Focus Mapping as a Group

Preview

About 12 years ago I created a design method I now call "Focus Mapping". Since then, I've iterated and improved this method. I've taught Focus Mapping to students at Stanford, and I've trained industry innovators in my 2-day Boot Camps.

Today, of all the methods in Behavior Design, **Focus Mapping is my favorite**. It's extremely useful. And I find this method to be fun as well.

In this Expert Guide I explain how to run a group session of Focus Mapping.

Why use Focus Mapping?

You should use Focus Mapping when you have a **large set of items** and you need to **choose just one**, or just a few.

For example, suppose you want to get healthier, and you've listed 40 different behaviors that could take you toward a healthier you. Well, you can't realistically focus on 40 health behaviors. Instead, at the start you'll need to match yourself with one, or a few, but not all 40. Instead of guessing which healthy behaviors to do, my Focus Mapping method gives you **a systematic way** to find the best behaviors for you.

Another example: Imagine that you're creating a website for your company, and your team has brainstormed about **70 features for the web site**. That's way too many. So instead of guessing (or arguing about) which features to implement (and which to exclude), your team can use Focus Mapping to identify the best ones.

Not only does my Focus Mapping method give you **a systematic way to identify the best options**, when done as a group this method will help your team agree on what to do -- and what not to do. In other words, Focus Mapping as a group can **create alignment in your team**. And that's important.

To summarize, Focus Mapping gives you a systematic way to:

- **Identify the best items** from a large set of options, and
- **Build team consensus** for the items identified.

When you use this method, you save time and effort, and you minimize disagreements among your teammates.

In summary, **my Focus Mapping method vastly increases your chances of success**.

Individual vs Group

In other places I've explained how to do Focus Mapping on your own -- my method for an individual. I won't cover that territory in this Expert Guide. Instead, at this point I'm assuming you know how to Focus Map on your own. However, you don't yet know (or you need a refresher) on how to lead your team in a Focus Mapping session. In other word, this document is about Focus Mapping as a group.

By the numbers . . .

You can run a Focus Mapping session with **2 to 12 people**. When the group is bigger than 12, the method starts to feel slow and bogged down. That's not fun.

Your team can complete a Focus Mapping session in **20 to 45 minutes**. The more experienced the team, the faster the session.

You can Focus Map anywhere from **6 to 60 items**. The more items you have, the slower the process feels. However, an experienced team can Focus Map a bunch of items -- as many as 60 -- in less than 30 minutes.

(See the end of this document for info on using this method with big teams, or with huge sets of items.)

Part of a system

My Focus Mapping method is part of a larger system I've created for Behavior Design.

The graphic shows where Focus Mapping fits in an overall, ideal process. However, in the real world, you can use Focus Mapping at a moment's notice (or nearly so).

Some innovation teams tell me they run a session of Focus Mapping at least once a week at work to help them figure out answers to a range of problems.

Yep, that makes me happy.

Steps in Behavior Design

- Clarify
- Magic Wand
- Crispify
- Focus Map
- Simplify
- Starfish
- Snaptest
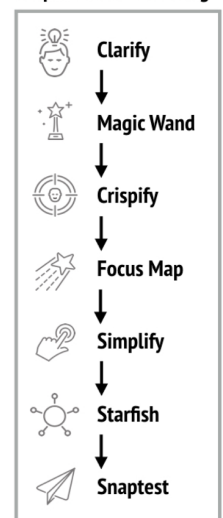
This is a draft. Get the real thing.

This Expert Guide is a draft version.

Email bjfogg@gmail.com for the new edition.

What to prepare in advance

Focus Mapping is a sorting process. Before you begin, you need to have items to sort.

In most cases you prepare a set of index cards (or sticky notes) that have one behavior, feature, or option printed on the card. For example, if you trying to help people save money, you would have a set of cards, each with a money-saving behavior printed on the card.

What's written on the card needs to be **clear and specific**. It can't be abstract or ambiguous. Revise items until all are clear.

Why? Because if people on your team disagree on what the item means, then they will disagree about where that item fits in the Focus Map. This wastes time and can lead to conflict.

So before running the Focus Mapping session, you need to put together a set of cards that each have a specific and unambiguous meaning.

How do you create the cards?

I like to use a printer to create the cards. Yes, you can print on index cards. And yes, you can even print on **4" x 6" sticky notes** (that's the size I prefer).

If those things are beyond you, then just print on regular paper and cut it into pieces. For example, you enter items into Powerpoint or Keynote, one behavior per slide, and then print out the deck with 4 slides per page. Finally, you take scissors cut each printed sheet into 4 pieces. Voila!

In some situations you won't have a printer (or time to print things). In this case, I suggest you ask one person with **very good handwriting** to use a marker to print on each card so it's readable from about 8 feet away.

When you print or when you have one person write each card, then all the items are readable, and it also **anonymizes the items** to some extent. (Sometimes anonymity is helpful.)

Resources you will need

In addition to the all-important set of cards you will sort, you must have these resources:

- A big wall, table, or floor
- Signs that describe the x and y axes
- An object that signals when a person as "opted out"
- A moderator -- someone to direct the session (that's probably you)

There are optional items as well:

- A set of rules you post
- Tape for sticking the cards to the wall

Overview of session

A session of Focus Mapping has these stages:

- **Preview** -- You explain how the session will go, and you hand out the items (the printed cards).
- **Round 1 - Part A** - Everyone takes turns placing items on the landscape. *No discussion allowed.*
- **Round 1 - Part B** -- Everyone takes turns moving items up or down on the landscape. *No discussion allowed.*
- **Round 2** -- Everyone takes turns sliding the items side to side on the landscape No discussion allowed.
- **Round 3: Wildcard** -- Anyone can propose moving an item to any new spot. Short discussion is okay, and then everyone votes.
- **Selecting the Focus Item**s -- You determine which items are in the Focus Zone, and which are not.

What is "Behavior Design"?

*Behavior Design is **a new field that I started** in collaboration with researchers in my Stanford lab. (Some people call it "behavioral design," but I don't. I prefer the directness and simplicity of "Behavior Design.")*

*Over the past 15 years, I've created a **set of models** for Behavior Design. Models are ways of **thinking**. For example, the Fogg Behavior Model helps people think clearly about how behavior works. I've created a bunch of models, some big, some small.*

*I've also created a **set of methods** for Behavior Design. My methods are ways of **designing** solutions that influence behavior. This Expert Guide explains one of my methods.*

*My models and methods work together; they go hand in hand to give you **a systematic set of tools for thinking and designing**.*

***My models and methods are new**. With a foundation in Behavior Design, you will be able to tackle most any challenge related to behavior. It's a **powerful system**.*

*To become an expert in Behavior Design, **you can join my 2-day Boot Camps**. Email me for more info: **bjfogg@gmail.com***