Everyday Empathy in a World of Social Distance

A Practical Guide To Connecting With Your End Users

APRIL 2020

How To Impact

A Fast-Changing World and Consumer Mindset

There's no doubt that we are living in unusual and unsettling times, with self-isolation and social distancing becoming a reality for millions across the globe.

As workplaces shift to remote teams, we are seeing new solutions for working, socialising and connecting with one another.

As we stare down the barrel of a global recession, it is now more important than ever that businesses are connecting with their customers – so they can pivot, anticipate and adapt to their rapidly changing needs and outlook.
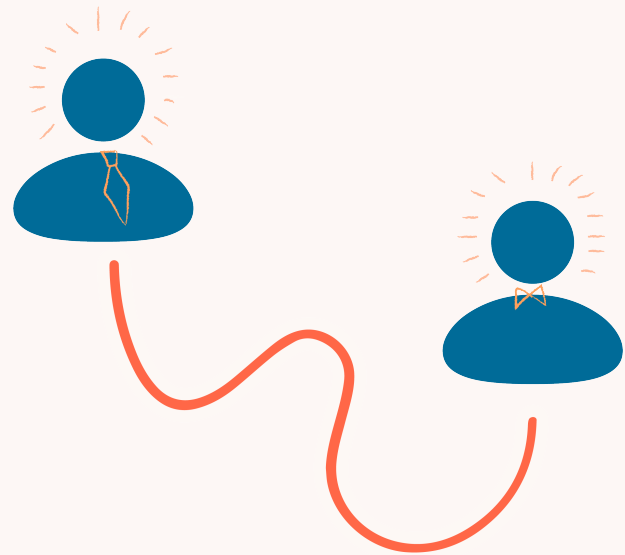
Connection and Empathy at a Distance

To really connect and understand our customers, we need to practice *Everyday Empathy* as a business habit. Everyday Empathy is the engrained practice of seeking to understand the emotions and experiences of others (without judgement) and communicating those emotions. It's the essential part of design thinking that helps defines user needs, frustrations and motivations.

The 'everyday' part means building empathy-gathering into not just every challenge, but as an 'always-on' mindset.

In the following cards, we will outline how to use the 'Empathy Map' to explore a problem from multiple angles, and introduce some practical tools that you can use to better understand your users whilst we are all practicing social distancing.

The Empathy Map

When faced with a new challenge or a need to understand a problem space, we always start by mapping out the right mix of empathy-gathering activities;

	'Explore With' spend 70%	'Talk About' spend 20%	'Act As' spend 10%
'Unusual' spend 10%	7%	2%	1%
'Extreme' spend 20%	14%	4%	2%
'Core' spend 70%	49%	14%	7%

How To Use This Pack and Navigate the Empathy Map

The vertical axis on the Empathy Map represents WHO you should be talking to when gathering information. The horizontal axis tells us HOW we should be exploring these user groups.

In the following cards you will find 3 Who cards and 3 How cards. Pairing a Who and a How card will give you a blueprint of activities that will build empathy remotely.
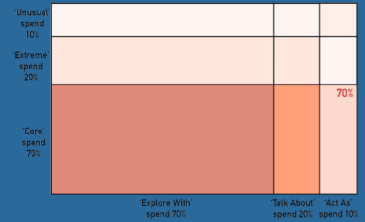
Working through the all the quadrants of the empathy map will build a complete picture of your challenge and allow you to anticipate the needs of a rapidly changing market.

HOW TO impact

Who: Core Customers

Who are they?

Your core group is often who you initially jump to when thinking about conducting research or gathering feedback from end users. This group are the people that your product or service is originally designed for, or the group that have the strongest connection to the category or problem.
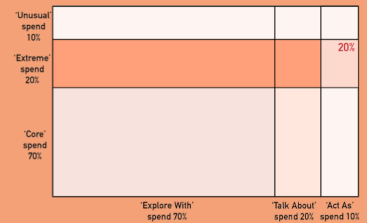
Why talk to them?

Firstly, you want to understand their current usage and needs by exploring their habits, attitudes and pain points (in the real world). Secondly, you want to understand future needs and problems to solve for – in order to stay relevant and increase preference.

Thought starters:

- What contact do you already have with your existing customers?
- How can you effectively recruit and engage your existing customers?
- How can you talk to people that fit into the core audience and aren't currently using your product/service?

'Unusual spend 10%			
'Extreme' spend 20%			20%
'Core' spend 70%			
'Explore With' spend 70%		'Talk About' spend 20%	'Act As' spend 10%

Who: 'Extreme' Users

Who are they?
Extreme users are those people that may have a deep/more frequent relationship with your product, service, or the problem in general.

They may use your product at a heightened level, or disproportionately feel the effects of the problem when compared to your core group – just as truck drivers would have a more pronounced relationship with driving apps, or asthmatics would have a more frequent need for inhalers or ventilators.

Why talk to them?
They are in your problem space far more frequently and so have a deeper knowledge. They often have their own work-arounds or 'hacks' that highlight problem areas and potential innovation opportunities.

Thought starters:
- What characteristics and situations would make someone an extreme user?
- How could you leverage existing communication to talk to these people?

HOW TO impact

Who: Unusual Users

Who are they?

Unusual users are those that have an atypical relationship with the category or problem space and offer a new perspective into drivers and barriers that you may not otherwise see.

These can be users who reject your category/offer for some reason, who have never experienced the triggers to usage, or approach it from unique angles: vegans will have an interesting perspective on meat products, people living in large communes will have an interesting perspective on collaboration software, and wheelchair users can reveal new angles about public transport.

Why talk to them?

By shining a light on these groups you capture movements and trends that are emerging, and therefore can solve for pain points in their infancy.

Thought starters:

- What groups of people have an unusual relationship with the area you are investigating?
- What trends will have an impact on your industry or space in the future?
- How might you engage with these users that otherwise may have little to no contact with your product or service?

HOW TO impact

How?

**What activities should you be
doing to build empathy?**

How: Explore *With*

'Explore with' means taking a deep dive into the challenge space with the end users. Traditionally this would be done with in-situ observations or in-depth interviews.

These conversations and activities give you an opportunity to put the problem under a microscope and uncover learnings direct from the source; core, unusual and extreme users

Remote techniques

- Zoom or Skype one-to-one interviews
- Diary studies to examine attitudes and behavior over a longitudinal period
- Daily check-ins: 5 minute written or video exercises for users to answer
- Mail an activity pack for participants to complete at home
- Establish online forums and groups: Set up a panel of users in a shared online space to co-design solutions and provide feedback
- Online workshops with a digital whiteboard: Allow your users to complete activities with your guidance and illustrate their unique challenges visually

HOW TO impact

How: Talk *About*

We always look to multiple sources and diverse points of to view to build empathy. In practical terms this means engaging experts from within and beyond the world you are exploring.

Two types of experts:

- Within your field: By speaking to experts within the field, you gain a deep understanding of what is really going on within the problem space.
- Beyond your field: By speaking to people in different industries and from related worlds, you can understand how similar challenges and drivers play out in different contexts.

Remote techniques:

- Zoom or Skype one-to-one interviews with experts
- Collaborative workshops and activities using a digital whiteboard
- Illustrate the problem or journey using online tools and allow experts to contribute and comment
- Post activities and prototypes to experts to test in-situ and gather feedback

HOW TO impact

				10%
'Unusual' spend 10%				
'Extreme' spend 20%				
'Core' spend 70%				
	'Explore With' spend 70%		'Talk About' spend 20%	'Act As' spend 10%

How: Act *As*

The saying 'put yourself in someone else's shoes' is the crux of practicing *Everyday Empathy*. By acting *as* the end user, you truly understand the nuances of their everyday lives and the other challenges they face.

You could build an app with the most amazing resources for new mums, but only by living their reality would you understand that they need to be able to use the app one handed while juggling their baby... and need to be able to put it down and come back to it later, after the baby stops crying.

Remote techniques:

- Immerse yourself in online groups and forums
- Use your product or service keeping in mind lockdown rules and new workplace set ups
- Access competitor's products or services to compare the experience
- Apply a limitation to your abilities, then re-try your offer
- Run an experiment where you embody the key characteristics of your users for an entire day

HOW TO impact

Everyday Empathy is an essential business practice normally, but in times of disruption and (pending) recession it could give you the edge to stay ahead of changing behaviours, to help you remain relevant.

Get in touch to find out how you can upskill your team, foster new ways of working, or leverage true customer insight to respond to and anticipate the changing needs of your customers.

Reach out to find out more.

Let's make something amazing together.

Contact

Matt Whale
Managing Director
How To Impact

T: 0403 057 446
E: matt.whale@howtoimpact.com