

# How to Uncover Valuable Design Insights

3 steps to understanding  
the unknown

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You've conducted your design research and have collected many types of rich, diverse, nuanced information.

Now it's time to get your team together to uncover the right insights to inform your design—and unlock innovation.

“*Every act of creation begins with an act of destruction.*”

— Pablo Picasso

Insights are penetrating discoveries about user, consumer and customer behaviors that can be applied to inform innovative products, services and experiences.

Inspired by the Synectics Creative-Problem-Solving Methodology, this guide outlines a three-step process to help teams uncover valuable insights from design research.

#### STEP 1

## Pearl Finding

Identify valuable pearls in your raw research outputs by listing the themes, patterns and instances observed.

#### STEP 2

## Code Cracking

Crack the code to true understanding by drawing all possible meaning from what your team has observed.

#### STEP 3

## Force Fitting

Find insights that will unlock innovation by force fitting logical connections between disconnected ideas.

## STEP 1

# Pearl Finding

Using the Johari Window model as a reference, *Pearl Finding* is all about uncovering “blind spots” in your research outputs: the information that is known to others, but is not yet understood by the team.

A “pearl” is an objective observation captured during the design research process, free of interpretation or judgment.

## Do not underestimate the value of any pearl.

Each team member should use post-its, paper or digital collaboration tools to list:

Language and expressions heard

Metaphors and analogies used

Processes and behaviors observed

Sensory images that research evoked

Anything surprising or mysterious

Participants repeated frequently that whole milk is high in fat

Customers noted a lack of recycling centers at the market

Someone compared running a supermarket to driving a train

65% of people have some level of lactose intolerance

There are many brands of non-dairy milk on the market

Participants reported wanting more info on food sources

## STEP 2

# Code Cracking

*Code Cracking* is a creative process developed in the 1960s to systematically decode meaning. The goal is to come up with as many potential hypotheses explaining an observation as possible.

To crack the code, assign multiple potential meanings for your most provocative pearls and form hypotheses that explore the patterns hidden beneath them.

Assume all hypotheses are true to some degree.

Each team member selects their top 3–5 pearls. Then, brainstorm as a team to generate multiple hypotheses about what's causing them.

These could include:

Motivations for behaviors

Cultural influences

Systems affecting processes

Market or operational factors



## STEP 3

## Force Fitting

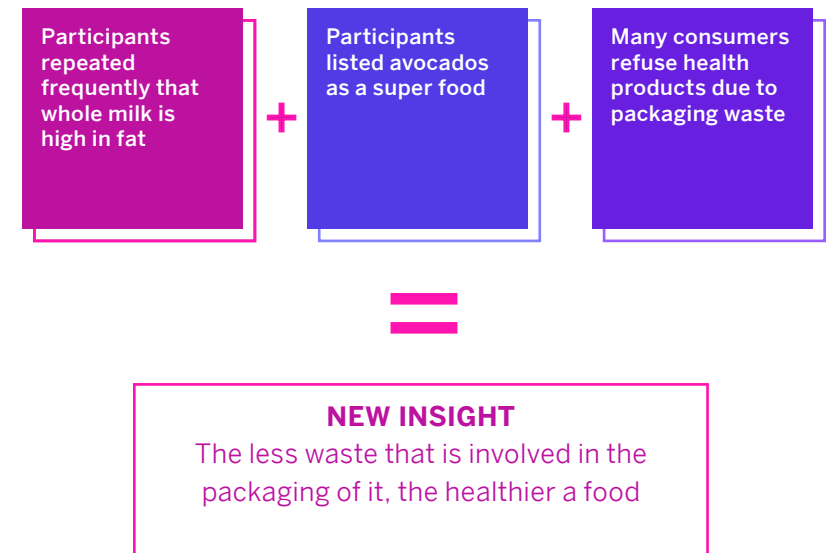
*Force Fitting* is a method of inductive reasoning, not unlike that utilized by characters in famous detective novels. It requires creating possible logical connections between seemingly disconnected pieces of evidence.

Break apart old patterns of understanding to arrive at new insights. Force fitting research inputs together in an unexpected order can lead to new ways of approaching a design challenge.

## Find links between the team's individual contributions.

Each team member contributes 1 pearl or 1 hypothesis to form a group set. As a team, look for potential links in the group set and define these links as insights.

Repeat this step as many times as necessary to arrive at a sizable list of possible insights.



By now your team has uncovered many new insights that have no doubt offered new ways of thinking about your design challenge at hand. Now you must ask: which insights are the most relevant? Which insights pose the most valuable opportunities for innovation?

Here is a simple framework for measuring and comparing the team's insights.



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