

EMPATHY MAP

Unleashing Insights, Inspiring Design

The Empathy Map method is an analytical tool to foster understanding, empathy, and insight into the needs and perspectives of users, customers, or stakeholders. By visually capturing observations, thoughts, and emotions, the Empathy Map helps people gain a deeper understanding of the target audience, enabling them to design better solutions, products, interventions and make informed decisions.

Purpose: Knowledge construction, Development

Group size: < 10, 20 or more (if broken into groups)

Duration: < 60-120 min


USE THIS METHOD TO:

- Develop empathy by putting your participants in the shoes of the target audience;
- Inspire design solutions that directly address the target audience's pain points and needs;
- Promote a user-centric approach;
- Move beyond assumptions and biases when designing solutions, products or processes.

Multilanguage fit: Yes

Level of interaction: High

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STEPS TO APPLY THE METHOD:


Preparation

1. Identify and define the purpose of the activity.
2. Identify the Target Audience: Determine the specific group of users, customers, or stakeholders that the group wants to understand better. This could be based on demographics, behavior patterns, or specific contexts.
3. Prepare a short input of 5-10 minutes to set out the general outline of the discussion. Mention the target audience(s) that you will be reflecting on, so that people can start already thinking before the meeting.
4. Prepare a visual template: Create or print out an Empathy Map template. The template typically consists of a simple diagram divided into four quadrants: "Says," "Thinks," "Feels," and "Does." This provides a visual structure for capturing observations and insights. There are several ready made downloadable and virtual templates available. See Tooltips.
5. In an ideal case, this activity is preceded by some form of data collection to gather user insights: such as research, interviews, or observation sessions and direct engagement with users, to gain a comprehensive understanding of their perspectives, behaviors, and emotions.

Delivery

1. Introduce the activity and explain how the empathy map works.
 2. If needed, remind participants of the data collected about the target audience.
 3. Complete the Empathy Map: In each quadrant of the Empathy Map template, write down or sketch relevant information based on your research and insights. The "Says" quadrant captures the explicit statements or quotes from users. The "Thinks" quadrant delves into their thoughts, assumptions, or beliefs. The "Feels" quadrant records their emotions, desires, or frustrations. Finally, the "Does" quadrant documents their actions, behaviors, or interactions.
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When completing the Empathy Map, you can ask a variety of questions to gather rich insights for each quadrant. Here are some potential questions to consider:

Says:

- What are some direct quotes or statements that the audience has made about their experiences?
- What are their expressed needs, desires, or frustrations?
- What specific feedback have they provided in interviews, surveys, or user testing sessions?
- What are the common themes or patterns in their verbal communication?

Thinks:

- What assumptions or beliefs does the audience hold about the product, service, or experience?
- What are their expectations or preconceived notions?
- What thoughts or considerations influence their decision-making process?
- What are the mental models or frameworks they use to understand the problem or context?
- Feels:
- What emotions does the audience experience when interacting with the product or service?
- What are their pain points, frustrations, or anxieties?
- What brings them joy, satisfaction, or delight?
- How do they perceive the overall experience emotionally?

Does:

- What actions or behaviours does the audience engage in when interacting with the product or service?
 - What steps or processes do they follow to accomplish a task or goal?
 - How do they navigate through the experience physically or digitally?
 - What are the observable behaviours that reflect their needs or challenges?
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4. **Analyse and Synthesise:** Review the completed Empathy Map as a facilitator or with a collaborative team. Look for patterns, commonalities, and key insights that emerge from the collected data. Identify the most critical needs, pain points, or motivations that should be addressed. Use this information in the next steps when you move into brainstorming and other processes to generate solutions.

Have in mind the following:

Here are a few potential formats to synthesise the insights:

5. **Persona Creation:** Create user personas based on the synthesised insights. Personas are fictional characters that represent different segments or archetypes of your target audience. Include key characteristics, behaviours, goals, and pain points that emerged from the Empathy Map. Personas help create a shared understanding of the users and serve as a reference point during the design process.
 6. **Storyboarding:** Create a visual narrative that illustrates the user journey based on the synthesised insights. Use a series of panels or frames to depict the different stages, actions, thoughts, and emotions experienced by the users. Storyboarding helps communicate the user's perspective and can uncover opportunities for improvement or innovation.
 7. **Experience Map:** Develop an experience map that illustrates the end-to-end user experience based on the synthesised insights. This map visually represents the touchpoints, interactions, and emotions users encounter throughout their journey. It can help identify pain points, moments of delight, and areas for enhancement. Use visual elements, such as icons, colour coding, or graphs, to convey information effectively.
 8. **Insights Matrix:** Create a matrix that summarises the key insights and observations from the Empathy Map. Use categories or themes as rows or columns, and populate the matrix with the relevant insights under each category. This format provides a concise overview of the synthesised results, making it easier to identify the most critical findings.
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TOOL TIPS:

Storyboard templates on Canva

<https://www.canva.com/templates/storyboards/>

Persona creator tool on Hubspot

<https://www.hubspot.com/make-my-persona>

Persona templates on Xtensio

<https://xtensio.com/user-persona-template/>

Experience mapping template on Miro

<https://miro.com/templates/experience-map/>

