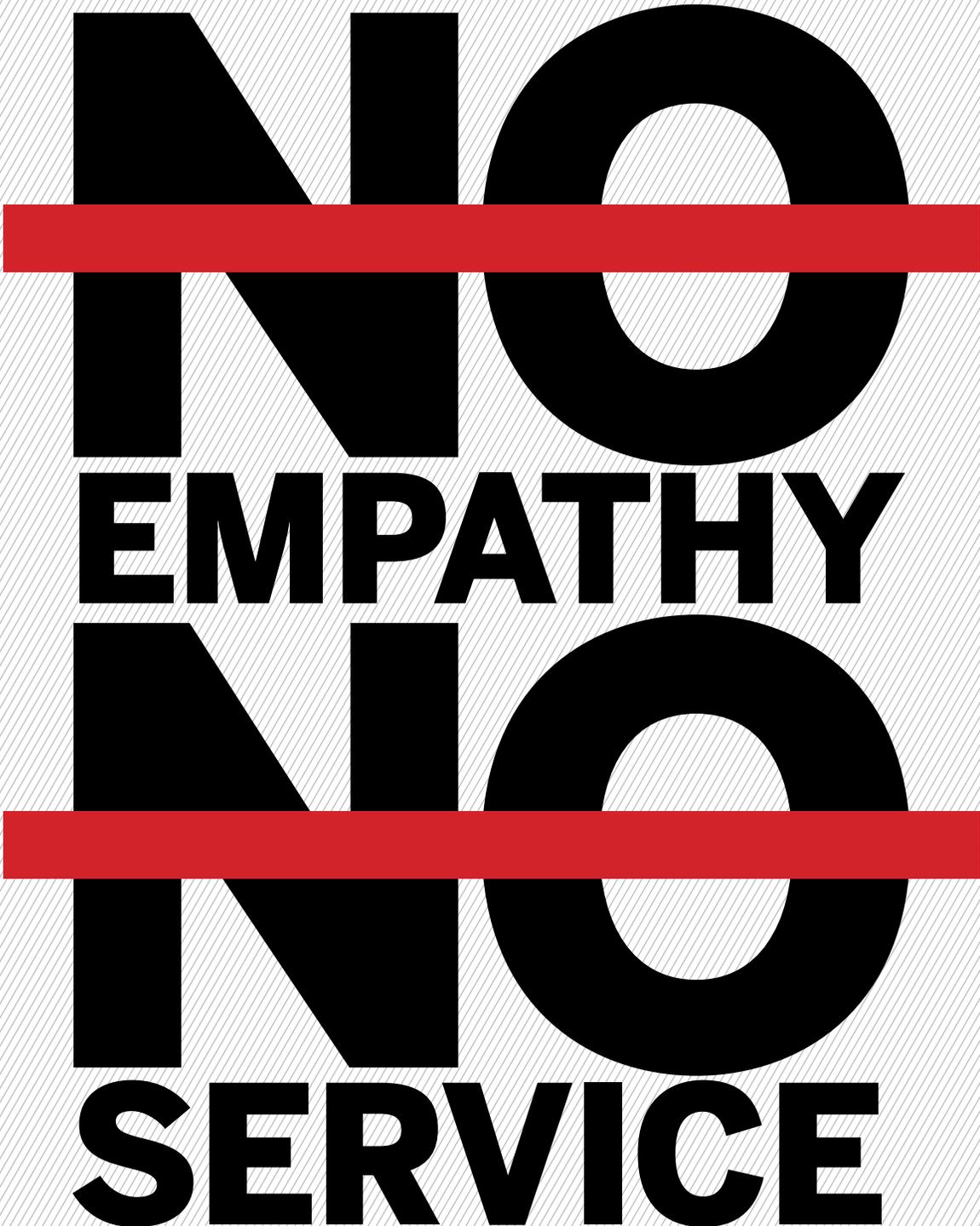
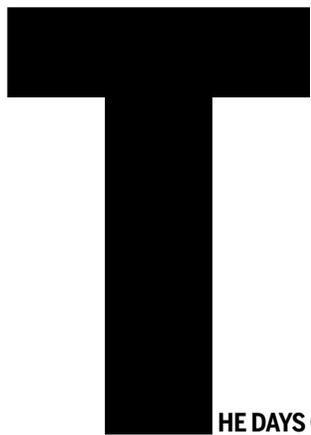


By Cindy Tripp

**Empathy is the launching pad for new ideas
about how you might be of greater service.**



**NO
EMPATHY
NO
SERVICE**



THE DAYS OF BUILD-IT-AND-THEY-WILL-COME ARE GONE. So are the days of increase-scale-and-productivity-and-profits-will-come. The industrial age has given way to the new age of the twenty-first century, in which service and experience differentiate a business. Today, a product that delivers what it functionally promises is the cost of entry, especially in the developed world. *Service* is the differentiator; but the success of a service inherently depends on the person being served, not necessarily on corporate goals. Business needs to go deeper than before. The key is empathy.

Empathy, defined by Dev Patnaik (author of *Wired to Care*) as “the ability to step outside of yourself and see the world as other people do” is the magic ingredient for unlocking insights that can yield service opportunities. You cannot be expedient and look only at empathy in the context of what you care about; you must look at the larger life story of the people you hope to serve. By taking this broad and empathetic stance, you will see opportunities to increase your value through service. Think about it. In your own life, is there a business that serves you in a way that fills you with fierce loyalty?

I see evidence that companies are paying attention to empathy and designing with it in mind. It is happening in places like Universal Studios’s *The Wizarding World of Harry Potter*. It’s happening at NIKEiD, Discovery Cove, Apple, and Coke. Even a rapidly growing regional tire store, Tire Discounters, demonstrates empathy in their delivery of products and services to clients on a regular basis, causing customers to post statements like “...a ray of sunshine. I can’t imagine going anywhere else.” I am sure you too have your list of places that seem to have developed an “empathy muscle.” These businesses have good products (cost of entry) plus more (empathetic service), and they have business results (growing sales, share, or profits) that speak volumes about the power of great service design.

UNIVERSAL STUDIOS

Harry Potter and the Forbidden Journey is the flagship attraction at Universal’s Harry Potter area. The line for this ride can be unbearably long, and lines are the antithesis of what you want when you go to a theme park—they are boring, smelly, and tiring. Thus, imagine the surprise when you read reviews of customer experiences

like this one: “This is easily the best park experience I ever had in my life...the queue itself is an attraction.”

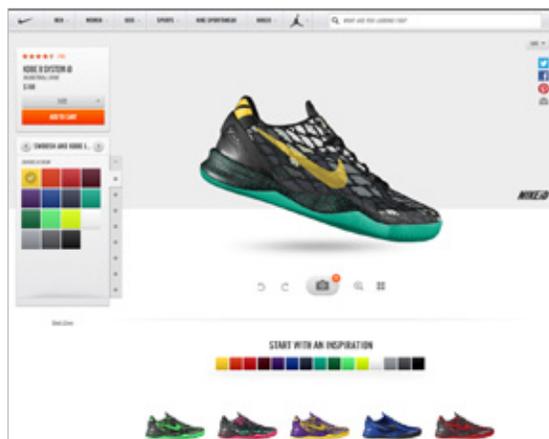
The queue for the Forbidden Journey uses story to engage you as you move along the line. There are twists and turns as you weave through a replica of a castle. There are picture frames that come to life and holographic images of Harry Potter actors that interact with you and advance the story. The wait becomes a part of the ride. Obviously, someone at Universal considered what it was like to stand in line and chose to do something more empathetic.

NIKEiD

NIKEiD seems to be alert to their customers’ needs. All athletes want to be spectacular, be special, have their star moment. For years, aspiring athletes have bought the shoes of their idols: Chuck Taylor, Michael Jordan, Kobe Bryant. Nike takes it much further with the ability to make their shoes and clothing yours uniquely (Figure 1). Although the idea of customized products is hardly new, the NIKEiD experience of designing, redesigning, sharing, purchasing, anticipating, and receiving is completely engrossing. Nike manages this entire experience with the customer’s needs in mind, and does it with a site that is easy to navigate, explore, and purchase. It encourages updates and invites you to share with your friends.

FIGURE 1.

Nike shoe fans come to the NIKEiD site to design their own shoes with all manner of colors and patterns, just as their sports heroes do.



DISCOVERY COVE

For Discovery Cove at SeaWorld in Orlando, Florida, empathy is demonstrated in anticipating the guest’s every need in order to deliver a stress-free, delightful experience. The key functional promise is “swim with dolphins,” but there is so much more than that at Discovery Cove. The dolphin portion of the day represents only about 30 minutes of one’s time—yet the whole day is magical. At check-in, you are whisked away into what feels like time on a tropical island. Delicious food, island music, sunscreen, and towels are all provided, and you can easily walk around or swim with just your locker key on your wrist. The atmosphere is that of a slow-paced island getaway, with lazy rivers, snorkeling with tropical fish and rays, feeding exotic birds, and sunning: a collective sigh of relaxation—until the thrill of the dolphins, which they photograph and film for you. (After all, who has a camera handy while swimming with dolphins?) You only need to bring yourself. Clearly, the designers of this resort have gone beyond typical theme park research and looked at it from a guest’s perspective.

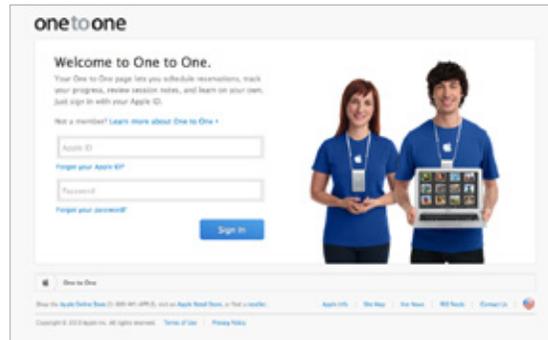
APPLE

Apple products are the darling of the design community, but it’s Apple’s services that make me sit up and take notice. It’s not the genius bar at the Apple retail store, where one goes to have product issues fixed—that’s a reframed customer service center. The thing that captures my attention is Apple’s One to One service (Figure 2). Simply stated, it is a personal training system for people converting from a PC world to a MAC world to help them successfully make this transition and to build their confidence in leveraging their new computer’s full potential. For about \$100 a year, you get unlimited access to personal, one-on-one time on your questions and projects, as well as access to small and large group classes. It’s easy to use wherever you are—you can access it at any Apple retail store in the country once you are a member. One To One alleviates fear and builds confidence, resulting in a deeper integration of Apple into your life and a deeper

Service is the differentiator; but the success of a service inherently depends on the person being served, not necessarily on corporate goals.

FIGURE 2.

Working on a PC but wish you were a Mac user? Apple makes it so much less daunting by offering one-to-one training to new owners.



connection to your Apple store and its friendly knowledgeable staff. Simply good business.

COCA-COLA

If you are in the consumables business, the theme park example and others may not seem relatable. However, I believe it is applicable. Take Coca-Cola. Coke has taken something that is typically avoided (advertising) and made it enjoyable—even desirable. Their Open Happiness Campaign continues to surprise with advertising that truly invites you to tune in by tapping into a deep human need, that of being connected. In the process, they serve up a little bit of happiness. Another ad campaign shows random acts of kindness caught on security cameras. As one reviewer put it, “It’s hard not to feel all warm and gooey inside after being reminded of all the fleeting moments of good in our everyday lives.” And isn’t that what Coke is trying to be for its users: a little moment of good in our everyday lives?

Getting there

All the services mentioned clearly meet their users where they are and in a way that is contextually relevant for their lives. What they don’t do is offer services only from the company’s perspective.

How does a company get to this place? It is certainly not by doing more taste research or even shopper marketing research. You only get to a delighting campaign like Open Happiness if you go beyond your own business needs and look at the world through the eyes and hearts of the people you serve. That’s empathy. It’s why a company might innovate a package to be

more arthritic-friendly, as Oxo has, or mom-friendly, as Hellmann’s has with squeeze mayo. It is looking beyond the pure corporate self-interest into what the user needs. When you look through her or his eyes, you see not only product opportunities, but service opportunities, as well. So, Tide Stain Brain interactive web help, Tide Stain Stick, Tide Drycleaners, and Tide Loads of Hope disaster relief program all are born out of a common pool: empathy.

How does Corporate America arrive at this kind of empathy? It is not easy. After all, we are not talking about the well-oiled machine of getting product insights, but rather the process of going deep and broad with a few people to inspire our approach to many. Empathy research is a form of design research and is very different from classic market research. In his book, *Exposing the Magic of Design*, Jon Kolko does a nice job of comparing and contrasting the two types of research (see Table 1, on p.58). The critical difference he exposes is that design research’s purpose is to *understand culture and identify the peculiar*, whereas market research seeks to *predict behavior and remain unbiased*. For example, a company that makes an air freshener might use marketing research to talk to a balanced sample of representative users and to seek to understand habits and practices that reflect the most common uses of their product so that it can predict usage volume. Design research, however, might recruit extremely heavy users to see all the curious uses they have for a product to better understand opportunity spaces. Or it might look at the overall family environment to see where there air quality challenges and opportunities exist and imagine what could be done differently. Empathy comes out of letting go of predicting and leaning into peculiar.

Typically, in-depth design research uses smaller sample sizes, but that may not be as troublesome as some may think. In fact, Harvard Professor Gerald Zaltman has demonstrated in his ZMET research that research with as few as 12 people can be extrapolated to larger populations. The challenge is to go deep—to listen to stories, metaphors, and imagery from the other person’s perspective.

TABLE 1. COMPARING DESIGN RESEARCH TO MARKET RESEARCH

DESIGN RESEARCH	MARKET RESEARCH
Focuses on people	Focuses on people
Can be qualitative or quantitative	Can be qualitative or quantitative
Borrows from social and behavioral sciences	Borrows from social and behavioral sciences
Attempts to understand culture. Looks at the styles, words, tools, and workarounds people use in an effort to inspire design.	Attempts to predict behavior. Looks at what people say they would do and at what they actually do, in an effort to predict what they might do in a new situation.
Celebrates the unique and peculiar. The rare or obscure in observations can lead to a new or interesting idea.	Avoids the unique and peculiar. The goal is to understand mass responses; outliers are frequently ignored.
Avoiding bias is irrelevant. The goal is not to be objective but instead to be rigorous.	Avoiding bias is critical. The statistical analyses of data require an objective point of view.

Source: Jon Kolko, *Exposing the Magic of Design*.

So, how do you do it? How do you get to empathy?

Some guidance on how to start this journey to empathy can be found in Table 2. First and foremost, you have to reframe the way you see the people you serve—stop calling them your target market—or any name that turns them into a statistic or a bullseye. Instead, consider them to be people: the people you hope to serve, your stakeholders. That reframe alone opens your eyes and leads you into a different type of engagement with them.

Even healthcare buys into this reframe and the power of empathy. Recently Cleveland Clinic CEO and President Toby Cosgrove, MD, noted that “offering compassion, showing empathy, and providing patients with the responsiveness they deserve can improve outcomes and speed recovery.”

Cleveland Clinic is so committed to this that it is hosting its annual Patient Experience Summit for a fourth year. (Check out its YouTube video on empathy—and the screen shot in Figure 3—to learn how the clinic sees the people it serves.)

With empathy as your framework, you can better listen to the people you want to know. And you need to get to know them in human ways. Imagine going out on blind dates with people you hope to serve. On these dates, which are one-on-one and unstructured, you can connect to your potential user as a human being first and begin to better understand what help looks like in her life before the official research begins. Or you can shadow your customers in their daily lives. For instance, when I was at P&G researching the use of our hand-laundry products in a developing market, we had our executives in that country visit homes and do the hand laundry under the guidance of the household mom. Needless to say, it was an eye-opening experience. The executives realized that their product was in fact too harsh on hands and that their advertising was not connecting with customers in the way they had imagined. The realization unlocked business results that had been inexplicable for years.

Truly, to get to empathy, you have to get yourself and your team out of your corporate world and into your customer’s world, where you

FIGURE 3

The Cleveland Clinic wants its staff to get beyond the paperwork and charts to see and feel what their patients feel. The clinic is running its fourth Patient Experience Summit this year.

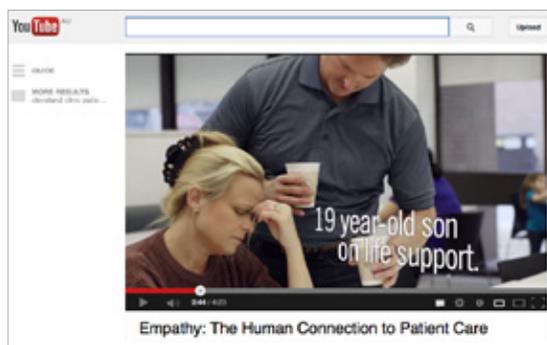


TABLE 2. THE PATH TO EMPATHY

PATH TO EMPATHY-INSPIRED SERVICE	YOUR STANCE	CONSIDER...
1. Reframe your view of your target consumer to that of a person.	Pay attention to your language. If you are focused on targets, you will spend your energy aiming arrows at them.	...letting go of what the person you are researching might mean to you numerically and instead get curious about who she is.
2. Focus on a few people you will really get to know and be open to listening to the extremes of your potential user base.	Enter into her life versus her reaction to your brand's world.	...having an open dialogue, where she controls the direction of the conversation rather than you having a specific agenda.
3. Understand her hopes and dreams in the broader context of her life.	Be curious; don't judge.	...constructing a persona inspired by the people you have met, and keep it as a handy inspiration as you navigate your work.
4. Imagine her story and imagine what looks like help to her.	For now, don't consider whether it is something you can do or not—just look at her life honestly.	...solving her problem from the perspective of another business or group. How would Disney help her? Apple? The Red Cross?
5. Now consider your brand/business strategy. What might your company be able to offer her?	Try to imagine solutions first and then to overlay the business model of how to make it affordable or profitable.	...prototyping your service idea to learn more about what the potential really is.
6. Check in with her about what you are thinking is appealing to her.	Approach humbly with low-resolution prototypes that invite her to give you her advice. High-resolution samples limit feedback since they look "finished."	...iterating this process with her/people like her over multiple iterations. Many small interactions are powerful accelerators.
7. Keep the personas constructed available and refer to them when you make decisions or need a little inspiration.	What would Joe or Judy Persona think?	...physicalizing the persona. One business I know had its persona on a life-size cardboard cutout in the conference room as a constant reminder of the people they wanted to serve.

Source: Cindy Tripp & Company, LLC, 2013.

can see his or her life in a broader context rather than watch from behind a two-way mirror.

The conversations you have with customers in such an interaction are different too. You do not ask direct, probing, fact-driven questions (market research can deliver that)—instead, you *listen*. You hear stories, observe behaviors and body language, and see how people connect the dots.

As you explore empathy for others, it is also important to find ways to make your frame or paradigm explicit so that you don't unknowingly filter what you learn exclusively through your own lens. Do whatever you can to use the *customer's* lens. For example, when executives from a beauty company shadowed a woman getting her hair

done in a salon, both parties took pictures at the event. The executives photographed the things they thought were important. The woman getting her hair done was asked to do the same thing. The next day, the two sets of pictures were compared, and there was virtually no overlap. The executives took pictures of the products used on the woman; *she* took pictures of the experience. For her, getting her hair styled at the salon was a bit of fantasy and pampering. She did not take *any* photos of products. For the executives, of course, it was about shampoo, conditioner, and style gels—that is, until they saw her photos. The experience opened the floodgates and let in ideas about how their products might fit into the service.



Cindy Tripp is a recognized thought leader in how to integrate the empathy and imagination of design with the practicalities of business in a way that can help business deliver results now and in the future. She has an MBA in marketing and advertising from Indiana University and a BA in

economics from Duke University. Tripp spent the first 24 years of her career at Procter & Gamble, where she worked in brand management, marketing innovation, media, and design innovation, and where she established the highly regarded P&G Design Thinking application for business within the global

enterprise of P&G. Today, she is an independent consultant and lives near Cincinnati, Ohio.

FIGURE 4

Adolescents get a lot of their information online, especially when parents are shy about giving it. P&G's Tampax and Always sponsor the Beinggirl.com website to offer support with topics that go beyond menstruation.



Tampax to focus less on their product offerings and more on girls' questions about growing up on their highly regarded Beinggirl.com site (Figure 4). As a result of this focus on a girl's overall needs, Tampax and Always are able to build a relationship with girls they hope to serve and to help them navigate being a teen, and of course, menstruation.

You need to go back to your customers and see if you are heading in the right direction. Indeed, you may find that when you take an idea formed out of empathy for a person back for input and help in a "low-resolution" form, that person's feedback will help you make it better or help you think of an even better idea. The co-creation that follows tends to be a highly productive and positive experience—for you and your company, as well as the person you hope to serve.

In other words: Offering great products is not enough. Scent, the way products make you feel, the story they evoke—that's where service can begin. As Dev Patnaik says, when people have empathy, "they're able to see new opportunities faster than their competitors, long before the information becomes explicit."

Empathy is the launching pad for new ideas about how you might be of greater service. With empathy, you can start with what's needed by your customers and figure out a way to serve them. This level of empathy led Pampers to create The Pampers Parenting Institute and the online video series *A Parent Is Born*, and for Always and

It sounds simple, right? It's not. In leading dozens of teams through empathy journeys like the ones just discussed, I know how difficult it is. It's challenging to summon up the patience to take the early steps (see Table 2) before even allowing your business considerations to creep in. I hear questions like, "When do we start solving our problem?" or "How does any of this relate to the business?" Self-interest, resistance, doubt: All of these can block the path to great service design. But empathy, openness, curiosity: These can lead to that magic moment, when your customer's world and your world come together and you see it—that service opportunity you never knew you had. ■