

The Secret to Consumer Centric Products Is Hiding In Plain Sight





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Data isn't necessarily synonymous with insight, but many treat it that way. This wasn't a total dealbreaker in the past, as consumers had fewer product choices. Today, people have access to products from around the globe. They can connect with brands like never before, giving them increased ownership over their purchasing decisions—and upping the pressure on companies to deliver a consumer-centric product.

So, how can brands create truly customer-focused products or services? Answering this isn't as challenging as it might sound. The answer to building a consumer-centric product is readily available.

But before we dive in, let's take a look at a very common, very problematic misstep.





The common mistakes most brands are making

Consumer centricity is more important than ever as consumers are changing their behavior faster than they ever have. The recent pandemic is a good example of consumers swiftly changing their buying habits.

Yet, there's a gross disparity between the beliefs of consumers and companies regarding customer centricity:

30% of consumers feel companies listen, while 75% of companies say they're consumer-centric.

Basically, few companies are listening to their buyers and drawing real human insight (even if they think they are!).

But the fault does lie entirely with companies. We're in uncharted territory when it comes to insights and the tools we have available. Let's take a look at why companies miss the mark when it comes to insight, and how we can start working toward a consumer-centric model. right now - it's the next step in feedback's evolution.



Data overload

We have more data than we know what to do with. By 2025, we're going to be creating 463 exabytes of data every day ! Data's great for guiding us or acting as a jumping-off point to investigate an issue, but we need real human insight to get to the root of a problem.

Simply put, data is information. It's a set of numbers, a percentage, a collection of "yes" or "no" responses. This information can be useful for figuring out where to start your journey, but it's not the same as human insight.

A lack of distinction between Data & Insight

All that data we just mentioned is necessary, but it's a poor substitution for insight. Human insight goes deeper than data to provide the "why" behind a response. Instead of a simple "yes" or "no," get a comprehensive response from the consumer, explaining why they feel a certain way. This insight allows you to think more holistically about a problem and how you can solve it.

Without leveraging human insights, we miss the bigger picture. Think of that 45% disparity between companies that believe they're listening and consumer feeling heard. Most of them are analyzing data, so clearly they're missing something: human insight.





From alcohol to hand sanitizer:* Many whiskey and vodka distillers have been making hand sanitizer during the COVID-19 pandemic.



Vacuums and ventilators: Vacuum manufacturer Dyson has been making ventilators instead of their usual vacuums and fans.



Grocers and retailers pivot like pros: *Grocery stores and retailers are pivoting on a dime to better serve their consumers via curbside pickup. This has helped consumers while allowing businesses to continue staying afloat.



Scraps into masks: Some small businesses are going even further, thinking outside the box to help where they can. Livi Rae Lingerie started offering virtual fittings as well as making masks out of garment scraps.

Companies to model

While many companies fall victim to the above mistakes, some epitomize consumer centricity. Certain companies are listening to audiences very well, and during difficult times nonetheless.

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Even if all these examples are from industries well outside your own, they can certainly serve as inspiration!

Ultimately, the above mistakes boil down to one thing: a failure to understand data versus insight.

The companies mentioned above didn't look at data to pivot—they looked at what was happening in the world and what people needed. This is the kind of action that's driven by insight and human understanding. Now, let's make that happen.



Power to the people: Embracing human insight

Companies should leverage human insight needs at every stage of the product development life cycle to create consumer-centric products. This sounds like a tall order, but it's never been easier to do.

To properly use human insights and close the gap between you and your audience, you need to be ready to receive feedback at each step of product development. You wouldn't ask someone what they wanted for their birthday and then stop listening, would you?

Modern feedback—such as video feedback—allows you to get the entire story from your audience, no matter your industry or your customers. Even better, modern feedback methods can be implemented at every stage of the product development life cycle. This makes it possible to hear your audience at all times.

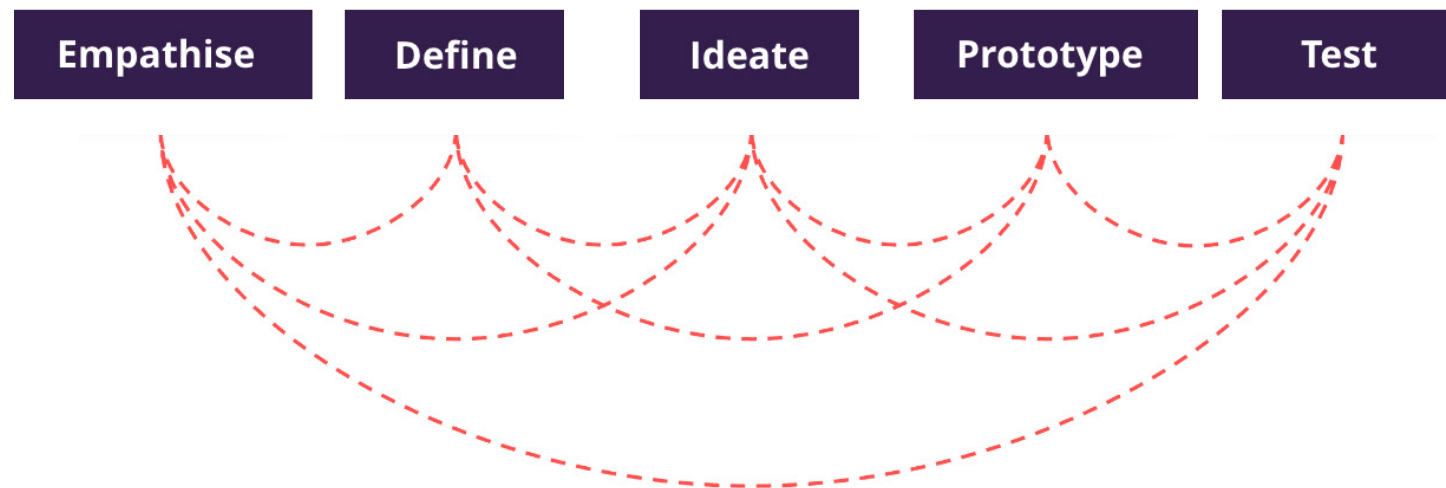
Here's how.



Design Thinking

There are five stages of Design Thinking. In the past, feedback was generally reserved for the prototype and testing phases. This is, of course, a giant mistake. Instead, the five component stages of Design Thinking (see graphic below) will guide you through a more flexible, fluid approach to design. It's worth noting that the stages are not always sequential and do not have to follow any specific order. They can often occur in parallel and be repeated iteratively.

Fortunately, you can easily implement video feedback at each of the five stages. This opens the door to unparalleled insight and keeps the consumer at the heart of it all. Let's take a look.





Empathise

During this stage of product development, your primary goal is to gain an empathetic understanding of the consumer problem you're trying to solve. Consumers can provide this understanding before you even begin designing the product.

First, immerse yourself in the problem the consumer is having—the problem you're trying to solve. Poll your consumers or target audience using a method like video feedback. This will shed light on any pain points they're having while providing the full context, including their emotions, body language, and so on.

Next, don't shelter others in your company from bits of information. Consumer information and feedback need to be available, especially when you're building a cross-functional team. Then, share that video feedback with anyone involved in the development process. This will build empathy and ensure your product aligns with consumer wants and needs before development gets underway.



Define

This stage is all about humanizing the problem you're solving. You might understand feedback and the metrics connected to that feedback, but it needs to be humanized.

For example, you realize your baby food company is missing out on the audience of new mothers. The human sense of the problem could be, "Some new mothers need help ensuring their newborns get enough sustenance." Your solution would then be baby formula.

By putting a human spin on the problem, we can really look at that problem we're trying to solve.

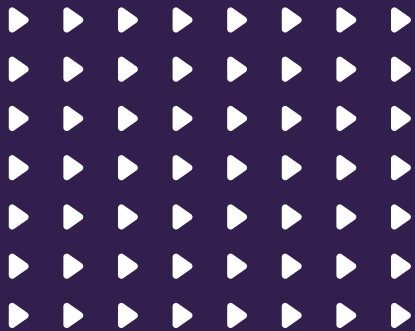


“Never make too many assumptions about what it is you think you know.”

— Dave Carruthers, Voxpopme founder and CEO

But consumer behavior doesn't stop changing the moment you stop receiving feedback. Elicit ongoing feedback to ensure you're staying current with consumer problems and needs. This will help you define the problem statement as it continues to evolve.

You'll also want to ensure your feedback is going to the right teams—otherwise, the problem statement will be moot. Many businesses make the mistake of only giving feedback to product teams. Consumer centricity is only possible when you loop in more stakeholders. Increase problem ownership by involving people outside the usual product team like salespeople, marketers, and executives.



Ideate

The ideation stage focuses on identifying new ways to solve a consumer problem. While every stage is a team effort, this one is the epitome of collaboration. At this stage, you need to bring in the feedback and cross-functional ideas from your teams and other stages to develop the solution.

There are a few crucial steps here, including:

1. Creating a culture of feedback

Take steps to create a culture where feedback isn't just appreciated, but a part of everyday life. For example, at Voxpopme, we have an always-on feedback channel where our team can share any ideas they have via video feedback. This has created a culture that's conducive to feedback and brainstorming.

You can go the route of an always-on video feedback channel using Voxpopme, or even have a brainstorming or feedback channel on Slack where people can freely throw out ideas and constructive feedback. This will help your team become more comfortable giving feedback and give them a chance to get to know one another better.

2. Bringing in outside vendors and agencies to work toward a solution

You likely have a number of vendors or agencies you work with regularly. Assuming you have a great relationship, vendors and agencies are a core part of your team. Don't be afraid to ask them how they feel about a particular idea or solution.

Their experiences are unique and can yield original and often useful insight. And because they know your business well, their external feedback will come with the advantage of being reinforced with knowledge of your company.

3. Keeping the feedback flowing

Continue to reach out to your audience and request video feedback on your ideas. Since consumer behavior is still changing as you go through development, there's never a wrong time to ask for feedback. Even if you feel you've arrived at a great solution during the ideation stage, some last-minute feedback can help you make minor tweaks. All of this feedback will only serve to make your next round of product development even stronger.

If you're noticing a theme (feedback, feedback, feedback) during this stage, that's great. Ideation is all about receiving feedback and taking it to heart. Once your idea is feedback-proofed, it's time to prototype it.



Prototype

At the prototype stage, your focus is on creating your tangible solution to the consumer problem. You've gotten a ton of feedback and gone through ideation—now, it's time to make a solution based on your feedback thus far.

Work with your team to create a minimum viable product (MVP) or rough draft equivalent, then reach out to your audience for feedback ASAP. You'll want to ensure you've followed all MVP best practices, otherwise, the feedback will be for naught.

Once you've received feedback, it's time to make sense of it. If feedback is negative, don't fret. Instead, look through the other stages of the product development cycle and ask yourself where things may have gone wrong. It's possible your prototype missed the mark, but it's also possible you missed a vital data point during an earlier stage.

For example, maybe you missed feedback during the "Define" stage and wound up solving a problem that didn't exist. By carefully examining each stage and reviewing the feedback you received, you can determine where things went awry.





Test

This is an area where a lot of people do well, but many still leave much of the consumer feedback until this phase. It should be clear by now that saving feedback for testing is a bad, bad idea.

So, now that you've gathered feedback before getting to the testing phase, you can rest assured you have a solution that's in line with consumer wants. This will, naturally, lead to more accurate testing.

It's important that you gather feedback during this phase as well. If the test missed the mark, determine at which stage the problem occurred. It's possible you only need to make minor tweaks with this iteration. Make any necessary adjustments, gather more feedback, and keep trying.

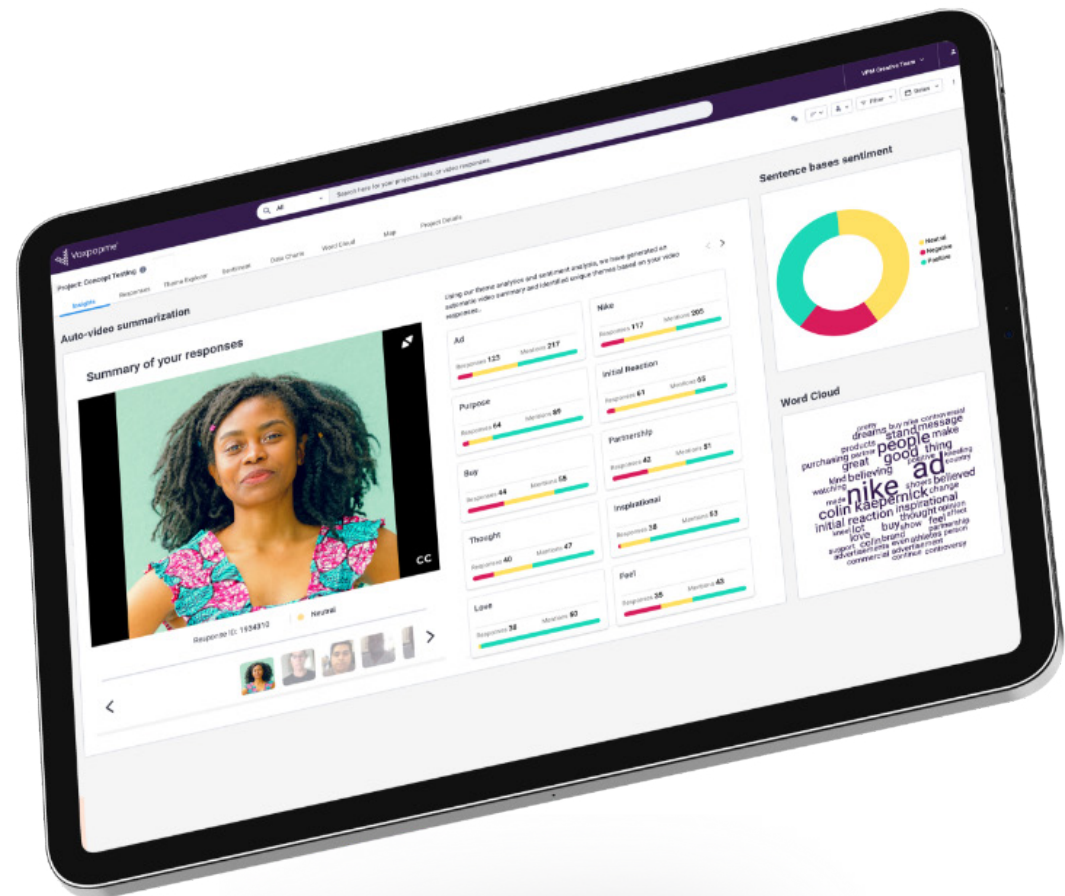
Also, take the agile tools you're using for the testing phase and implement them across all five stages. For example, if you're using Voxpopme to get video feedback from consumers during testing, roll that out to the other stages to keep that feedback coming. You should be getting feedback at every step of the product development cycle. Any tools you use during testing will likely come in handy throughout.

All of the above stages are essential to success. But it's also important you don't limit video feedback to select roles in your company. Virtually any role can use video feedback. Think outside the box and allow your company, as a whole, to embrace video feedback, using it in the above stages and beyond. This will allow your company to establish a culture of consumer centricity and keep your entire company in touch with your audience.

Consumer centricity: Ready when you are

Companies used to have a fairly decent excuse if they were tone-deaf to their consumers: Getting feedback was tough! And even still, it's easy to get buried in mountains of data. But, we're fortunate enough to live in an age where video feedback is available and easy to roll out. What's more, video feedback can be used at every step of product development to help us make sense of all that data.

Don't wait until your product is complete to reach out for feedback. Start listening to your consumers now, and you'll find that the secret to a consumer-centric product was right in front of you all along.



Get in Touch!

We're always available

Contact us

