Guide

to Insight Generation and Customer Stories

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Genuine insight is key to true innovation, but a great idea or concept often fails on its way to the market unless visually brought to life and narrated in a way understandable to people that are not designers. Design Strategist Marcus Gabrielsson shares some ground rules on insight methods.

To Veryday everything starts and ends with the user. What we do is people-driven innovation. Uncovering genuine user insights that incorporate emotional, cognitive and physical aspects is the key to true innovation. Insights based on what people really need, feel and desire give rise to new opportunities and improve the total user experience. During the many years that we have been working with design and innovation, our tools and methods have continuously been refined. This article shares our many learnings from these years.

The Challenge
A great idea or concept often fails on its way to the market, unless visually brought to life and narrated in a way that is understandable to non-designers within the client organisation. Our role, as designers, is to advocate the importance of true insights throughout the entire design process. The approach is to tell a compelling story that supports and links together the design concept and the business case. A compelling story gives the designers' work more grounding and creates an organisational buy-in during the client's decision and implementation processes.

A great idea based on true user insights accompanied by a great story are the designers' most powerful tool in the quest for true behavioural change both within organisations and among the people using the final products and services.

The Process of Generating Change

Theory is one thing, real life is a different story … This is the Veryday way of doing things …

Right Recruitment

All insight processes commence with identifying the relevant interviewee profiles. The trick is to start recruiting early on, since this task tends to take more time than first anticipated. Cohort definition is not always easy and should always be done in collaboration with the client. Additionally, this requires you to limit the scope, many times a challenge so early on in the process, but you cannot hope for a fine catch if not fishing with the right tackle. Also, if you gather too much data, the analysis will be a chore.

Be attentive to the personality profiles of your interviewee recruits. Personality has great impact on consumer behaviour. Be sure to screen for a mix of personalities as the outcomes may differ immensely.

Insight & Analysis Strategy

Your research set up should always be guided by your research focus and what you want to find out. Where, when, how, for how long and why are you doing the research?

Equally as important as setting the research approach is to plan the research data analysis framework. In doing so, you will better stay on target during the actual research execution as well as make the analysis more efficient.

Research Methods & Tools

When your research strategy is in place, you will most likely realise what methods and tools you need. There is no right or wrong, be inventive but careful, and let your insight & analysis strategy guide you. Consider both generative tools like interview guides, card sorting and boundary work tools, as well as documentation methods: pictures, notes, post-its etc. The methods and tools should help you build insights and tell the story, not weigh you down. Note that one hour of video takes at least two hours to process.

User/Consumer Interaction

Once on site it is time for you to roll up your sleeves and get to work. **Make sure to make the most of your field research time. When the time is out, you can't go back. It is important that you get what you came for.**

The number one rule is to be curious and social. If you like people, you are very likely to have a great time when doing your interviews and you will learn a lot by just hanging out!

If possible, try to get your client to join in the field work. Identify a role for the client, such as documenting or being in charge of an exercise. This will give the project greater strength when the ideas and concepts are further developed and implemented internally. Remember, your client has the potential of becoming the ambassador of the new ideas and concepts

generated from the process. An internal person promoting your insights and telling the story from their perspective is a true asset.

Collaborative Analysis

Processing research data should preferably be done in collaboration with the client. However, before processing and building insight, the data needs to be made presentable and understandable for non-designers. Just showing your client the generated raw data may be counterproductive and intimidating. An effective method is to cluster and illustrate your findings with pictures and short stories to make it intriguing and 'alive'.

Throughout the project it is important to involve your client, host insight workshops and identify insight themes with true potential and relevance for business.

Innovation Brief

Once the insight themes are in place and prioritised, it is valuable to turn them into visualised innovation briefs before going into ideation. The brief should be summarised on a sheet of A3 paper, at the most, and should include the following:

- Theme Title + Theme Description
- Supporting Insights
- Business Relevance
- Connection to other Business Units
- Design Principles
- Early Ideas, etc.

Co-Creation & Ideation

Starting out from the brief, which is clearly linked to the insights and the consumer stories, invite your team and client to generate concepts. Traditional ideation with experts is one thing, but do not forget the opportunity of co-creating concepts together with consumers. Designing your co-creation exercise is similar to designing your tool-kit for the research phase. During such a session it is important to be flexible and responsive. Use probes and provide the users with tools that help them tell their story or illustrate their idea; interview them and sketch out their ideas.

Visualisation and Prototyping

Needless to say, it is important to visualise, illustrate, mock up and test your ideas all along the way. At the final stage, revisit your interviewees, yet again, and get them to evaluate and refine the prototype.

If adapting this process you will be well equipped with concepts, insights and user stories that will, most certainly, nudge both people and organisations into positive change!