

# Business Insights through Empathy

The secret free tool that can make  
your users extremely happy

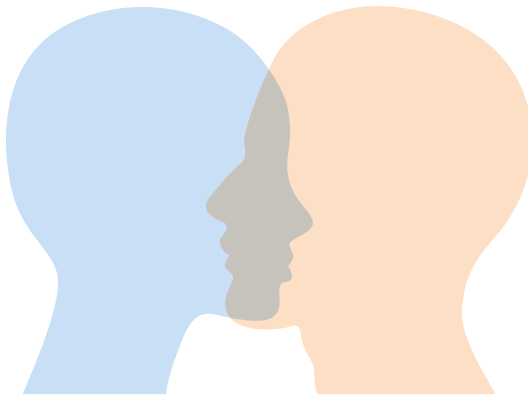


EMAKINA



# So you want to make your users happy?

And you'd like a free tool to do it with?



Here's some good news for you:  
you were born with the greatest tool on  
the planet. It's called empathy.

Don't like this answer? Let us explain...

# We're the user agency

That means we put the user at the centre.

It is important to start from a common definition of **user**.

It is not the same as a target audience. You can identify this with criteria like demographics :

we target women between 25 and 65 years old with 2 kids, a full-time job, and an interest in fashion.

It's also not the same as **segment** :

we target young mothers who don't sleep well because their young kids wake up several times every night and who scroll Instagram right before going to sleep to get their fix of fashion pics.

**We're talking about your users, which you can make tangible in a personas.**

Take Sandra (34), mom of Kevin (3,5) and Sophia (1,5), who loves Van Cleef & Arpels and who always dreamed of one day buying one of their iconic bracelets to pass it on to her daughter.

Sandra has been saving up and because she follows the brand on Facebook and Instagram, she already decided which jewel she wants to buy.

She's been waiting for a promotion to buy online, but when there is one and she tries to make a profile in the webshop late at night, she doesn't receive a confirmation email and can't log in. She takes to twitter the next morning after dropping the kids off to school to contact the brand but doesn't receive a response. She is frustrated because the promotion is a limited time offer that's about to run out.



Is this the level of detail you have about your users?

Chances are that the answer is **no**. Don't panic, you are not alone, there are plenty of brands with the same answer.

### Why?

Because it's hard. Yes, getting to know your user this intimately is hard. But doesn't it help you to know exactly what content you should be putting where? Which changes you need to make to your customer journey to make them happy? Where the bulk of your marketing budget should go? Yes, we think so too.

### So, how do you fix this?

How do you get an understanding of your users to the level where you can give them exactly what they want, when and where they want it? Read on and we'll tell you.

### Spoiler: the key is 'empathy'

And yes, we'll go beyond theory to explain what to do with all that knowledge, how to put it into practice and make it work for you.

# 1

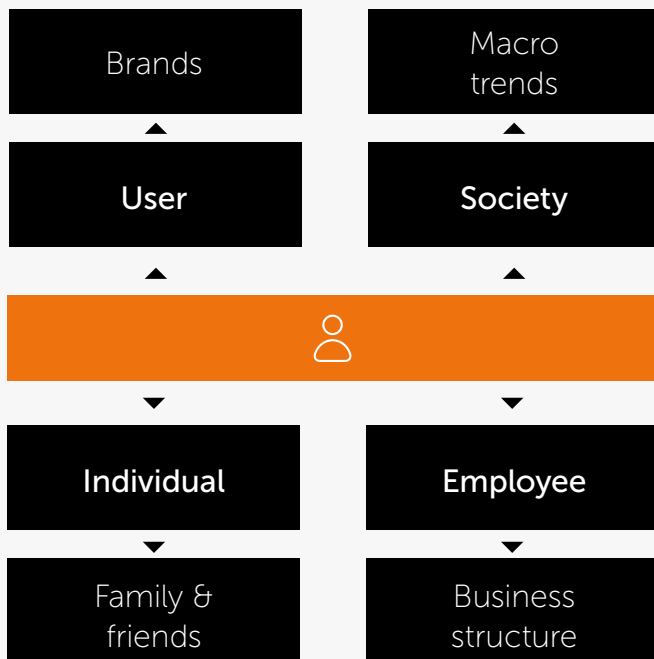
## Deep user knowledge

**Deep user knowledge** may sound like yet another buzzword, but it's not.

We tend to think about our users in only one dimension: 'our clients'. We know them in this role quite intimately, we know how they shop and where and when. We know what kind of products or services they want and we get that if we give them an enjoyable experience, they're likely to come back for more or - and this is the dream - even become vocal ambassadors.

All of this is a good start. Yet, it is not the whole story. Even you, reading this, you define yourself by more than just the brands you shop.

For businesses, it is important to look at users in 4 dimensions:



## User

- What is the interaction between the person and the brands they choose or reject?
- How does it shape their experience? How does it refine or even strengthen certain personality traits?
- What is their perception of the brand communication and positioning, and how does that impact their perception of the world?
- How do different brands fill in their needs?
- Are they attracted to/do they have experience with/ do they engage with ambassadors?

## Individual

- Which part of their social ecosystem is the biggest source of influence on them?
- Do they live in a traditional or a new family format?
- How do they see their gender identity?



## Society

- Society evolves and changes faster than ever before, so how do people grasp the exponentially increasing complexity of the society they live in?
- How do they adopt it, and how do they understand this world?
- What are the causes they fight for?

## Employee

- What is their professional situation?
- Which place does **work** take in their life (status, ambition, involvement, ...)?
- How does it shape their daily life?  
Does it cause stress, are there time constraints?  
Or does their work provide inspiration and stimulation?  
Do they have a **Millennial** approach to work  
(a rather disruptive relationship with their job consent and employer)?

# 2

## How to deeply know your users

By now you're (hopefully) quite convinced that it's important to have a view on your users in 4 dimensions. If you are, then the next question is a simple one: how do we get these insights?

Easy: through research! Don't worry, this is not a dry chapter on methodology. There are plenty of methods to get at the information you need. But before we do, a word on the importance of doing high-quality research. The aim of collection information is to deepen your understanding. No matter the data, if you're not open to seeing the truth the data reveals, you will be forever stuck in what you already **think** you know.

However, if you manage to look at the information with an open mind, using **active listening** techniques, you will get to meet your customers, to interact with them, to grasp their reality and the personal nuances of the insights into their minds and hearts. Being open to new information is very difficult when you are in a meeting room with canvasses and post-its confirming what you already know.



Though it is a good start, it is certainly not the whole exercise. It needs to be complemented with high quality research. Good to know is that there is quantitative and qualitative research to get at that data.

The first, quantitative, gathered through surveys and analytics for example is research that gives you clear numbers:

XX% of your clients think eco package is important, yet XX% of those who think it's important are willing to pay extra for it. Numbers are a great window into an existing situation or estimated projections. They help tremendously when it comes to figuring out the presence and the size of an insight in a specific population.

The second, qualitative, gathered through immersions and in-depth interviews for example is research that does not offer any idea of the volume of an insight, but rather on the granularity, the personal nuances of an insight:

some of your users feel proud when they discover a brand with packaging they can throw on the compost heap and use to fertilize their plants next year. Quotes are a great window into the soul of your users, they help tremendously when it comes to figuring out how to talk to your users like a human, and to build a bond.

The first kind of data we call hard data, the second one soft data.

And sometimes you only need a little bit of data to deepen an insight you already have (small data), sometimes you need a lot of input from a lot of users (big data) to uncover patterns across big groups, multiple touchpoints, or longer periods of time. Whatever kind of data you choose collect, there is only one rule that you need to be aware of and it applies to all data: the research must be done by professionals. When it's not, your data might be skewed and you could be in for an unpleasant surprise.

# 3

## On the importance of empathy

Now when does **empathy** come into play? Let's first agree on what empathy is: according to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary it is the ability to *"understand, be aware of, be sensitive to, and vicariously experiencing the feelings, thoughts, and experiences of another (...)"*

It's easy to agree that nobody could deeply understand you, dear reader, by simply looking only at your purchase history. That someone could walk a mile in your mother's shoes by tracking her repeat purchases with a single supermarket over the past 3 months. Or claim to know your teenage nephew by analyzing his ad clicks on Facebook and Instagram.

The above examples offer a glimpse into the lives of people, they don't paint a complete picture. Yet, to experience the thoughts and feelings of others, a complete picture is exactly what you need. Think of it like a VR headset allowing you to step into the lives of others in 360°.

To make that experience life-like, it needs to look and feel real. And the key to that, is high granularity.



A high level of fine detail, across the 4 dimensions we discussed earlier, is needed to paint a full picture of your user and to deeply understand them. To see them so clearly that you can feel them, get to know them like a real person. To step into their minds and hearts and experience their needs and desires as if they were your own. To reach the level of empathy that allows you to flawlessly feel what your brand can do for them that will make an actual difference.

### To predict what they will want or need next.

**High granularity is not only an all-round view of your user** so complementing what you know about them in relation to your brand with what you know about them in relation to their personal lives, their work and their world view.

Once you have mapped the rational layer (what they think), the behavioral layer (what they do) and the emotional layer (what they feel), the picture is complete.

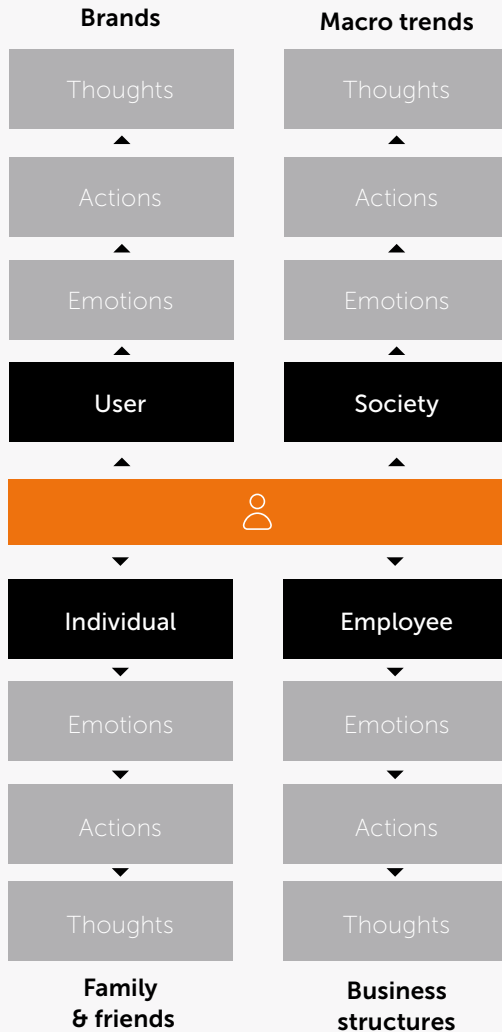
You can now leverage your intimate knowledge of your user at a level of clusters/ segments through quantitative data (from survey, analytics). The numbers of this kind of research are meaningless without the first base of deep user understanding through empathy.

“

Once you have mapped  
the rational layer  
(what they think),  
the behavioral layer  
(what they do)  
and the emotional layer  
(what they feel),  
the picture is complete.

”

It is also a deep view of each dimension in 3 layers: their thoughts, their actions and their emotions.



# 4

## How to turn deep knowledge into deep use

So you have a deep knowledge of your users now. The picture is so complete, you can feel them. And you have the quantitative data to leverage that understanding at segment level.

### What's next?

Do you print the report and put it in a nice binder for your desk drawer, to pull out and impress your colleagues at the Christmas mixer? Of course not. You make that knowledge work for you and your team.

The first task you now face is to make sure everyone in your team has an empathetic knowledge of your users. You can put up some reminders on the walls to help them, but they should have this knowledge ready for use at the drop of a hat. If everyone can feel their users, this knowledge will automatically be brought to the start of each new project.



“

Make sure everyone  
in your team has  
an empathetic knowledge  
of your users

*There will be no more blind starts, no more “we’ll see who it is for once we produce it” attitudes, no more “we didn’t know our users weren’t going to like it” excuses. Every project will have your users at its center.*

Eventually, your team will become user rights activists. When dealing with other entities both in- and outside the company, they will stand up for your users. They will become known as the experts on your users and gradually infuse others with a user-centric mindset.

And finally, every new drop of data that comes in about your users, will increase the knowledge everyone already has about them. It will add a little more color to the picture of your users. New data will either deepen what you already know, or signal a shift in the thoughts/actions/emotions of your users that you need to be aware of. You will be able to follow the evolution of your users without much effort.

# Conclusion

Emakina is the User Agency and we put the user at the centre because we believe it is fundamental for the health of your business.

To deeply understand your users, we believe you need more than a few post-its on a wall that repeat what you already know about them. Additional information must be gathered through sound user research.

There are several methodologies. Earlier we discussed qualitative and quantitative research methods, but **the strongest tool in your research toolbox is empathy**. This can be achieved by **gathering data about your users in 4 dimensions** (private, brand, work, society) **and 3 layers** (actions, thoughts, emotions).

**The higher the granularity of this data, the easier it is to paint a full picture of your user that you can use to experience what it is like to be them (empWathy).**

Once you have felt what it is like to be one of your users and have a truly deep understanding of them, you can effortlessly bring a user-centric mindset to every single one of your projects. From then on, every new datapoint you gather about your users will deepen your knowledge about them even further, or help you spot shifts in their behavior that can have an impact on your business. In short: deep user understanding through empathy will help you make products and services your users want, now and in the future.

## The authors

### **Aline Durand**

Head of Insights

Aline puts the user at the center of all Emakina projects. She leads the research department that provides qualitative and quantitative research, benchmarking and trends, and represents the consumer voice throughout the implementation phase. She is also our first Empathy Ambassador, providing user-centric training to the entities within the Emakina Group.

### **Sarah Claeys**

Storytelling Manager

Sarah helps international brands tell compelling stories to its users. She does so by combining deep user insights with content strategy, editorial support and coaching. She works with clients across the global portfolio of the Emakina Group.



**EMAKINA**

The User Agency

---

## Welcome to Emakina

Team up with our marketing and technology experts to grow your business and brand value.

Let's join forces, to develop highly effective strategies and creations, from cutting-edge applications and websites to impactful e-commerce projects, content and campaigns.

---

## Take the next step

Learn more at

[www.emakina.com](http://www.emakina.com)

Feel free to contact us

### Emakina Europe HQ

Rue Middelbourg 64a  
1170 Watermael-Boitsfort  
Belgium

+32 2 400 40 00  
[think@emakina.com](mailto:think@emakina.com)

### Emakina Middle East HQ

Aurora Tower office  
2202-2207,  
Dubai Media City,  
PO Box: 478891, Dubai,  
United Arab Emirates

+971 4 589 57 22  
[info@emakina.ae](mailto:info@emakina.ae)

### Emakina North America HQ

79 Madison Avenue  
New York, NY 10016  
USA

+1 866 499 9591  
[info@emakina.com](mailto:info@emakina.com)