

# Design Thinking Stage I: Research

**What is Design Thinking?** A user-centered, solutions-focused approach to problem solving that is fueled by curiosity. In the Design Thinking framework, you'll use research findings and information to fuel the engine of ideation and generate many solutions in a state of creative chaos. Through that chaos, your design team will identify promising solutions to move forward into a cycle of prototyping and testing, resulting in the best available solution to the underlying problem at hand.

## Empathize:

In this step, you'll gather data from a variety of stakeholders through interviews, observations, and focus groups. Listening and observing are key! Identify your users' **explicit needs** (those understood and defined by the user) and **latent needs** (those revealed during research.)

*"What people say, what people do, and what they say they do are entirely different things."*

*-Margaret Mead*

## Sample interview questions:

- Describe the problem in your own words.
- Who is affected?
- When have you noticed the problem? What circumstances preceded it?
- What solutions have already been tried?
- Where else are similar problems being addressed across the industry?
- Why is the problem worth solving?
- What expertise is required to understand the answers to the above questions?  
Who has that expertise? *This will help you build your Design Team!*

## Define:

Working from your initial problem description and using the data collected in the previous step, use this step as your first opportunity for iteration and redefine the problem.

Create a solutions-focused problem statement:

"Since we have observed (identified problem), how might we (positive verb such as "increase" or "improve," so that we might achieve (desired outcome)?"

Remember to work towards progress, not perfection! Problem-solving in the real world often looks like fewer obstacles to success, not zero.