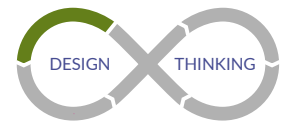


EMPATHISE



Develop a deeper understanding of your users.

Why empathise?

The first stage in the Design Thinking process requires the entire project team to fully understand an experience or problem from the user's point of view. This is achieved by completing and sharing the insights from in-depth research with a sample of the user audience. This allows companies to:

- ensure that designs are based on unbiased, real-world insights rather than the preconceived ideas or assumptions of team members
- gain a clear understanding of user attitudes and behaviours, as well as how these vary between different user groups
- define the problems or pain points in the current experience that need to be addressed to deliver a good user experience
- align thinking and secure team buy-in early in the design process, so that the rest of the project can run smoothly.



Steps to success

1

Consolidate what you do and don't know.

Adopt a beginner's mindset, set aside assumptions and take a step back. Collaborate with your multifunctional team to consolidate what you already know, including prior research, data/analytics insights, and identify gaps in your knowledge. Also be open to finding things you didn't know that you don't know!

2

Connect with your user audience.

Identify your user audience, taking into account different user profiles, backgrounds, and including those who have different needs to others. Involve real users or potential users of your product or service at this stage; don't just work off assumptions.

3

Carefully consider research approaches.

The most appropriate research approaches for your project will depend upon the goal, scope, focus and audience, as well as the budget and time restraints you are working within. Take a look at the questions you are trying to answer and knowledge gaps you are trying to fill, and apply a combination of approaches that will best meet these.

4

Learn by observing and asking.

Observation and asking questions are key to tapping into your users' experiences, thoughts, emotions and motivations. This is particularly relevant when running inclusive sessions, where participants may find it difficult to verbalise their thoughts. Immerse yourself in the research and don't be distracted; have someone take notes for you or record the sessions so you can go back to them. Focusing on the participant(s) will facilitate sharing, reflection and storytelling.

5

Develop a shared understanding and empathy.

Having members of the team shadow and observe some sessions can help engage them with the research, but you should also think about how to develop a shared understanding and empathy amongst the wider team. Plan how to consolidate the key insight and present it in the most meaningful way.



Top tips

Remember those with access needs.

Create an inclusive, cost effective sample by recruiting participants with varying needs rather than by different 'disability types'. For example, people who use sign language as their first language, and those who are dyslexic both have a need for clear, easy to understand language, so could be considered as one user group.

Mix methods to maximise insight.

Consider starting with internal stakeholder research to offer focus for sessions with users, and mixing several of the methods below:

- Stakeholder interviews
- Data analytics
- Desk research
- Competitor analysis
- Ethnography
- Observations
- Diary studies
- User interviews
- Focus groups
- Surveys

Look in your remote toolbox.

If in-context research is not possible, encourage the user to share photos and videos, or use remote tools that support aspects of ethnographic research techniques.

For example, see [how we used the tool Incling to help gather insights](#).

Decide on deliverables in advance.

The communication of insights is important to instil empathy. Deliverables should be considered in advance to ensure that the research addresses the outputs required.

- Personas
- Empathy maps
- Journey map
- Task analysis
- Storyboards
- User soundbites

If you need help understanding your users, please reach out to our UX team via:

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Find out more about how we use empathy throughout our user research projects.