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[Essentials of Software-as-a-Service \(SaaS\) Business](#)

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User Journey Mapping

In our previous lecture, we explored the creation of user personas based on market research. In this video, we'll build on that foundation to understand how to map out the entire user experience with your SaaS product.

So a **user journey map is a visual representation of the process a user goes through to accomplish a specific goal with your product or service**. It's typically displayed as a horizontal timeline, showcasing each step of the user's interaction with your product.

In practice, journey mapping is a collaborative process that involves multiple team members from different departments. Team members come together, often using a large whiteboard or digital collaboration tool. Let's walk through the process of creating a user journey map and understand its components.

Define the scope

Firstly, the team needs to define the scope. In this initial step, the SaaS startup team **clearly outlines what aspects of the anticipated user journey they want to map**. For a SaaS product in the design phase, this typically involves envisioning the entire journey from when a potential customer first discovers the product concept to when they become a hypothetical active user. Defining the scope helps the team stay focused and ensures that the journey map aligns with their product development goals.

Identify anticipated user stages

Next, the team outlines **the main stages they expect a user to go through in their journey with the product**. These stages provide a framework for understanding the user's progression from initial contact to becoming a loyal customer. By defining these stages, they create a structure for the journey map and ensure that all crucial phases of the user experience are considered in product design. The number and nature of these stages can vary depending on your specific SaaS product and its complexity.

Map out predicted actions and touchpoints

Then for each identified stage, the team brainstorms **the specific actions they anticipate the user will take and the touchpoints where the user might interact with the company**

or product. These could be digital like your website or application or physical like a customer service call. Mapping out these actions and touchpoints helps you visualize how users will interact with your product and identify key areas to focus on in the design process.

Anticipate customer feelings

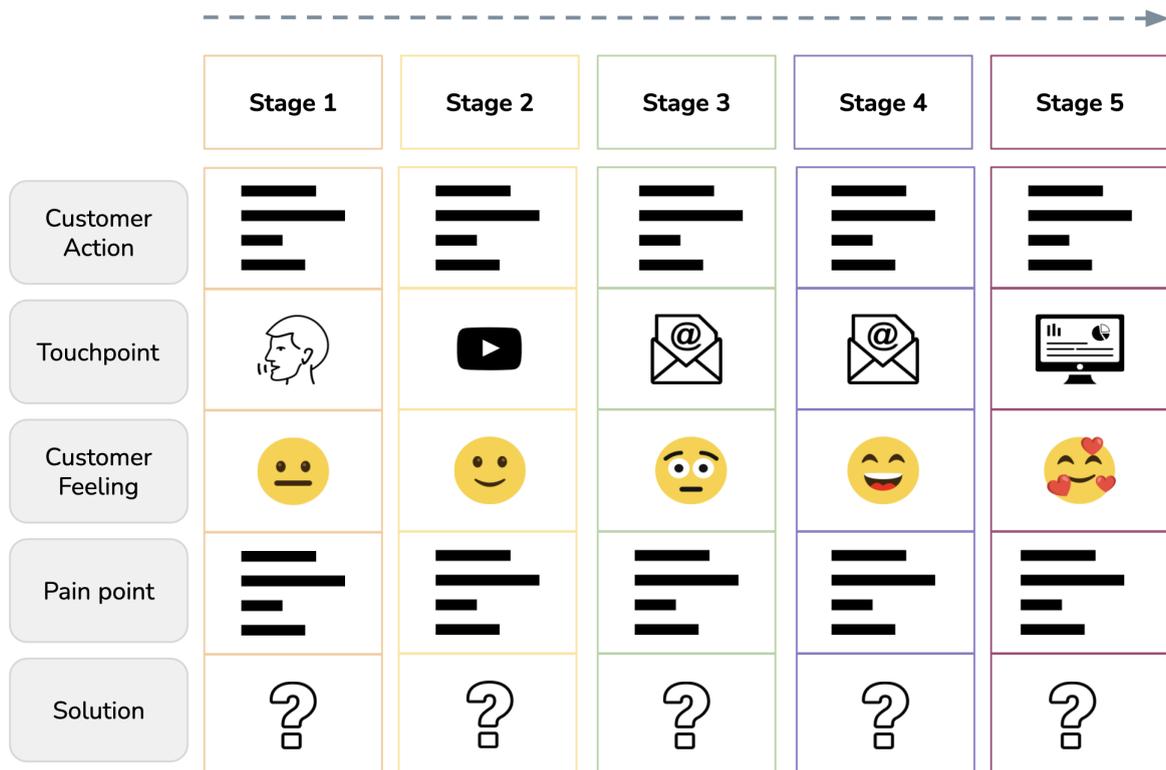
In addition, the team considers **the potential emotional state of users at each stage of the journey.** This involves putting themselves in the shoes of their hypothetical users, based on their personas and market research. Emotions can range from excitement and curiosity to frustration or anxiety. By anticipating these emotional responses, they can design a product and user experience that addresses both functional and emotional needs, creating a more satisfying and engaging experience for users.

Predict potential pain points

Also, the team **identifies areas where users may potentially experience frustration, confusion, or dissatisfaction** with their product or similar products in the market. These could include issues like confusion about pricing, or potential frustration with the learning curve. Identifying these potential pain points early allows the team to address them proactively in their product design and create more enjoyable user experience.

Brainstorm preemptive solutions

After that, the team brainstorms **potential solutions for each identified pain point or potential issue.** These could be features, design elements, or strategies that address the anticipated problems before they occur. For example, if they anticipate a steep learning curve, they might design an interactive onboarding tutorial. This step transforms potential problems into opportunities for creating a superior user experience, giving the product a competitive edge even before launch.



This visual format makes it **easy for team members to understand the entire user journey at a glance and identify areas for improvement**. The startup might share the map with a select group of potential users to get their feedback, or discuss it with team members from sales and support to get diverse perspectives. This process often reveals new insights or corrections that need to be made to the map.

Once complete, the journey map becomes a valuable strategic tool. As the SaaS product evolves, new features are added, or market conditions change, **the user journey will also change**. Successful startups make it a practice to regularly revisit and update their journey maps, perhaps quarterly or bi-annually, to ensure they always have an accurate picture of their users' experiences.

It's also important to note that **the components of a user journey map can vary depending on the specific needs of the product, company, or project**. The structure and components of a journey map should be tailored to best represent the user's experience with your particular product and to provide the most relevant insights for your team.

Practical Example

Let's explore a practical example of a user journey map for an AI-Powered Email Marketing Automation Tool. This example illustrates how a potential customer might interact with the product from initial discovery to first use.

1. Discovery

- *Customer Action: Searches for "AI email marketing tools" online*
- *Touchpoint: Search engine results page*
- *Customer Feeling: Curious but skeptical about AI capabilities*
- *Pain Point: Overwhelmed by options and technical jargon*
- *Solution: Create clear, jargon-free landing pages highlighting key benefits*

In the Discovery stage, a marketing manager, feeling frustrated with their current email marketing processes, turns to Google to search for "AI email marketing tools." He lands on a search engine results page, which serves as their first touchpoint with various AI-powered email marketing solutions. He feels curious about the possibilities of AI in email marketing, but he's also skeptical about its actual capabilities and also quickly becomes overwhelmed by the numerous options and the technical jargon used to describe these tools. So that's his pain point. To address this our SaaS company can create clear, jargon-free landing pages that highlight the key benefits of our AI-powered email marketing tool, making it easier for potential customers to understand its value proposition.

2. Research

- *Customer Action: Reads blog posts and watches demo videos*
- *Touchpoint: Company website and YouTube channel*
- *Customer Feeling: Interested but unsure if the tool fits their needs*
- *Pain Point: Difficulty comparing features with competitors*
- *Solution: Develop an interactive feature comparison tool*

Moving on to the Research stage, the marketing manager dives deeper into the company's website, reading blog posts about AI in email marketing and watching demo videos on our YouTube channel. These touchpoints provide more detailed information about our AI-powered email marketing tool. The manager's feeling at this stage is one of interest, but he's still unsure if our tool truly fits his specific needs. A significant pain point emerges as he struggles to compare our features with those of our competitors. To solve this issue, we might develop an interactive feature comparison tool on our website, allowing potential customers to easily see how our product stacks up against others in the market.

3. Evaluation

- *Customer Action: Signs up for a product webinar*
- *Touchpoint: Webinar platform*
- *Customer Feeling: Excited about potential*
- *Pain Point: Unsure how the AI will integrate with existing workflows*
- *Solution: Offer personalized post-webinar consultations*

In the Evaluation stage, the manager takes a more active step by signing-up for a product webinar. The webinar platform serves as the touchpoint for this interaction. During the

webinar, he feels excited about the potential of our AI-powered tool, however his main point is uncertainty about how our AI tool will integrate with their existing workflows. To address this concern, we can offer personalized post-webinar consultations, giving the potential customer the opportunity to discuss their specific integration concerns with our product experts.

4. Trial Initiation

- *Customer Action: Starts a 14-day free trial*
- *Touchpoint: Trial signup page and welcome email*
- *Customer Feeling: Eager to explore but slightly overwhelmed*
- *Pain Point: Uncertain where to begin with the tool*
- *Solution: Implement an interactive onboarding checklist*

The Trial Initiation stage begins when the manager starts a 14-day free trial of our tool. The touchpoints here are the trial signup page and the welcome email they receive. He feels eager to explore the tool's capabilities, but he's also slightly overwhelmed by the prospect of learning a new system. His main pain point is uncertainty about where to begin with the tool. To mitigate this, we might implement an interactive onboarding checklist that guides new users through the essential first steps.

5. First Use

- *Customer Action: Creates and sends first AI-powered email campaign*
- *Touchpoint: Email creation interface and sending dashboard*
- *Customer Feeling: Impressed by ease of use, anxious about results*
- *Pain Point: Unsure how to interpret AI-generated content suggestions*
- *Solution: Provide in-app tooltips explaining AI recommendations*

And lastly, in the First Use stage, the manager creates and sends his first AI-powered email campaign. He interacts with our tool through the email creation interface and sending dashboard. He feels impressed by the tool's ease of use. A key pain point emerges as he's unsure how to interpret the AI-generated content suggestions. To address this, we can provide in-app tooltips that explain each AI recommendation, helping users understand the reasoning behind the suggestions and feel more confident in using the AI-powered features.

The insights we've gained from user journey mapping directly inform our decisions about user interface and user experience, which we'll explore in depth in our next lecture. I look forward to seeing you there!