Building empathy with user research

Based on a presentation by Hannah Hudson,
Head of User Research at Segment

Connecting data to action

Your users are treasure troves of data. The insights you can learn from your users will help you create amazing product experiences. But getting the right insights from your users is difficult. You need to go through a multi-step process to make sense of all the feedback you receive and data you're collecting.

The best insights come from stitching together data from both quantitative and qualitative research methods. That helps you find a singular point of view that gives you a better understanding of your customer's pain points.

Four takeaways to help with user research

Collecting user data and drawing useful insights from it can be a complicated process, but Hannah helps simplify the process with these four steps:

1. MAKE TIME FOR RESEARCH AND PLAN FOR IT.

User research can be a time-consuming process, but if you plow forward without it, you'll actually end up creating more work for your team.

Researching your users' biggest problems gives your team direction and alignment that will save you time in the future. Everyone will understand your users and their pain points. That prevents your team from wasting time arguing about what direction or growth tactics are best. You'll have the data to validate your assumptions and point your team in the right direction.

It's crucial that you plan your user research ahead of time. Collecting data from your users can get confusing because it can (and should) come from multiple sources.

To keep things organized, use a research plan from the start. A research plan explains where your data is coming from, who is collecting it, and how you're going to pull it all together.

> " **The real magic of doing great user research comes from the ability to stitch together multiple methods.** "
>
> – Hannah Hudson

2. ANSWER THREE IMPORTANT QUESTIONS BEFORE STARTING.

Before you start any user research project, you need to answer three questions:

1. **What are your goals?** Research can help you understand a new problem, learn a new customer segment, or just help you gain empathy for users. Whatever your goal is, define it ahead of time.

2. **Who is your audience?** Depending on your goals, you might need to learn from different segments of your user-base. If you want to improve your product in a way that helps small businesses, you'll need to learn from your small business users.

3. **What research method will you use?** There are qualitative and quantitative research methods. You'll need a combination of both, but make sure you understand which methods you're going to use and why.

Those three questions will help you build out your research plan, which will help your research stay on track and keep you accountable.

3. USE QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS, TOO.

Quantitative data, like analytics data, can be easier to gather, but you can't solely rely on it because quantitative data doesn't give you the context surrounding your data.

Here are a few quantitative research methods that Hannah recommends:

1. **1:1 interviews:** Interviews are great for anecdotal evidence and when you're really trying to understand a customer mindset. They're valuable because you have a chance to ask "why?"

2. **Observation:** This is when you watch a customer use your product. There's less talking than an interview. They're helpful to see if customers are using your product as you intended.

3. **Concept testing:** Use this when your team has a new feature idea and you want to gather basic input to see if it's valuable. Create a very low fidelity version of your feature and see how users react to it.

Those aren't the only qualitative research methods, but Hannah recommends them because they're the quickest to set up.

4. STITCH TOGETHER MULTIPLE RESEARCH METHODS

After you've gathered all of your data, you need to stitch it together. This is where the real value of user research comes from. You can bring your research together through synthesis.

This is the act of going through each of your individual customer interviews or data points and looking for patterns. You should do synthesis as a team. Schedule time to get together and talk through the data. Doing that will allow you to catch patterns from qualitative data you may have missed that someone on your team noticed. From there, you can connect those patterns with quantitative data that was collected.

Great synthesis will help your team understand the root cause of the problem, rather than just focusing on what the customer is asking for.

How Segment can help

Segment can help combine both your qualitative and quantitative research. For quantitative research, use our integrations catalog to find the right analytics tools for your specific use cases. Heatmaps and recording tools can also help you gather quantitative data.

For qualitative research, we integrate with a number of surveying tools to help you automate that part of your user research.

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- **On The Path To Product Market Fit, Don't Wait For Statistical Significance**

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