, yes, but I also want to meet the speakers because I'm also here to gain more knowledge in customer support and basically I'm really excited for the talks and workshops as well. I also want to know what's the speaking style that people take up when it comes to presentations and workshops, see through that, basically.

Adam: So this is kind of circling back, but as you're traveling so far, you're coming from a different cultural background... is there anything that makes you anxious about this trip, or anything that you...?

Zara: Yeah, I actually have a couple of things. [Coded: Attendee Characteristics begin] So culturally, I don't know, but since the place is going to be new for me, this is the first time I'm going to go to the US and I definitely want to explore the city as well, and I see that, from the kind of companies that come there, [Coded: Attendee Characteristics end] I know that they are from the US, they know the place really well, and I also saw on support driven where there is a networking opportunity even before the event starts. I wanted to attend but I'm not sure if I'd be a fit to attend the event. [Coded: Attendee Characteristics begin] I know I can gel with everyone, but I don't know what people talk about and I'm sure other things, I don't know what the other things are. [Coded: Attendee Characteristics end]

Adam: So it's more a question of maybe how people socialize and...

Zara: [Coded: Attendee Characteristics begin] Yeah, exactly, how people socialize. I mean, if someone can give me an answer, I'd be fine with it, because... I'm looking to explore, [Coded: Attendee Characteristics end] I'm looking to find ways, because when you're meeting a group of people somewhere halfway, you have to see something that is good for you, something that's good for everyone, get a sweet spot, so that I also meet people... [Coded: Attendee Characteristics begin] I don't know how socializing works as well. Are people proactive to talk, because here, I attend any events, maybe a party that's organized by a friend, or a networking meeting, or a happy hour that's organized by a startup here in India, I know that I can walk up to a founder or an investor and start talking. Is that the same thing that's gonna happen, because I see that people already know each other, so will I be that bit of a stranger, or will I feel like that? [Coded: Attendee Characteristics end]

Adam: OK! That's a really interesting and insightful point, so thanks for that. I'm just looking to see if we have any final summary questions... James, do you have anything that you want to ask?

James: Yeah, just one kind of clarifying: you said that this is your first conference, did you mean in the United States or in general?

Zara: [Coded: Attendee Characteristics begin] In general, this is my first conference. [Coded: Attendee Characteristics end]

James: OK. That was my only question.

Adam: And do you know, we've read that there is a support driven conference in Europe now, it sounds that they are branching out, do you know if there is anything in your part of the world?

Zara: Yes, so one of my teammates attended this event, I think it was in Serbia?

Adam: Right.

Zara: Yes, it was in Serbia, I know that this event happened in Serbia, but I was quite busy at work, otherwise I could have gotten a chance to attend this event, but i didn't take much steps to be part of this event because I was quite busy with other things. So that's why I thought that maybe I'd get a chance to attend the Americas event, and visit the US. I'm looking forward to the next conference in Europe. I know that there will be another conference in 2020, so I'm looking forward to that.

Adam: Cool, sounds fun. Well, great, thanks for doing this. And, I was at the Support Driven conference last year, I may be going this year, we'll see, so I might see you there.

Zara: OK, let me know if you're coming, I'd love to find some people that I know so I can socialize.

Adam: Sounds good.

Zara: I think I have a couple of questions. So what was your idea when you ask me that I'm coming from a different cultural background, are there any opinions that you have, I just want to know what made you ask that.

Adam: Well, part of what we're trying to approach with this study is for one thing how the conference was dealing with accessibility, so that was why we asked the question about vision and mobility and so on. With the cultural question what we were trying to get at wasis the conference accessible to people from different cultures. If it's not are there things that, is there feedback that you could give us about how it could be made more accessible, or just what are the things that might make a person from another country nervous coming into this setting, so that was kind of the idea. I just did another interview with someone from Estonia who is coming to the conference, and so it was interesting hearing his perspective on it... in his view, it tends to be a pretty American audience, occasionally you'll meet somebody from Europe, but...

Zara: Yeah. Exactly, so that's what I think because I do know... Because it's happening in Portland I think a lot of people in the US will show up for this because it's more accessible for them. What I don't know how people from there will socialize. It's really common for people from here who want to go out for a drink, just get some coffee, you just walk up to someone else in a different stall or someone you know, and we like to just go out for coffee. I don't know if that's ok to do in the United States with people, I don't know if we have a similar mindset or if that's not offensive, but I don't know how to do it.

Adam: Just ask people out for a coffee?

Zara: Yeah, because, going for a break, that serves as a good socialization option, go out to lunch, if they are from that country they will know cool places in and around portland, portland state university that I can go around because I am not from that place. If someone were to visit me in my office, or in my country, I would make sure that I take them around, I take them out for lunch or at least tell them that hey, these are cool places that you should check on in the next couple of days.

Adam: I think you'll get a lot of that. Most Portlanders really love their city. It is a beautiful region and a cool city, so I think people will be enthusiastic about giving you suggestions. It also is a big coffee city, so my memory of the conference is they have a lot of coffee there. There's always this central area with coffee and people congregate there. So, you might have to think of another excuse to ask people outside for things.

Zara: It's not about asking people out--

Adam: To have interactions with people outside of the context of the

Zara: Conference. Exactly.

Adam: Yeah, I think you'll have a good time. I think you'll enjoy the conference.

Zara: Yeah, thank you. I hope to see you and James.

Adam: I may be there, and I'll send you a message if I will be. Safe travels!

Zara: Bye! Have a great day ahead. See you.