

# Understand users through scenario mapping

Scenario mapping helps you create to-be scenarios with confidence and understand the experiences that your personas have as they traverse through activities.

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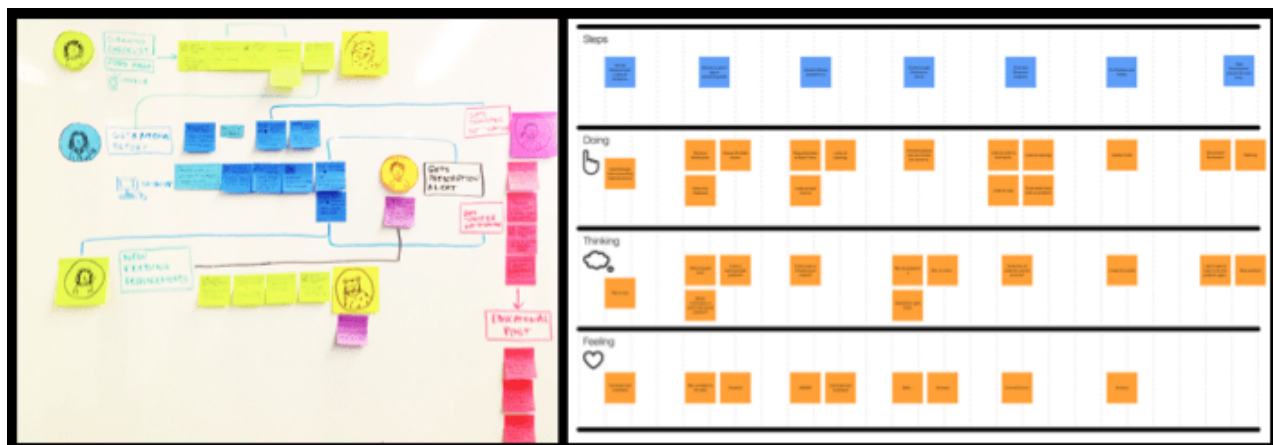
After you understand your persona and have a reasonable amount of empathy for them, it's time to take a closer look at the problem or opportunity space that you want to impact. You probably have an idea of the area that you want to target. For example, you want to move to mobile so that your sales-person persona, Kathy, can access pertinent client information more quickly while on the road. But what is the real opportunity?

### Problem identification: Scenario mapping

Porting the entire set of tools that you think Kathy wants to a mobile app isn't cost effective and might incur too much unnecessary risk. Too many questions are unasked and unanswered. Instead, clearly identify the problem or opportunity space within the context of your persona. This approach can help you understand where to focus your energy so that you can create the greatest impact for your persona.

Scenario mapping helps you see the experiences that your personas are having as they traverse through their activities. The relationship between task and experience provides a tremendous opportunity for insight. Your team can immediately see which feelings a persona is having. In the case of an *as-is scenario*, your team can see what is generating those feelings or experiences. In the case of a *to-be scenario*, your team can ensure that whatever they design and build generates positive, delightful experiences.

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## Define scenarios by using scenario maps

A scenario is a workflow for one or more personas. Scenarios are minimally captured in written text form, but can also be conveyed orally, as a storyboard, or as a video. Like any good story, a scenario begins with a motivation and involves a series of steps toward an intended—or unintended—outcome. Design thinking suggests using scenario maps to rapidly prototype scenarios. From those scenarios, you can identify pain points of users and opportunities for design.

As-is scenarios capture the workflow as it is today. To-be scenarios are a way to envision how your persona will experience the workflow after it is redesigned.

Scenario maps use a relatively simple formula. You capture information by using different colored sticky notes for each of the following numbers. Each number represents a row:

1. The steps that your persona takes to complete a task
2. The specific activities in which your persona engages to complete the step
3. What your persona is thinking during this step
4. What your persona is saying during this step
5. What your persona is feeling during this step

In addition to the steps that your persona completes, your team can see the feelings that these steps generate. Identify the negative feelings and see where they are coming from. Is the absence of a specific functionality causing extra work for the persona? Are unreasonable demands being placed on the persona, such as expecting him or her to remember too much information from one step to the next? Where can you

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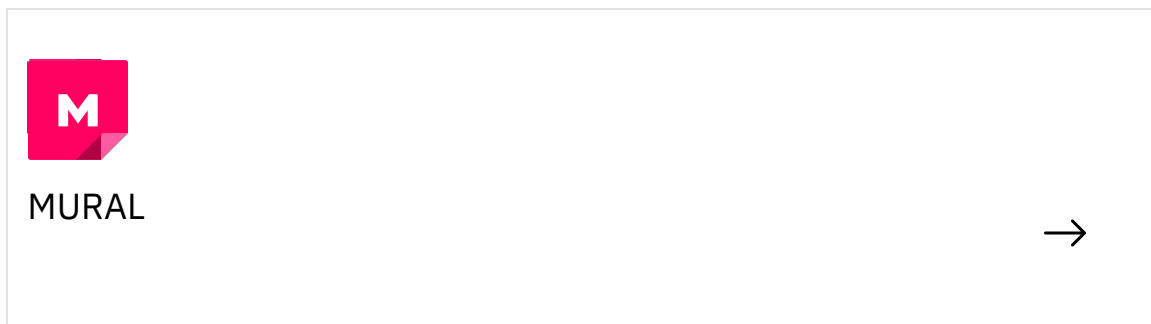
the greatest impact on improving your user's experience?

An as-is scenario is a great way to surface the problems that you intend to solve with your project. You might start a project with a fairly clear sense of the problem, or you might be looking to make the biggest impact that you can with limited resources. Taking the time to map your persona's scenario and add his or her experience to that scenario can both validate what you know and uncover problems that you didn't consider.

## What's next

- As-is Scenario Map (<https://www.ibm.com/design/thinking/page/toolkit/activity/as-is-scenario-map>)
- Turner, Neil. "A step by step guide to scenario mapping." *UX for the masses*, November 5, 2010. <http://www.uxforthemasses.com/scenario-mapping/> (<http://www.uxforthemasses.com/scenario-mapping/>).
- Spool, Jared M. "Scenarios and Journey Maps Help Designers Become Storytellers." *User Interface Engineering*, May 7, 2014. [articles.uie.com/storytellers/](https://articles.uie.com/storytellers/) (<https://articles.uie.com/storytellers/>).

## Related tools



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### Related practices

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[Get started with Enterprise Design Thinking → \(/garage/method/practices/think/enterprise-design-thinking/\)](/garage/method/practices/think/enterprise-design-thinking/)

[Solve problems through ideation → \(/garage/method/practices/think/practice\\_ideation\)](/garage/method/practices/think/practice_ideation/)

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## Related MURAL templates

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Scenario Map → (<https://app.mural.co/template/0ae195bc-111b-4e22-8eb6-c628b1fe8760/93df9435-ad8d-4117-9654-35b2ed542d13>)

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## Authored by



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