

D36°REES NORTH

An Entrepreneur's Guide to Market Research through Design Thinking

36 Degrees North

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Human-Centered Design Case Study:

Source: <https://www.designkit.org/case-studies/2>

IMPACT HIGHLIGHTS

Design Team

2 IDEO.org Designers

Partners

Bezos Family Foundation

Timeline

Design phase 14 weeks; To Vroom launch 3 years

Location

Across the USA

Vroom

A Human-Centered Take on Early Childhood Development

Advances in neuroscience and child development confirm what many educators have long believed: Children's readiness for kindergarten (and life beyond) hinges on positive engagement with their parents and caregivers during the first five years of their lives. This is the most active period for brain development—children's brains form new connections at a rate of 700 synapses per second. But as a

society, we underinvest in children and families during the earliest years, leaving far too much opportunity on the table. For low-income parents, who may have lacked good models themselves and feel judged or blamed, much of the parenting advice is unattainable. [The Bezos Family Foundation](#) and [IDEO.org](#) set out to activate engagement through new tools and messages, and to broaden the prescription beyond commonly heard (but not uniformly embraced) directives about reading to children. Could there be a way to communicate brain science directly to parents in ways that positively influence behavior, and raises the value of all forms of positive interaction with babies and toddlers?

THE OUTCOME

After extensive interviews with parents, child development experts, and pediatricians around the country, the team developed a large-scale messaging campaign celebrating everyday moments as learning opportunities. Whether sitting in the laundromat or shopping at the supermarket, the fundamental message was that taking advantage of the many chances to engage with a child strengthens the foundation of that child's brain development. The Bezos Family Foundation built upon our design team's key insights, further developed them, and in the spring of 2014, launched [Vroom](#). Vroom advocates for the time parents do have and using it in different ways to help build their kids' brains.

THE PROCESS

INSPIRATION

The IDEO.org team undertook a highly immersive inspiration phase, visiting low-income communities in California, New York, and Pennsylvania to conduct interviews with parents and to observe existing programs aimed at improving child development outcomes. The team learned that many of the parents they met had had very tough upbringings. These parents didn't feel fully equipped to engage with their children, because their own parents didn't engage with them. One of the most successful programs the team witnessed during their research was one in which nurses went into people's homes for several hours each week simply to play with the children in front of the parents. By modeling play, they were able to affect behavior change and shift the parent-child dynamic.

Interviews with child development experts and pediatricians tended to reinforce the direct findings: If parenting advice is limited to reading books, those who don't feel comfortable reading aloud may forego all forms of engagement. One pediatrician in New York argued outright that playing, talking to, and responding to children reading trumps reading.

IDEATION

When field research was complete, the team returned to San Francisco to synthesize its findings and look for patterns among the interviews. As they synthesized everything they learned, the team began to formulate a voice, identity, and set of design principles for the campaign. They came to some core principles that still guide Vroom today, ideas like Speak in the voice of their peers, Withhold Judgment, and All parents want to be good parents.

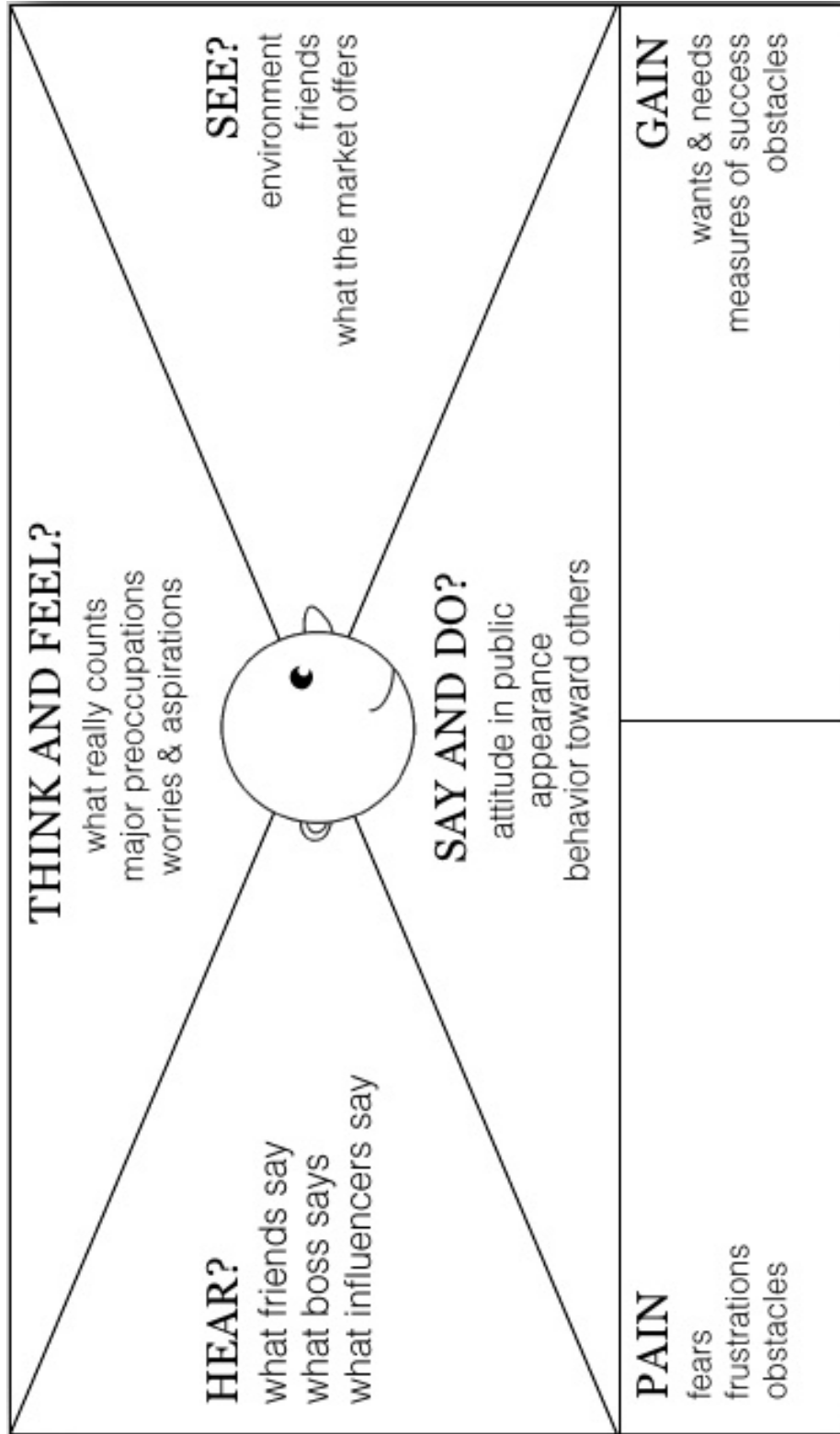
The team came up with a series of personas, each of them representing a woman from the communities being served, then invited mothers to the office to review mood boards, listen to sample voices, and provide feedback on which character they'd trust for advice on child-rearing.

From this feedback period, the team discovered that most parents, though they weren't drawn to an academic approach to engaging their children, were very interested in the science behind behavior and brain development. Through a host of interviews, the team heard parents talking about a eureka moment after meeting with a neurologist who explained how the science worked. It was a revelation that had a big impact on how they saw their role in bringing up their child.

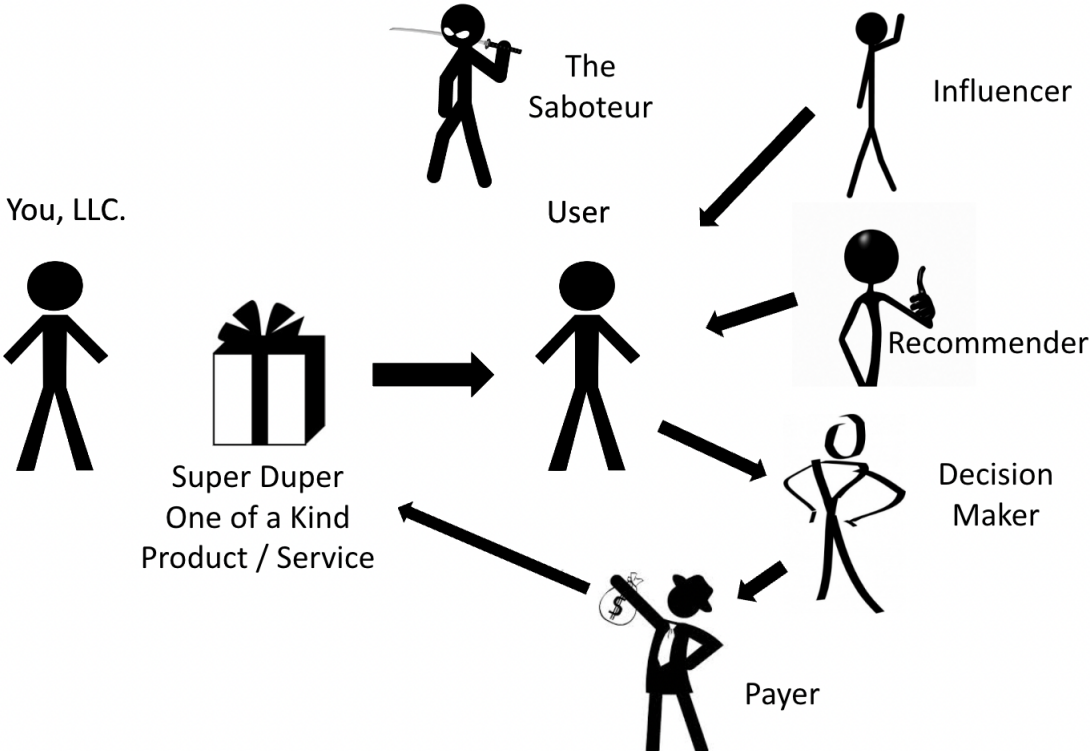
IMPLEMENTATION

By the end of the Inspiration and Ideation phases, the IDEO.org team had created a strong, well-defined creative brief that could be handed to an advertising agency and used as the foundation for a major campaign. They came up with provocations and prompts for people to play with their kids as well as an advertising strategy that included guerrilla interventions displayed in laundromats instead of on big billboards. After another couple years of refinement and more design work, the Bezos Family Foundation launched the pilot of Vroom in 2014 in King County in Washington State.

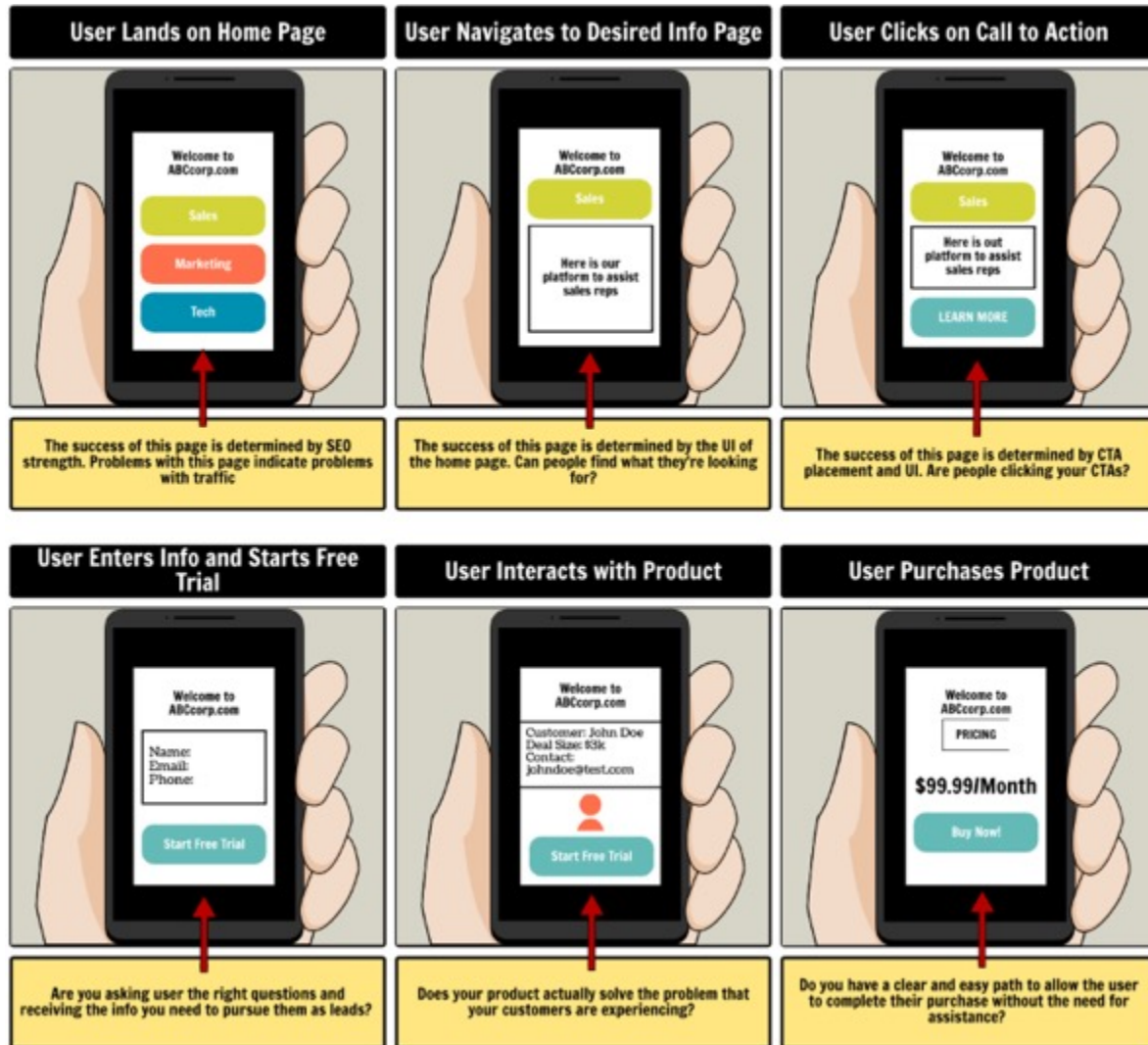
Empathy Map:



Customer Ecosystem Mapping:



Example Storyboard:



Practice Pitch Structure:

- The problem is _____ (problem)
- Our proposed product/service is _____ (new solution)
- For _____ (target customers)
- That provides _____ (key benefit)- for customers and/or company
- We have validated that this will work by _____ (description of test or what you will go do)