

Empathy Logbook Ignite 2023

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Preparation for our sessions

To get the most out of our time together, it is essential that you complete the prep work, which consists of 4 parts:

- 1) Watch this short [video](#).
- 2) Read this [article](#) on design thinking.
- 3) Peruse the [resources](#) available through the Stanford d.school.
- 4) Conduct empathy work for your project, using the instructions in this logbook.

Step 1: Define your “user”

For the purposes this exercise, you and your team must identify one group of people whose opinion of your product or service is critical to your success. We will refer to this as your “user” or “user group.”

Who will benefit from the product or service that your team will create and provide?

This group of people could be end users of your product, purchasing or procurement agents, intermediary users of some type, and so on.

For example, if you were a tire manufacturer, you might be concerned with some of the following users:

Owner of tire store



Mechanic



Car owner

Our user is:

Step 2: Empathy work through interviews

To figure out what our users need, we conduct empathy work.

Empathy is when you can feel what another person is feeling. It is the foundation of a human centered design process. By deeply understanding people, we are better able to design for them because we better understand their needs.

To empathize, we *immerse* ourselves in the experiences of others, we *observe* them and their behaviors, and we *engage* with others through interaction and interviews.

Before we meet for our session, your team should break into pairs.

Each pair should also have at least 2 meaningful conversations with members of your USER group (or would-be USER group).



Interview instructions

Conduct your interviews in pairs, with one person asking questions, while the other person takes notes. Swap roles so that you each get a chance asking questions and listening and taking notes. You can do this by video conference or by phone. Video is preferred because you better assess nonverbal cues.

Your job is to get a really good story from your user that will allow you to learn about their unmet needs, so that you can improve your product or service, come up with a new idea altogether for the problem you hope to solve or discover a different problem than the one you thought you would solve.

You might try to interview an **extreme user**. That is, try to have a conversation with someone who, for whatever reason, is different from others that you talk to, or represents the extreme tails of a distribution (this is described in the video). Extreme users are defined by whatever your idea or venture is. For example, in the video, the extreme users for the fitness device were either very active children, or very sedentary children.

Some interview tips

It is critical that you complete your interviews before we meet, so please get started right away.

Please limit your pre-work to conducting these interviews *only*. In other words, do **empathy** work *only* and do not go beyond this step.

Please approach these conversations with humility. Recognize that you probably do not know what the “right” solution is to meet your users’ needs, and you might not even know what they need. So approach these with an open mind and with an intent to learn something.

Explain why you would like to have the conversation, but be clear that you are not looking for ideas for solutions.

Take a lot of notes during the interview, and then spend some time jotting down reflections after each interview.

Try to learn something about the emotions of your interviewee. Go deep!

Some interview tips

Keep questions short (e.g., 10 or fewer words).

Try to avoid asking questions that can be answered with a binary answer (e.g., yes or no), as these curtail conversation.

Ask *specific* questions, rather than “usually” or “generally.”

For example, don't ask users what they usually eat or if they generally exercise. Ask what they had for lunch today and what they did for exercise yesterday.

Ask “why” several times (respectfully). The more we ask “why,” the deeper we get into understanding what motivates our user.

For example, ask someone why they exercised for 3 hours yesterday. If they say because they're trying to lose weight, ask why. If they say because they're going to go on a beach vacation, ask why a beach vacation. If they say because they're tired and stressed out, ask why they're tired and stressed out. And so on. Once you get to this level, you will notice that you are no longer talking only about exercise, but learning something about the needs of a stressed out, tired person.

Avoid leading questions, such as, “Don't you think my solution would help you?”

Spend most of the time listening, and allow for periods of silence so that your interviewee can process & reflect before speaking.

Seek **stories**, rather than answers to directed questions.

Silence is golden. Give your interviewee plenty of time to think before answering.

Step 3: Reflect and synthesize interviews

Once you have conducted your interviews, you and your partner should spend some time reflecting on what you have heard from the people you interviewed.

What was surprising to you and what did you learn from each interview?

What pain points were expressed in each interview?

What needs were expressed in each interview?

What did each person think and feel? How (e.g., interview techniques) were you able to get at their thoughts and feelings?

How did the information from these interviews influence your views of your team's product or service? What questions did these interviews raise about your assumptions about your team's product or service?

If you could ask one more question of each person you interviewed, what would that question be? That is, what else do you wish you knew?