



Empathy Overhaul Workshop

This workshop is designed to help your team develop a deeper understanding of your audience. It through a two-phase process:

Phase 1: Internal Hypothesis—Your team maps out assumptions about key audiences.

Phase 2: Listen and Validate—You test those assumptions through real conversations and refine your findings.

This process encourages you to think critically about your audience's motivations and then validate those insights through direct engagement. The interviews will also strengthen listening skills, making you more attuned to audience needs.

While every audience is unique, patterns will emerge. These insights will help shape your marketing, communications, and branding strategies in ways that truly resonates. Most importantly, keep listening. Pay attention to conversations at events, questions from parents, and informal feedback. Your personas and empathy maps should be **living documents, evolving** as you gain new insights.

Phase 1:

Internal Hypothesis

Estimated Time: 3 hours

Goal: Create a working hypothesis about your audience's motivations, emotions, and decision-making process.

- 1) **Print the worksheets** in A3 format or larger to allow for easy collaboration.
- 2) **Bring together** your communications team and other staff involved in marketing and messaging.
- 3) **Choose two or three key audience segments** and use the Persona Worksheet to create a profile for each.
- 4) **Collaborate** to make informed assumptions about their motivations, challenges, and decision-making process.
- 5) After completing the personas, use the Empathy Map to explore how their perspectives, emotions, and behaviors change **at each stage of their journey**.

Review your findings as a group and refine them into interview questions to test in Phase 2. These questions will help confirm or challenge your assumptions in Phase 2. Ask about how their perspectives shift over time to track key changes in their journey.

Phase 2:

Listen and Validate

Estimated Time: Varies, but expect multiple interviews or discussions

Goal: Gain real insights to refine your personas and empathy maps.

- 1) **Conduct Interviews** – Use your Phase 1 questions as a guide, but remain flexible. Listen for key themes, emotions, and unexpected insights. Ask open-ended questions, and take notes on both what is said and how it is said.
- 2) **Analyze and Adjust** – Compare findings to your initial assumptions. Identify patterns, then update personas and empathy maps accordingly.
- 3) **Turn Insights into Action** – Summarize findings into visual reminders such as posters, internal guides, or reference sheets to keep audience insights visible. Use these to align marketing, admissions, and leadership around a clearer, shared understanding of your audiences.

Set a plan to continue gathering insights through regular conversations, surveys, and parent interactions. Your audience is always evolving, so keep listening and refining as you learn more.

SCHOOL ID Empathy Overhaul Workshop – Worksheets Instructions

Define Persona Sheet

Step 1: Define Your Persona

Select a key audience segment (e.g., a prospective parent from another school, a locally-based internationally minded family, or a relocating international family).

- Give your persona a name and define their demographics to make them feel real.
- Identify their role, motivations, and challenges when engaging with your school.

Step 2: Identify Their Journey Phase

Where is your persona in their relationship with your school?

- **Research & Awareness** – Learning about your school for the first time.
- **Decision & Commitment** – Choosing to enroll, work, or engage with the school.
- **Onboarding & Transition** – Adjusting to the school environment.
- **Engagement & Advocacy** – Becoming an active community member or school ambassador.

Step 3: Get to Know Them Better

Go beyond basic demographics and step into your persona's perspective. **This section doesn't need to be fully completed on the first pass—you'll revisit it after working through the Empathy Map to fill in gaps and refine insights.**

- What does their typical day look like? Consider their routine, work-life balance, and daily challenges.
- What other communities do they belong to? Think about their professional networks, cultural groups, hobbies, or social circles.
- What key qualities or values do they prioritize in education?
- How do they describe your school to friends, colleagues, or family?

Empathy Map Sheet

Step 1: Build the Empathy Map

Turn to the Empathy Map Page. Start in the center, defining your persona's name and key goals for their journey phase. Then, move through the outer sections. As emotional insights emerge, list likely emotions in the center, categorized as positive, negative, or neutral.

- What do they see? Consider their environment—what messages, visuals, and options are they exposed to?
- What do they hear? What do they hear? Who influences their decision—friends, family, online reviews, or other parents?
- What do they say & do? How do they talk about your school? What actions do they take (or hesitate to take)?
- What excites them? What worries them? Identify both positive and negative emotions.

Tip: Move back and forth between sections! Insights from one area may inform another.

Step 2: Align the Empathy Map & Persona

Review your empathy map and update your persona with any new insights. Adjust their challenges, motivations, or influences based on what you uncovered. Use this refined version as a foundation for further research—engage real audience members to validate and improve your understanding.

Next Steps:

- Revisit & update your empathy map as you gain new insights.
- Apply what you've learned in all communications.
- Summarize key personas and their journey phases into a sharable format for departments—like Admissions, Leadership, or Academics. Show them how to better understand your audience and see how marketing supports the school's goals.