

95 User Journey Maps

A user journey map is a visualization of the experiences people have when interacting with a product or service, so that each moment can be individually evaluated and improved.

A user journey map tells a story about an individual's actions, feelings, perceptions, and frame of mind—including the positive, negative, and neutral moments—as he or she interacts with a multi-channel product or service over a period of time. By documenting the series of events and interactions that a person experiences, the user journey map can shift an organization's focus from an operational, system-centered view to the larger context in which products and services are used in the real world. It also helps teams pinpoint distinct moments that elicit strong emotional reactions and are ripe for redesign and improvement. By creating discussions around which interactions are working optimally, which are insignificant, and which are failing altogether, the user journey map helps teams develop a shared vision about ways to more effectively augment existing user behavior within their actual contexts of use.

Solid user journey maps are usually created alongside, or immediately following, *personas* and *scenarios* documents. All three deliverables should be heavily informed by direct contact with the customers who use the product or service. Rich, qualitative data that is a result of primary research is the only way to be sure to craft deep, compelling narratives that reflect people's actual needs, feelings, and perceptions that occur before, during, and after product interactions. Each map should represent a journey specific to a persona, as well as include a description of the persona. For the benefit of the internal team, the map should also articulate the event it illustrates: this can be either an entire relationship life cycle, or can be limited to a specific scenario. The map should be an honest representation of an experience, and include moments of indecision, confusion, frustration, as well as delight and closure. Multiple maps will need to be created for multiple personas, as each persona will have different tasks and goals, and will experience different breakdowns and successes on their journey.

The early versions of the document can then serve as a springboard for discussion on the team. Print out an early version of the map on large-format paper, pin it up on a board, and hold a review session where everybody can get up close to the document and mark it up with questions, ideas, and suggestions for improvement. The hands-on, inclusive design activity that brings all decision makers together can go a long way in ensuring that the user journey map becomes a living document for the organization.

Further Reading

McInness, Andrew. "Assess The Effectiveness of Your Customer Journey Map." Forrester Research, 2010.

Browne, Jonathan. "Executive Q&A: Design Personas and Customer Journey Maps." Forrester Research, 2011.

Behavioral
Attitudinal

Quantitative
Qualitative

Innovative
Adapted
Traditional

Exploratory
Generative
Evaluative

Participatory
Observational
Self reporting
Expert review
Design process

USER JOURNEY MAPS: A POP CASE STUDY

In 2010, POP, a Seattle-based digital agency, was engaged by Symetra Financial to craft a multi-year digital strategy centered on the Symetra.com website. Symetra’s products—employee benefits, annuities, and life insurance—are somewhat intangible and are often perceived as complex. Due to the nature of the products, as well as regulatory requirements of the insurance industry, each product may have several similar variations available to different clients and demographics in different states.



Symetra.com reflected this complexity, and it encouraged customers and sales representatives to rely heavily on person-to-person business consultation. Getting the right information to the right people, and presenting it in way that is clear, concise and builds trust was a tremendous challenge for Symetra.com.

POP conducted 35 phone interviews with Symetra customers and sales representatives as part of the project’s research phase. Interviews resulted in the creation of six personas and journeys that reflected the diversity of Symetra’s user base and online and offline behaviors. Through these deliverables, POP and Symetra were able to identify the types of content, features, and functionality that would effectively support each persona and provide greater workflow efficiencies via the refreshed website.

Courtesy of Symetra Financial

