

Needfinding

There are multiple ways to find product opportunities, including technological approaches, market approaches and user-focused approaches. Again, majority of products are often a combination of two or more approaches. However, these are all merely the beginning of the needfinding process. While aging baby boomers is a market change that may encourage an increase in products geared towards geriatrics, it does not specify which type of product to create and for what activity. Therefore we turn to the needfinding process. This chapter will discuss the five stages to needfinding:

1. Identify activity or tasks
2. Form hypothesis
3. Desk research
4. Field research
5. Observations/interviews/surveys

Successful products

Before diving straight into the needfinding, it is important to know how successful products happen. The principal is quite basic, a successful product needs to satisfy compelling, unmet user needs. Compelling so that consumers will be willing to spend money on it and unmet so that the products stands out in a large market. Finding the right need gives a product this competitive advantage. Be careful not to pursue a design concept because it is “interesting”. The best products are not always mind-blowing, they can be basic functionalities with only slight changes in details.

1. Who are the end users (audience) of the app you designed prototype for?
2. What should you consider for each group of audience for your app?
3. Find similar successful apps (minimum 3 apps) to your application, and investigate what users liked or disliked about the application. Mention top five apps almost similar to yours.

Needfinding

Needfinding is one process through which we can understand our user needs better. Understanding needs are important as they are often overarching while solutions can constantly change. Additionally, needs can be addressed immediately and accurately whereas predictions about the future are not. Understanding needs leads to better development of the product.

There are two types of needs: expressed and latent. Expressed needs are those that the user directly states, such as “I need a system to keep track of when to take which medication” or “I need a way to communicate with my family when we are apart”. Latent needs are those that users themselves do not know exist. People are very good at work-arounds. We can perform most activities with our existing tools, even if a new product may simplify the task. The Swiffer was created when the designer saw his friend mop up a spilled drink with his sock-covered foot, and proceed to toss the sock out. The mop, which required water and reusing was not as efficient as tossing out a cheap sock. Thus, a latent need for the Swiffer was discovered.

1. What examples of latent needs can you think of?
2. What are good ways of finding latent needs?