



SITUATION

A large utility company needed to re-vamp its approach to managing an appliance service program. Customers paid a monthly subscription fee to insure routine maintenance of large in-home appliances such as furnaces, heaters, refrigerators, washers and dryers. Yet after signing up for the service, customers were only engaging with the company when a large appliance broke down, typically an extremely stressful situation, especially during cold winter months. At that point, customers had little patience for inefficiencies or long wait times. Our project focused on streamlining service delivery to customers, as well as increasing profitability of the service.

WHAT WE DID

A cross-functional team, representing both the company's and consumers' interest, mapped out the customer's

journey while using the service. Special attention was paid to the customer's engagement experience: ensuring simple troubleshooting could be easily completed, and clarifying what maintenance would be included and what reasonable time expectations would be. Each contact point with the customer was considered in a job map to determine both customer and provider expectations. These expectations were quantitatively prioritized to identify the most significant pain points in the experience. Thousands of customers were surveyed so that we could understand which of these customer needs to focus on based on importance and satisfaction ratings.

WHAT WE UNCOVERED

Fundamentally, the provider and consumer had very different expectations around the purpose of the program. Ultimately, the program was internally viewed as a means to bolster revenue rather than providing a service. Service staff were primarily responsible for utility maintenance and viewed call-outs for appliance maintenance as a distraction. A lack of clear information on the type of maintenance required, as well as access to support documentation (history, model, part numbers, etc.), also increased apprehension.

We also found that many times customers could not articulate their true

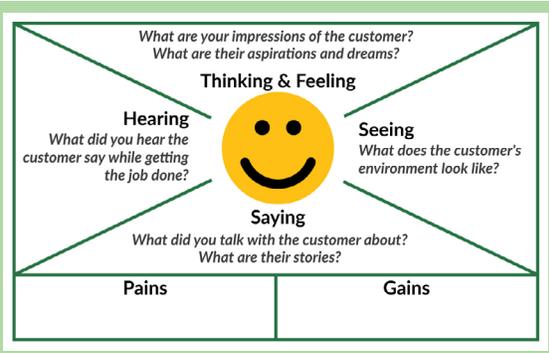
needs, especially their future needs. Through the process of ethnography, we were able to gain a deeper understanding of customer expectations and design a process that improved their experience.

RESULTS

Using a human-centered approach to map the customer's experience quickly showed that the customer's perception of responsiveness was critical to their continued support of the service. Resolving appliance problems in a single visit was a consistent expectation that was rarely met.

Two of the key solutions discovered during the customer experience mapping process were: 1) equipping maintenance staff with the means to resolve the most common problems in a single visit boosted the perception of the program tremendously, and 2) adopting a communications framework enabled both customers and service staff to access the same information and eliminated superfluous back-and-forth communication. The company implemented these low-cost solutions and experienced great results.

An empathy map was used during call observations to emotionally connect with the jobs that both the customer and provider were trying to get done. Then we asked: Are the processes we have designed optimal for creating the best experience on both sides?



"Your teams will develop new inspiration and more empathy by creating a customer journey map and validating it with your customers. In the end it is this external perspective that helps organizations better meet current and emerging customer needs."

Dana Ginn, Senior Client Partner, Lean Methods Group