As-Is Scenario Map

Visualize the current user experience through a story. Document what users do, think, and feel. This exercise is a great way to understand the current state before designing improvements.

1 hour 30 min

IBM Design

Intermediate

H HOW TO RUN

1 Choose a Scenario — 10 min

Select a specific user and task. Make it concrete and bounded. Don't try to map everything.

2 Map the Steps — 40 min

For each step, capture:

- What does the user DO? (actions)
- What does the user THINK? (thoughts)
- What does the user FEEL? (emotions)

Plot these from start to finish. Use actual user quotes and observations.

3 Identify Moments — 20 min

Highlight pain points (red), note delights (green), and mark critical decisions (blue).

4 Synthesize — 20 min

What patterns emerge? Where are the biggest opportunities? What surprised you?

O OBJECTIVES

› The goals of this exercise are to: understand the current experience, identify pain points, build empathy, and establish a baseline

M MATERIALS

- ☐ Large wall or whiteboard
- ☐ Sticky notes in different colors (actions, thoughts, feelings)
- ☐ Markers
- ☐ User research data

P PARTICIPANTS

4 to 8 people

F FACILITATOR NOTES

REMEMBER

- Base this on real user research, not assumptions. Use actual user quotes.
- Show the reality, including negative experiences. It's okay if the current state isn't pretty.
- This exercise sets up the "To-Be" Scenario Map. I've found it's best to push teams to be specific about the user and task.