



What's so great about Empathy Maps?

basic Empathy Map



What's so great about empathy maps...?

Empathy, done right, starts from a very different position to market research, focus groups, big data, analysis, etc. Those processes seek to '*get information*' from people. The required information is always sought from a companies' perspective and that's where the problems start. The research is already creating a box.

Empathy is more of a collaborative approach. Where you are working **WITH** other people to understand their needs, almost as partners. You put aside your needs and opinions [for a while] and immerse yourself in someone else's world. *"Empathy is about making a choice to connect with someone. Instead of guessing, judging or simply dismissing things because they are not relevant or fit your own objectives"* A phrase I've heard before, which summarises things nicely is, Empathy is to "Sit With" another person. "Knee to knee" It's a very different mindset to an interview or a discussion. Sit with, knee to knee implies there are no barriers, no agenda, there is equality and that you are open to seeing where things go without trying to control things, too much.

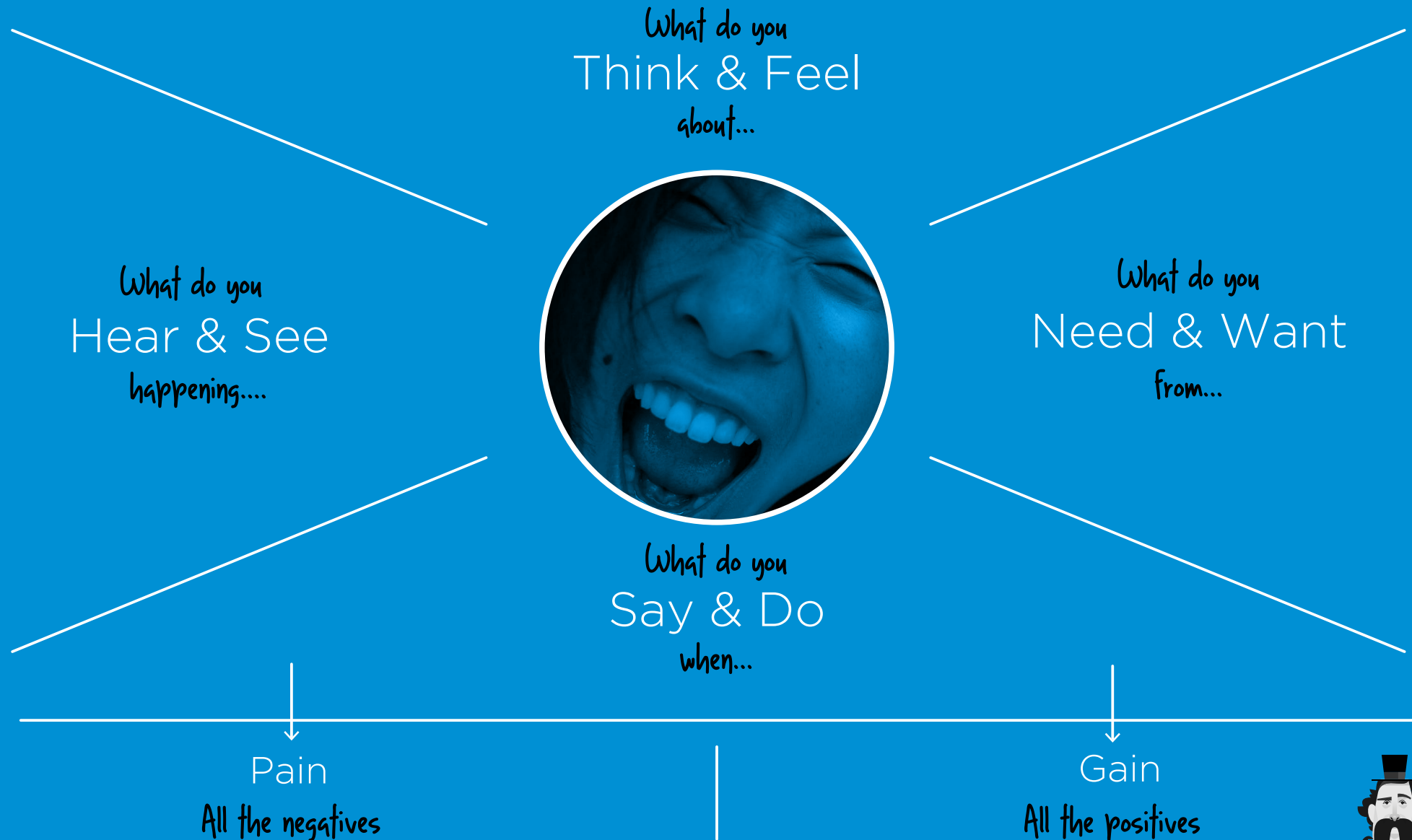
Using Empathy maps, properly, is not easy. You do need experience and a certain amount of skill and of course empathy to make them work. Genuine empathy is important, you can't just go through the motions, it's not just a bunch of steps, an exercise to go through. You have to truly see that person you are talking to as a friend. Someone you genuinely want to help and genuinely want to understand. Someone you genuinely want to create something better for or improve. Yes **GENUINE** is an important word, you can't fake or force it.

When asking Questions; Prioritise Depth. You are looking for the deeper insights, not superficial observations. **Follow the conversation.** Don't feel like you have to follow the Empathy Map. If you are having a good chat, let it flow, see where it goes and at the end ask/discover how the connections were made. **Focus on what is meaningful.** Find out why things matter, what meaning the comments have to the person. **Evoke stories.** Encourage people to tell stories about their experiences.

Using other tools with Empathy Maps can help. I use **the 5 Whys** sometimes. It's important to **Question Statements** so any techniques that can help with that can be used. Anything that can help tease out emotions and get down to the root causes can help.



Empathy Map



Using Empathy Maps

Each project will dictate the precise questions you ask and how you ask them. For each group of people I'm talking to I shift the quadrants about and expand a little. I often change the questions as I go along, learning from the first few people I chat with, to develop better starting points for the next.

Think & Feel If I'm trying to find out what someone thought of a piece of software, the question is pretty straight forward. "So what do you **think** of the app?" "Do you **feel** it was easy to use?" - You then just follow the answers. "A: "It blows!" Q: "Why" A: "It doesn't do anything interesting" Q: "Like what" A: If I'm chatting to someone about a reusable bottle the Think & Feel questions will move onto much more global concerns.

Say & Do On most projects asking what do you "do" means asking how would you normally use a service. How they act and what their behaviour is. What they "say" is just noting down what the actual words were they used.

Need & Want I use this to tease out information about what the product and service isn't delivering. What the person actually wants and what they might need. It's also a good way to find out what competitors are doing and how they may be satisfying a need better.

Hear & See: This I find helps a lot from a Brand perspective. Fishing out what people are hearing from their friends. 'See' is also about what the experience or the conversation around the product is. Often I'm using this to push past people being polite. Many people find it easier to say, "I heard someone say it's awful" than to say "I think it's awful"

[Many of the above sections overlap so you might skip a section because it already got covered when the person went into a long story about using the product. They are guidelines, not rules. You are just trying to get into their head and it doesn't really matter how, just as long as you get as much useful and honest info out as possible.]

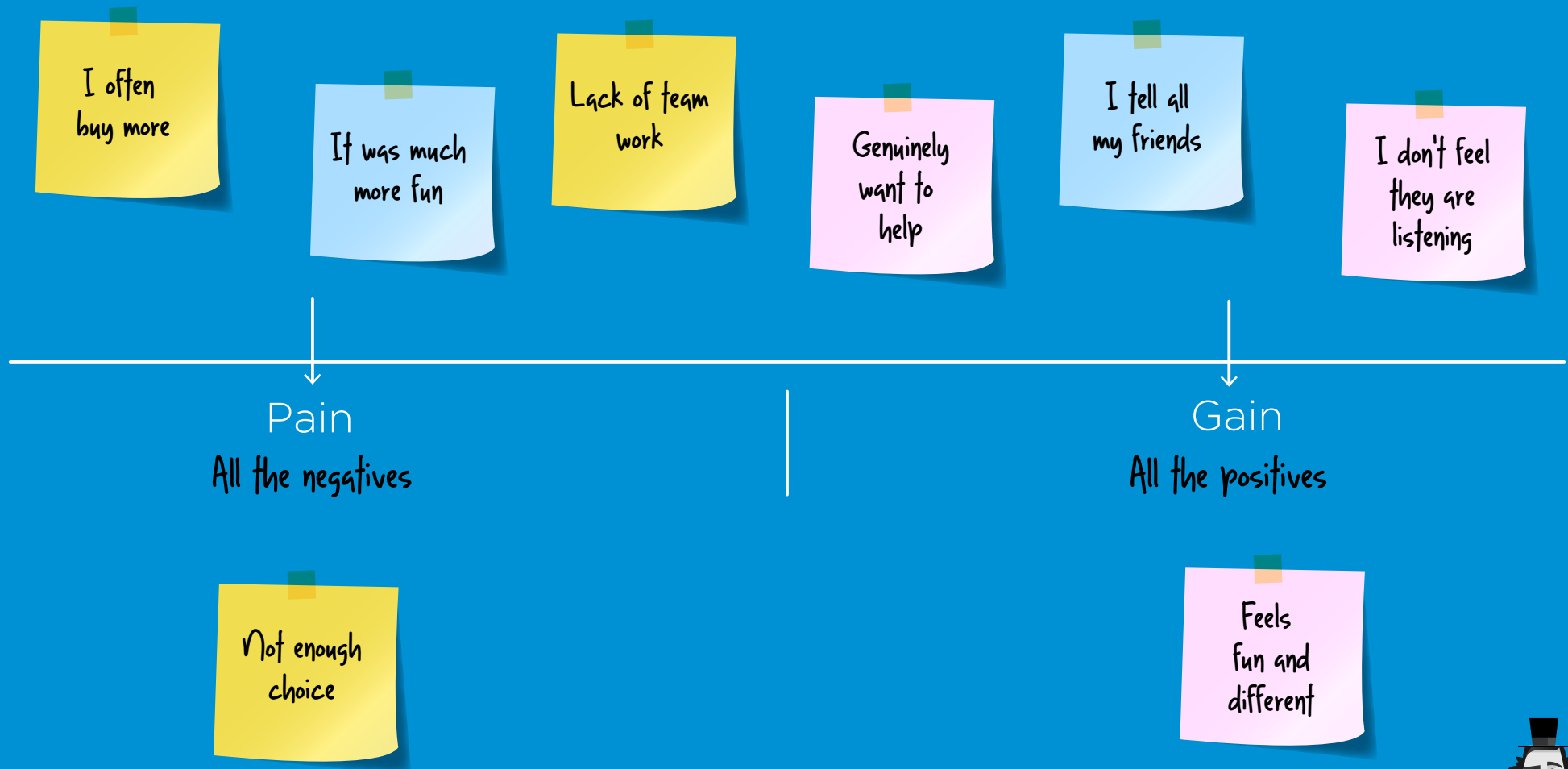
Every one is different - That goes for the people using an empathy map, the project and the person you are 'with.' Everyone I know has a slightly different take and uses them in a different way. I tend to use them as a reference and a starting point, more than anything and I'm happy to go 'off piste' if needed. Some people you sit with are clearly reluctant about opening up and you will get little out of them. Empathy maps don't deliver amazing insights every time but when they do work the rapport you develop and the insights you get can be Brand changing.



Using Empathy Maps

Pain & Gain

On some projects it's good to split comments into Pain & Gain, at the end. For Gain you put all the comments that were positive and Pain all the comments that were negative. This is best done if you use post-it notes, working with groups but it really depends on the project.



Results

You never exactly know what you will get out of an Empathy map and that's what's great about them. Here are a few things you might expect and what they might help you with.

Nuggets

You often get little nuggets of information that wouldn't have surfaced another way. Those nuggets [Insights] can prove invaluable in creating a point of difference, developing new products & marketing material.

Motivations & Emotions

Understanding what motivates a purchase or action can be a powerful tool when it comes to building loyalty and advocacy. The forces that lie behind our feelings are often more important than the functional attributes of the product/service being sold.

Stories

Having access to genuine stories you can share in your presentations makes those presentations more powerful and compelling.

Values

Understanding values and connecting with those values. Knowing what people believe and connecting with those beliefs creates a powerful bond between the brand and customers.

Perspectives & Expectations

That product or service you are selling and you thought people were buying it for reason X, well it turns out it was for reason Y. Knowing what people are looking for, what they expect. Finding out what features & benefits matter most.

Frustrations - Issues - Peeves

Knowing what people don't like can be as useful as knowing what they do.

Garbage!!!

Yes you can get a lot of garbage out. If you are trying to Empathy Map a product with very low emotional involvement then you may not get much out. [Or perhaps I need to work on my Empathy skills!]

The hard work and the skill really starts when trying to weed out the stuff that matters. Knowing what to discard and what to keep.





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