

Field Observations

Active Looking - What? | How? | Why?

In order to drive to deeper levels of customer empathy we need to move from concrete observations of a particular situation to the more abstract emotions and motives that are at play in that situation. What? | How? | Why? is a framework to leverage in the field, both for synthesis purposes, and to direct your team to future areas of field observation.

How to use What? | How? | Why?

1

Set-up:

Divide a sheet into three sections: What?, How?, and Why? or use the [What? | How? | Why? Worksheet](#).

2

Start with concrete observations (What):

What is the person you're observing doing in a particular situation, video or photograph? Notice and write down the details. Try to be objective and don't make assumptions in this first part.

3

Move to understanding (How):

How is the person you're observing doing what they are doing? Does it require effort? Do they appear rushed? Pained? Does the activity or situation appear to be impacting the user's state of being either positively or negatively? Use descriptive phrases packed with adjectives.

4

Add your interpretation (Why):

Why is the person you're observing doing what they're doing, and in the particular way that they are doing it? This step usually requires that you make informed guesses regarding motivation and emotions. By answering the why, you will project meaning into the situation that you have been observing. Therefore revealing assumptions that you should test with users, and often uncovering unexpected realizations about a particular situation.

Process Phase



understand

ideate

experiment

Time

15-30 minutes

Level

Moderate

Materials

Pen, What? | How? | Why? Worksheet



Don't judge. Just observe and engage users without the influence of value judgments upon their actions, circumstances, decisions, or "issues."



What? | How? | Why?

concrete ← → emotional

What? (what are they doing?)	How? (how are they doing it?)	Why? (why are they doing it this way? take a guess)

Design Thinking

Find patterns. Look for interesting threads and themes that emerge across interactions with users.

www.sprintdesignthinking.com/tools/WhatHowWhyWorksheet.pdf

More Resources:

www.sprintdesignthinking.com/tools.html