The Empathy Map Canvas

To be in business, you need to offer value to your customers. Furthermore, your value proposition must be dramatically different in order to overcome the inertia of the status quo. Because customers are the arbiters of value, you must view the world through their eyes. By doing so, you'll be better equipped to understand how they weigh the relative value of alternatives.

The Empathy Map Canvas emerged from the design thinking movement. We find it useful for eliciting, capturing, organizing, and understanding customers' points of view.

Let's acknowledge that our understanding of customers' wants and needs is always going to be hypothetical. Our insights are imperfect, customers' perspectives will change, and even they can't always understand their own proclivities.

Nevertheless, by making our assumptions explicit, we make them testable. That makes it easier, faster, and cheaper to find out whether we're more or less correct. Then we can adapt.

The success of the scientific method has illustrated that the most effective way to test our hypotheses is to seek disconfirming evidence. However, confirmation bias inhibits our ability to ask good questions. Most of us tend to seek affirmation rather than truth.

As entrepreneur turned author Rob Fitzpatrick puts it, the key to getting useful information from prospective customers is to ask them about their lives. In other words, you need to go out in the wild and engage prospective customers in conversation in order to gather valid information.

Armed with fact-based insights from productive conversations, you can use the Empathy Map to help you summarize what your customers want to do, how they perceive the world, the benefits they hope to experience, and the pains they wish to avoid.

The output from the Empathy Map becomes the input to the Value Proposition Canvas. We'll introduce the Value Proposition Canvas in another video.