

Observing the User Experience: A Practitioner's Guide to User Research

Part 2, Chapter 5: Competitive Research

Competitive research is key to figuring out how your product can stand out. It's not just about checking features or pricing—focus on how users actually experience competitors' products. Start by listing competitors, prioritizing direct rivals (Tier 1) and others. Use interviews, usability tests, or surveys to uncover what users love or hate. For example, analyzing Match.com showed gaps in supporting real-life dating, sparking ideas for new features. The goal? Turn competitors' strengths into threats and their flaws into opportunities. Avoid copying—innovate based on real user needs. Keep it simple, stay user-focused, and use insights to make your product uniquely valuable.

A Project Guide to UX Design

Chapter 6: User Research

Chapter 7: Personas

Workshops are where the real magic happens. They're not just meetings—they're structured sessions that get teams aligned, uncover problems early, and generate solid ideas. A good workshop isn't about just talking; it's about making progress. The key is having the right people in the room, setting clear goals, and using activities that keep everyone engaged and focused.

User research is non-negotiable. There's no point designing something if you don't know who you're designing for. Talking to users, observing their behavior, and testing ideas early helps avoid bad assumptions. The goal is simple: understand people so we can create better, more useful experiences.