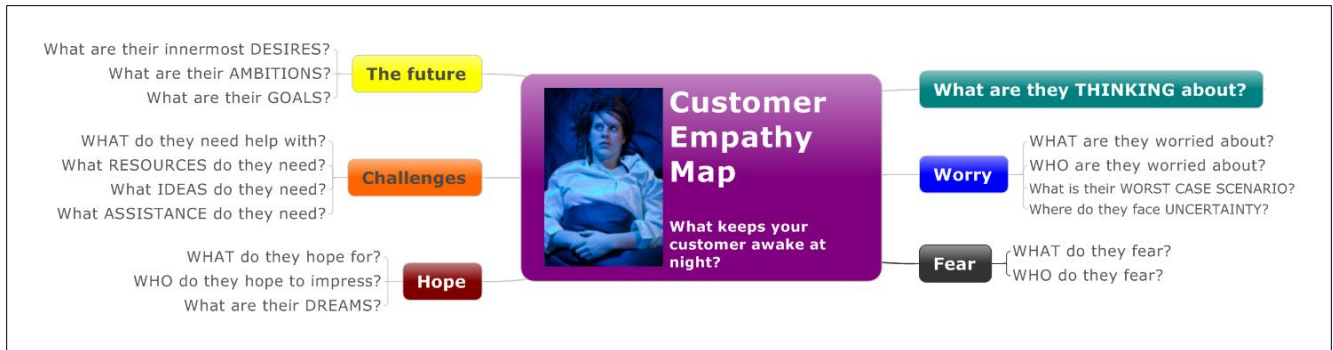




How to create a customer empathy map



One of the best ways to successfully market and sell any product or service is to deeply understand the needs of your potential customers. Not from just a functional view – the jobs they need to get done – but from an emotional point of view. What do they fear? What do they worry about? What keeps them awake at night, when they're trying to fall asleep? And how can your product or service solve those problems?

Darren Hardy, publisher of Success magazine, [recently wrote a blog post](#) that challenged readers to deeply understand their customer needs: *"If you want to connect with, not just communicate to, your audience you have to see, feel, understand, relate and empathize with them. In order for you to do so, you have to think as they think, experience what they experience and feel what they feel."*

As part of this article, he presented a list of questions he recommends that you ask about your customers. I got inspired to put them into a mind map template, which you can use to brainstorm and record your answers and observations about the customers you serve. At the end of this report, you will find links



for downloading this mind map in a number of popular formats. I encourage you to use it to “get inside the heads” of your key customers, to better understand what motivates them.

How can you use this mind map?

If your job involves marketing or sales, developing a deep understanding of your customers can help you to craft marketing materials that resonate more deeply with them and motivate them to take the action you desire them to do (to contact you for more information, buy the product, etc.). This is especially important in online marketing, where your key prospects are bombarded by messages all day long – in their e-mail inbox, on web pages and via the set of firehoses that is social media.

For your message to even get attention, it needs to stand out. The marketing experts I listen to emphasize that effective promotion messages need to make an emotional appeal in order to get the attention of prospective customers. You can't just bombard them with your product's features and benefits. That old-fashioned approach simply isn't effective any more.

What's an emotional appeal? Here are a few examples:

- Question if your prospect's job is really as secure as he or she thinks it is in today's uncertain economy, and then position your product as “job insurance” to make him or her more valuable and employable.
- Ask your prospect to imagine how good it would feel to get praised from their boss for saving the company several million dollars because of the efficiencies your product or service brings to their operation.

You get the idea. Effective emotional appeals dig deep down into the things that really matter to your prospects – job security, a successful career, making them look good to their superiors, being able to support their families, and getting congratulated for helping to spur growth in their organizations. Your marketing message paints the picture of a pressing problem like one of these, and then positions your product as the logical solution.

Selling your ideas

What if your job doesn't involve marketing or sales? Chances are, in your position, you must sell your ideas to others. To do so more effectively, it's a valuable exercise to better understand the key motivations of the people you're trying to persuade – your “internal” customers (the people you serve or important stakeholders within your organization). What worries them? What keeps

them awake at night? How will your idea make things better? How will it solve a pressing problem or help the firm to grow out of the current stagnation?

Just as importantly, in order to successfully sell your ideas, you need to think through its potential risks, and what emotional triggers that scenario may set off in the mind of your boss or other stakeholders. If your idea fails, whose careers could be negatively affected? Naturally, no one wants to fail – it's what they call a "career-limiting move," even though it shouldn't be. After all, failure is often simply a stepping stone to success.

That's not to say you should sugar coat the potential upsides of your idea while ignoring the downsides. What your boss and other key stakeholders are looking for is a realistic assessment of its benefits and risks. If you can show that you've thought through ways to potentially mitigate the risk of your idea (e.g., a limited pilot project with a smaller budget commitment, to see if the idea can work and to generate a "quick win" and some much-needed momentum), you're more likely to sell your idea to the people who matter at the higher levels of your organization.

Job hunting and interviewing

Interviewing for a job is another environment where customer empathy can really pay off. In this scenario, it's hard to get into the head of your interviewer, because chances are you have never met him or her before. But you can ask questions during the interview that are designed to help you understand the emotional climate of the organization. Questions like:

- What are the biggest challenges your department/company faces today?
- What are the goals of your company?
- What is your dream for growing this department/operational area?
- Ideally, what do you want this organization to look like 5 years from now?

Once you better understand what motivates your potential future boss, you can more easily position yourself as THE person who can help him or her to address those issues. This demands that you do some research on the organization before your interview, so you better understand what has been written in the media about it recently. This will immediately set you apart from other candidates, and will increase your odds of "selling" yourself to the interviewer.

The bottom line

We all like to do business and work with people who seem to understand us at a deep level. Empathy is a powerful tool, not to manipulate others, but to demonstrate that you care about the things that are important to them, and to build trust with them.

If you think about the term “customer” in its broadest sense, we can use this approach to build empathy with anyone who is important to us – family members, close friends, colleagues at work or people with whom you network. This customer empathy map can be a powerful tool to help you capture, analyze and deeply understand the people you need to persuade.

How to use the template

Invest some time thinking about each of the questions in the empathy map. Insert potential answers as subtopics to each of the question topics in the template. Where possible, ask these actual questions (or variations of them) to some of your best customers to help you better understand what motivates them. Be sure the customers you select reflect the profile and mindset of those whom you WANT to attract as customers.

Empathy map templates

[MindManager](#)

[XMind](#)

[NovaMind](#)

[iMindMap](#)

[MindView](#)

[MindMaple](#)

Questions?

Please contact Chuck Frey at chuck@chuckfrey.com.

Please [visit the Mind Mapping Software Blog](#) for all of the latest news, trends and resources related to visual mapping. You can also [follow Chuck Frey on Twitter](#) for even more insights and ideas.