



Generate Ideas

| Participatory Design Tool

Participatory Design actively involves all stakeholders (e.g., employees, partners, customers, citizens, end users) in the design process to help ensure that the result meets their needs and is usable.

WHEN

Use this tool:

- To understand how people think about a problem, discipline, or technology.
- When what the users say they do and what they actually do are not the same
- Where there is, or could be, any cultural or political disconnect between you and the end user.

WHY

From observing the users' building process and listening to their explanations of why they built their "perfect world" software or product, you learn a lot of the things you wouldn't through a mere interview with the users. Designers create more innovative concepts and ideas when working within a co-design environment than they do when creating ideas on their own.

HOW

STEP 1: Build a guide for the session and prepare some materials that will prompt discussion among participants. Typical prep time (setting goals, writing questions, selecting activities) is usually two hours for each 15-minute exercise.

STEP 2: Identify users and invite them to participate in a session. Plan to spend 60-90 minutes with the group.

STEP 3: Ask questions phrased as "How might we solve for problem X?" The designer helps to interpret what the participant is thinking, and the team works together to capture needs, ideas, and decisions.

STEP 4: Try to involve your whole team so that everyone gets face time with the users. Here are some tools to use during your participatory design activities (you can use several):

- Sketching
- Card sorting
- Prototyping
- Storyboarding

