

## Prepare Empathy Map

### Empathy map:

- An empathy map is less a map and more a graphic divided into four quadrants.
- Empathy maps help visualize your users, not only for your benefit but for your team's benefit.
- In fact, using an empathy map is a great way to help others really delve into your users' needs.
- This is a powerful way to improve the quality of product design. And if your team follows the Design Thinking methodology, these maps can be a great addition to the Empathize stage.

### Here are the main benefits of empathy mapping:

- **Develop a user journey**—When you understand your users, you can better anticipate how they'll interact with your product.
- **Keep your design pragmatic**—You may have some ingenious design plans, but your users may not want them. Empathy mapping keeps features tuned to the desires of your users.
- **Map user needs**—Empathy maps help you locate the deep, unmet needs of your users.

### Empathy map format

#### The four quadrants of an empathy map contain the following:

#### Says:

Include direct quotes you've obtained from your users throughout your research. Here are some examples:

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- I really hate having to accept cookies. I don't even know what cookies are.
- What do I do after I login?
- This drop-down menu is weird.

### Does:

A user's actions reveal important insights. Your user may say one thing and do another. You may notice actions such as:

- Instinctively swipes up
- Tries to use Apple Pay during checkout
- Abandons cart

### Thinks:

This quadrant requires a bit of conjecture since you can't actually read your users' thoughts. But you can make educated guesses. Here are some examples of the thoughts your users may have:

- Ugh, I don't want to get up and find my credit card.
- I'm not giving them my email address.
- Why can't I just share this with my friend with one tap?

### Feels:

Again, sometimes your user may not articulate what they're feeling. Use your research to determine the different feelings your users experience at points in their interaction:

- Frustrated when the page doesn't load quickly enough
- Worried they didn't receive a confirmation message after submitting info
- Annoyed they're having to repeat a step.

## 8 tips for creating empathy maps

### 1. Start with "says"

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This quadrant is the easiest to fill out because you have primary sources providing the information. There's no guesswork here: they're simply quotes. From each quote, you can provide context, trace actions, and deduce thoughts and feelings.

### **2. Define your user**

While you may have a bevy of research from all manner of users, not all of them are your target users. Before you make an empathy map online, determine who your core user is. You'll also need to determine if you're designing for a single user or aggregating research to show a segment of your user base.

### **3. Compile the research**

Empathy maps need to be created after the research portion of development. Make sure that every addition to the empathy map is based on the research you've gathered, not from only conjecture. You should be able to back up your empathy map with evidence.

### **4. Don't get too attached**

Additions to the empathy map aren't set in stone, and members of your team may have input that can alter points in your map. Use sticky notes or a cloud-based tool to easily change the map. Sticky notes are also an easy way to group themes together.

### **5. Refine**

Empathy map police don't exist. That means if you want to add additional sections to your empathy map, go for it. Feel free to add illustrations or color coding or goals or anything else that might ultimately improve your design.

It's also smart to periodically save each version of your empathy map if you're using a cloud-based or digital empathy map so you can revert to previous versions of the map. Also,

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don't worry about an empathy map being perfect: humans are complex creatures, subject to change. Your empathy map can change and evolve along with your users' needs.

### **6. Analyze the map**

Once you've filled out the empathy map, study it carefully. Where are the pain points here? Where are the opportunities for adding user value? This is your opportunity to make a plan. If you know your users really want an easier way to build a website using your tool, how can you add value? What features will achieve adding value to your users' lives? This is the time to transform your empathy map into actionable tasks.

### **7. Keep it simple**

Remember that you're only analyzing your users as it relates to your product. Your user may have difficulty losing twenty pounds, but that doesn't have any relevance to the calendar app you're building. Keeping that in mind can help things feel less overwhelming.

### **8. Reference**

An empathy map isn't a replacement for a user persona or any other UX tools. But it can definitely act as a reference tool. Give a hard copy of the empathy map to every member of your team so they can keep it within view as they work. Or send out a link to the cloud-based empathy map so your team can reference it at will.

An empathy map shouldn't be a solo project. Consult various stakeholders and members of your team as you build the empathy map. Once your empathy map is in a good place, check in with your team: do they understand your users? Do they actually empathize with your users? Do they seem excited to create something that can add value? If not, then go back to the drawing board and refine until everyone is on the same page.

## **Prepare Empathy Map**

### **Conclusion:**

As their name suggests, empathy maps simply help us build empathy with our end users. When based on real data and when combined with other mapping methods, they can:

- Remove bias from our designs and align the team on a single, shared understanding of the user
- Discover weaknesses in our research
- Uncover user needs that the user themselves may not even be aware of
- Understand what drives users' behaviors
- Guide us towards meaningful innovation
- Learn and practice empathy mapping in our full-day course *Generating Big Ideas with Design Thinking*.