

Understand the Environment.

CONTEXT MAPPING

Context Mapping is a design research method used during the initial phases of the design process, to understand the context within which a product or service will be delivered. It's particularly useful if you don't have a good understanding of a situation until you see it in a fuller context.

The methodology is also sometimes referred to as PESTLE Analysis, which stands for the scope of its investigation, into the **P**olitical, **E**nvironmental, **S**ociological, **T**echnological, **L**egal and **E**conomic Environment.

The Context Map is intended to show you the external forces and trends impacting on a product, service or organization. It helps map the external environment you're operating in, thereby improving your ability to respond proactively to factors that might impinge on your business.

Developing a context map is quite simple;

STEP 1: Hang six sheets of flip-chart paper on a wall in two-rows;

STEP 2: On the top-middle sheet of flip-chart paper, draw a picture or write a word to represent the organisation, service or product you are going to be discussing;

STEP 3: On the same sheet of paper, under the image, write the word "POLITICAL".

STEP 4: On the other sheets write "ECONOMIC", "TECHNOLOGY", "SOCIOLOGICAL (CUSTOMERS)", "LEGAL", and "ENVIRONMENTAL"

STEP 5: Introduce the context map to the group. Explain that the goal of populating the map is to get a sense of the big picture in which your service operates. Ask the players which category on the map they'd like to discuss first. Ask them to write issues on Post-It notes that are impacting on the organisation and get them to continue until all their ideas run dry.

STEP 6: Ask them to place the comments on the flip chart created for that category and ask them to explain the issues as they post them up.

STEP 7: Move to another category and ask the group to offer ideas for that category. Continue populating the map with content until every category but is filled in.

STEP 8: Summarize the overall findings with the group and ask for observations, insights and concerns about the context map.

It's up to the participants to build a shared picture of the environment in which they operate.

The facilitator can help generate content by asking thought provoking questions. At the end of the process the Context Map should give you a holistic view of the external business landscape and show the group where they can focus their efforts to get strategic results.

