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What?

Getting a deeper understanding of your target groups' daily context and thereby validating user needs and obstacles in relation to the given challenge.

Why?

When you're framing your challenge and looking at solutions, it's critical to know who you're designing for and how they will engage with your product or service. It's also important to understand their needs and how they are currently dealing with the given challenge. Following a user will allow you to understand their world and see how they behave in it. You might find that what they actually do can be different from how they say they behave. By observing and recording events the user can help the innovator understand the activities from the participant's point of view. You get to validate if you understood your users and their needs.

How?

A practical study where the innovator observes the participant in the location and context of their usual activities. This can be done from multiple users' point of view e.g., a patient and a nurse as an example.

The observations can be done by the innovator or by the user her/himself creating a diary – analogue or digital. The request can be to simply log specific information or even take photos and videos. Having users gather the data could help with remote research and facilitate self-reflection before an in-depth interview.



Picture: Example of a journey map. TIP: In the list of resources below you can download a map.

Step by Step!

Self-observation as described above is one of three main ways to do the observations; Give the user a “recording kit” that helps them document situations first hand. Other ways to gather data could be by shadowing users (acting the fly on the wall), taking notes, recording audio or video etc. OR to ask peers to observe peers. Regardless of the method, always try to find a balance between asking questions to understand and just observing the actions.

1. Based on your challenge, define the activities that you want to understand better.
2. Find participants that are willing to be followed for some hours (or even an entire day).
3. Arrange/schedule to follow participants throughout their day/activities.
4. Make sure you have materials to capture the data that the participants feel comfortable with (audio/video recordings, note taking, etc.)
5. Follow participants and capture the information. Sometimes it helps to ask participants to explain the reasoning they have for doing things in a certain way.
6. Go over the information that has been captured. Make storyboards that include a timeline of actions and explanatory text.

7. Analyse the data to gather insights. A method we would like to recommend for this step is to make a User Journey Map. A User Journey Map allows you to sort insights and identify and strategize for key moments in the product, experience, or service you're designing. By defining how the user interacts with a product, service, or experience of today you get help to strategize on how your idea makes that scenario better. We have listed a few sources below for User Journey Mapping tools.

Now use this journey map to determine where there are gaps to fill and how you can develop your concept. Make sure to revisit this map along your concept development and implementation phase to remind yourself of how this product/service/experience fits in and what the key engagements are. You should constantly work on improving your understanding of the people using your solution and their user experience by revisiting them and keeping the users in the loop throughout your innovation process.

Resources/Sources:

<https://toolkits.dss.cloud/design/method-card/day-in-the-life/>

<https://servicedesigntools.org/tools/diary-study>

<https://www.designkit.org/methods/journey-map>

<https://custelligence.com/blog/customer-journey-workshop-canvas.html>

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