

USER STORIES

WHAT?

This is a method for really listening to the stories of your customers, clients, end users. It is not about asking set questions; it's about prompting them to talk with you and listening for opportunities to make improvements.

WHY?

The majority of innovation comes from responses to user needs. However, it can be a challenge to deeply understand what those needs are.

Most people don't really know what they want—it's up to the smart innovator to intuit unarticulated wishes or desires. As Henry Ford is supposed to have said, "If I'd asked people what they wanted, they would have said a faster horse."

This exercise allows you to listen carefully and notice the gaps, for example, when they say:

"I couldn't..."

"There wasn't any..."

"I was frustrated when..."

"I wish that..."

HOW?

Go to the user's environment and tell them you want to chat about the issue, for example, you might want to know about their experience using a new product, service or technology.

Ask open questions such as:

- "Tell me about..."
- "Why did you do/feel that?"
- "How do you solve this problem?"
- "If you could have any service or product..."

You can also ask them to tell you the story of how they use your product and service with you asking probing questions, such as, "What would happen if...?", "What would you do if...?", and so on.

The most important thing is to be completely open to what they're saying. It's tempting to listen for things that merely confirm what you want to hear, rather than opening yourself up to negative feedback.

On the following page is a set of suggested strategies for identifying user needs.

Engage user	Encourage the user to become part of the design process, for example, bring them into the team, use them for ideation, ask them to test ideas.
Observing potential users	Just watch and note what people do. For example, if you want to find opportunities to improve the supermarket checkout line experience, watch people, see what they want to do and/or can't do, and imagine what they could do if it were possible.
Become the user	Put yourself in the position of the user to see what it actually feels like and what they would really want to use. For example, start going to the supermarket to have the experience. Use your own frustrations and irritants to think about how things could be improved.
Interact with users	Have them tell a story, encourage the user to speak, rather than to answer preset questions. Say things like, "Tell me about the last time you..." or "Tell me about when you had to choose a...". Look for indications of gaps, e.g., "I couldn't...", "There wasn't any...", "I was frustrated...".
Record observations	It's very important to record your observations. Use drawings, cameras, a video or a simple checklist.
Storyboard	Use the insights you gather to make up a story of a typical user experience. Spend about 15 minutes putting the story into four frames.
Journey mapping	To try to identify unmet needs in the user experience. Breakdown the users' experience into stages. Identify emotional highs and lows, for example, what frustrates them, what delights them. This will identify the strengths and weaknesses of the whole experience of using a product or service.
Improvising user behaviour	Set up situations to get people to act out responses and record their behaviour.
Fly on the wall	Set yourself up in a relevant place and just observe. Use your phone and take notes. Look for gaps, frustrations, interactions, choices, etc.
A day in the life	Ask potential users to keep a diary of a day in their life and to record their emotional responses as well as the actual things they did. Provide them with a list of things to look for.
Empathy tools	If you want to see things through the experience of people different to yourself create tools to help you experience their lives, such as empathy tools. Examples include a sling for a broken limb, distorted glasses to help you experience poor sight and so on.
Find new users	Sometimes we get locked into one target market, when there may be others. Observation and imagination can help you notice potential markets that you may not have thought of.

USER INTERVIEWS

WHAT?

Interviews are useful for gaining insight into your user needs and unmet desires. However, they can be difficult to conduct.

WHY?

These guidelines will help you conduct good interviews by keeping you focused on listening rather than talking and observing the user highs and lows.

HOW?

Get group members to interact with users around the issue being explored.

They should:

- Approach the task with a completely open mind
- Ask open questions
- Listen rather than talk
- Encourage users to tell stories that are relevant to the issue
- Seek facts, that is, what happened
- Ask for examples and evidence
- Probe by asking “Why?”, “How?”, “What happened?”
- Don’t mention solutions

TIPS

Have one person asking the questions, one writing down or recording the answers and you could have another noting body language.

Start by asking broad questions about habits, values and get a sense of their priorities.

Write down exactly what they say, rather than your interpretation of what you think they said.

Observe their body language as well as the words.

A good way to get different insights is to interview people who are not in the typical user group and who are unfamiliar with what you are testing. For example, if you were testing a new idea for an older woman, test it with a young child or an older man and see what they tell you about it.

PERSONAS

WHAT?

Personas are characters that you create based on your experience, your research and your insights. They are a way of understanding why certain customers value particular things and how they perceive your business. That means that you can see your customers as people and better understand their:

- motivations (what they need to get done)
- needs (what problems they need solved)
- unmet needs (what other problems that they have that you might be able to solve for them)
- unarticulated needs (problems that even the customer may not have realised need solving)

WHY?

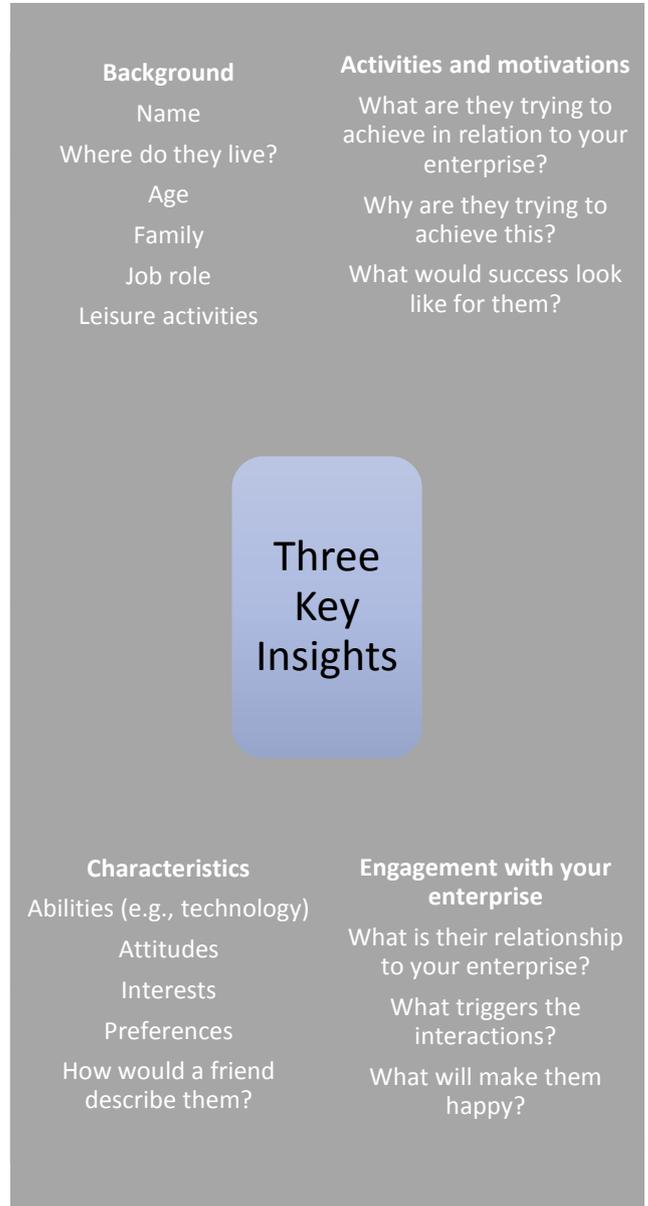
Creating personas will help you find opportunities for changing the way you provide your service or design your product. It also helps communicate to others in your company by providing a real-life story that is easy to relate to.

HOW?

You can create a persona out of the typical characteristics of a particular customer segment, for example, the casual customer, the SME owner, or the marketing manager of a corporate client.

It is important to give the persona a name and a social context. It helps to draw a picture or find a photograph that would apply.

You can use User Stories and Interviews to gather information for this exercise.





Name: Maria who owns a small fashion boutique

Age: 50

Maria has owned her retail shop for the past 15 years. She lives locally and has been a solid customer of your print shop. Her boutique caters to local women and provides good quality, good value casual clothes. She is well known and well liked in the neighbourhood and enjoys playing bridge at the local club. She's a great cook and her family and friends' parties often extend to customers who enjoy the feasts that she prepares.

The business has been steady for most of the past decade, however, recently she has noticed a decline in sales. She figures that she is experiencing the impacts of the influx of low cost, international retailers and online shopping. She is beginning to notice that her customers, even older women, are using their smart devices in the shop and has realised that she needs to smarten up and modernise her image to get her customers back. She has always relied on your print shop to design, print and recently to deliver with direct marketing materials and sales promotion ads but now she needs advice about changing her marketing and promotions strategy to meet the emerging needs of her market.

She has always been careful with her money, but recognises that she may need to invest a little more than usual. Advice about new forms of promotions and how to use them well would make her very happy. Her children use social media all the time and she has a Facebook page so that she can view photos of her son's family who now live in Italy.

Quote from Maria:

"I need to make my shop look more modern. I'm not afraid of the new marketing methods if it means I can continue to serve my local customers well."

Quote from Maria's family and friends:

"Maria is always willing to try something new. But she's very careful about how she spends her money."

JOURNEY MAP

WHAT?

This tool is an alternative to surveys and focus groups, which don't always provide the insights needed for innovation.

In short, journey maps:

- Identify the needs that customers are often unable to articulate
- Highlight areas where you can add or create value for your customer
- Provide a deeper understanding of the feelings that are influencing your customer's behaviour
- Identify real opportunities for innovation
- Decrease the risk of innovating

WHY

Journey mapping allows you to step into your customer's shoes and experience what they do as they interact with your company.

That's because customers often don't know what they really want, what causes them pain, and what delights them until they experience it. Also, in surveys and focus groups, customers respond with their heads, whereas when making purchasing decisions they often respond with their hearts. Unfortunately, it is difficult to read the heart of a customer in a survey.

HOW?

1. Use the persona or person from the customer group whose experience you want to fully understand

You might select a customer group that you want to increase, or a market that is declining or alternatively one that you think you could on-sell more effectively. Or you might select the customer on the basis of the product or service they want from you. Start with the group represented by your persona.

2. Lay out a hypothetical view of what their journey looks like

Use personas and step through their process. Alternatively, become the customer and chart your journey. It is important that you are rigorous and record every step in the journey. It can be quite exhausting. As you are going to be changing and rearranging this map, it's a good idea to use Post-it® notes or a white board so that you can easily add and delete.

3. Observe your customers in real time

Validate your persona's journey using real customers from the segment represented, and ask them if you can walk through their journey with them. Spend time observing their behaviour before they come into your business, while they're there and after. Note down the steps in their journey, the high points and the low points. Update the journey map and make note of your observations about their feelings.

1. Interview customers

Interview other customers to further validate the journey map. In your interviews ask them about their feelings at particular points in the journey. It is a good idea to have two people interviewing, one to ask the questions and the other to scribe. Alternatively, with the permission of the customer you could video tape the interview and write it up after.

5. Pool insights

Part of the observation and interviews should include capturing the emotional highs and lows of the journey. Get all the interviewees and observers to:

- summarise the journey of their particular person

- identify the high points
- identify the low points

6. Identify themes and opportunities for innovation

Draw together the information gathered, and as a group identify:

- high points
- low points
- themes, that is, where a number of people experienced the same feelings.

A journey map is not a demographic tool, it is a psychographic tool. It provides deep insights, rather than broad evidence.

For this reason, they are good exploratory tools and you may need to validate your findings with demographic research. However, for a small business they are particularly useful for exposing needs that can easily be catered for through an iterative design process.

SAMPLE JOURNEY MAP

Maria (see persona) reviews marketing materials

Stages	Researching	Deciding	Ordering
Doing	Looking at social media options	Maria goes to the Print Shop and asks to see a customer relations person	Maria describes what she wants to Kevin and Fiona
Thinking and saying	Should I use Facebook, Linked In, Instagram?	She wonders who is the best person to talk to. Do they know about social media? Are they going to try to sell her print media?	She feels happy that the Print shop can cater to both her print needs and also help her with her Facebook page
Feeling	Confused	Sceptical	Happy
Emotional map	OK	Neutral	Higher