

# Designing for Empathy



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Artefact is a technology product design company dedicated to defining next-generation products and user experiences that lead to preferable outcomes for society, humanity, and the environment.

## **Designing for Empathy**

### **A toolkit created by Artefact**

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### **A note about our philosophy**

21st Century Design is a call to action for our industry to focus on designing for ‘preferable outcomes’ (one of those outcomes is empathy, the subject of this toolkit). As we deal with increasingly complex problems such as hunger and global warming, we must step beyond our traditional approach to problem solving and ask different questions. Our mission is no longer just about the craft of design: usability, delight, and desirability. Our mission in the 21st century is about building systems and services that result in positive outcomes for a future that we all want to be a part of. Doing this means taking into account what we know and are rapidly discovering about human behavior through fields such as cognitive psychology, neuroscience, and anthropology. Learnings about bias in decision-making and the complexities of behavior change is knowledge that must be incorporated when we embark on design challenges. It is an exciting time for the design practice. In the 21st Century, design can be used responsibly as a powerful tool to change human behavior for a preferable future.

Read our full paper on 21st Century Design at  
[www.artefactgroup.com/21stCenturyDesign.pdf](http://www.artefactgroup.com/21stCenturyDesign.pdf).



## Why Empathy?

As designers and researchers, we recognize that our work shapes experiences, behaviors, and systems, whether we do it deliberately or not. Most of us would like to use this power to create a positive impact. We believe that product, messaging, and service designs have the potential to contribute to a more empathetic society that is better able to face the scale of our shared problems. By applying the lens of empathy to our design process, we've been able to facilitate more innovative solutions.

**This toolkit is designed to take you from the abstract idea of positive impact through empathy to a concrete process that can be incorporated into your work.**

Read our full paper on empathy at [www.artefactgroup.com/empathy.pdf](http://www.artefactgroup.com/empathy.pdf).



We will walk through insights about how to design for empathy with these steps:

- 1 **Define** opportunities for empathy in your product or service.
- 2 **Brainstorm** design concepts for these opportunities.

This toolkit is for:

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(name of product or service)

# Define

## Instructions

# Who are your users and what are their relationships with each other?

### WORK ON YOUR OWN

**Use the relationship map on the next page to diagram users.**

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Write in:

Primary users in the center

Secondary and tertiary users in the surrounding circles

Those who influence/support users in the outermost circle

**Then connect users based on the nature of their relationship.**

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Draw lines:

Solid line between users with a positive or neutral relationship

Hashed line between users whose relationship could use improvement

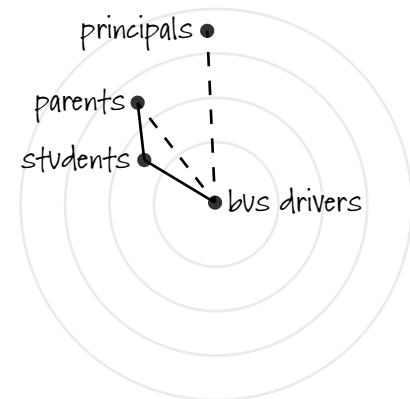
*Example:*

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*You are improving the bus service at a school. The primary user of the service is the bus driver, secondary users are the students who ride the bus, tertiary users are the parents of the students, and the influencers are the principals and administrators who manage the budget and bus schedule.*

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*Bus drivers and principals have a hashed line because the drivers feel like principals don't understand the time and safety pressure in their jobs – all they care about is whether parents are happy.*



Relationship map



## Instructions

# What are users' experiences with the product or service?

WORK ON YOUR OWN

**Using the experience map on the next page, choose one relationship to improve.**

Pick any two users whose relationship could use improvement, or who don't have a relationship at all, but should.

Example:

USER 1:

bus drivers

USER 2:

principals

**Then map out their experience using the product or service.**

Think about the initial experiences, frequent experiences, and infrequent cases.

What interactions do the users have with each other?

INITIAL EXPERIENCE

First day of work, the bus driver tests out his/her route.

FREQUENT EXPERIENCES

Driver picks-up and drops off the students while principal counts kids.

INFREQUENT CASES

Maintaining unforeseen repairs is frustrating. Principal doesn't know if bus will be on schedule and bus driver doesn't know when bus will be back in service.

What interactions could the users have that they currently don't have?

Better coordination when maintenance happens.



## Experience map

USER 1:

USER 2:

What interactions do the users have with each other?

INITIAL EXPERIENCE

FREQUENT EXPERIENCES

INFREQUENT CASES

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What interactions could the users have that they currently don't have?

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## Conclusions

What interaction do you want to improve?

WORK AS A GROUP

**Decide on one interaction between the users that is broken or doesn't exist.  
Choose that as the interaction you're designing for.**

Interaction:

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Why did you choose this?

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# Brainstorm

## Empathy strategies

Brainstorm design solutions that incorporate empathy.

### WORK ON YOUR OWN, THEN AS A GROUP

The following pages outline strategies that lead to empathy. Choose the strategies that are relevant to your product or service.

**Engage**  
**Share**  
**Tell a story**  
**Access**  
**Membership**

*Tips for brainstorming:*

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*Brainstorms work best when you work separately, and then share your ideas with the group.*

*Sketch or write out your ideas on the half-sheets provided. Don't worry about being a good artist here. The goal is to capture ideas and communicate concepts quickly.*

*There are no "bad" ideas. All ideas are capable of leading to other ideas.*

*When listening to others' ideas, pile on by starting with "Yes! And..." to keep the brainstorm positive and creative.*

# Engage

Create an opportunity for users to engage with another person currently unknown to them, or transform and expand a current relationship. These interactions do not have to be in person.

Consider these questions:

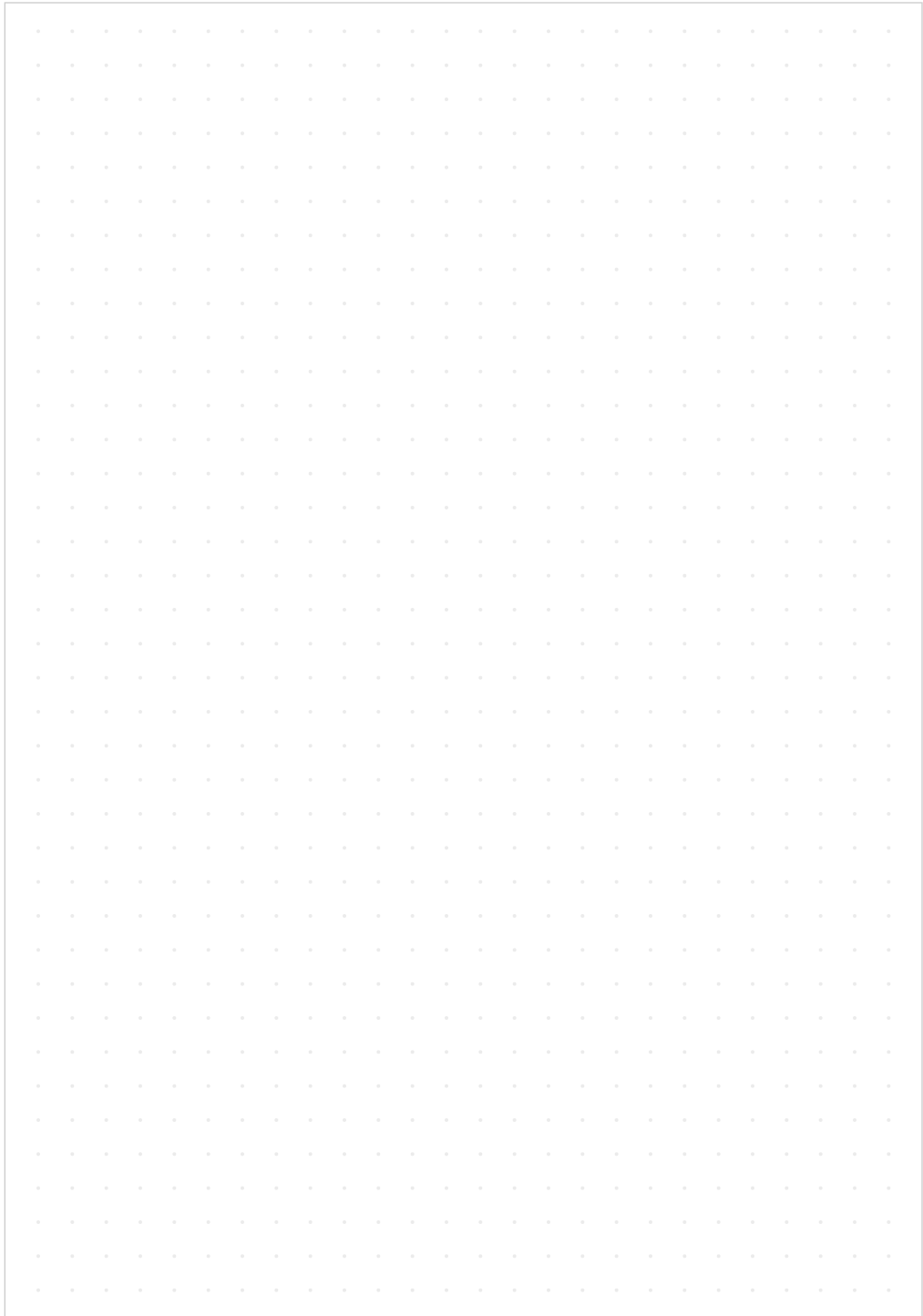
Can we...

Transform a use context from solo to group-based?

Provide a group of users with new opportunities to interact with another group of users?

Help users have new interactions with others who are unfamiliar to them?

Transform written or distant interactions to face-to-face interactions?



## Share

Create a moment when users unfamiliar to one another share something the other user needs, whether it be information, objects, experience, meals, a view, time, etc.

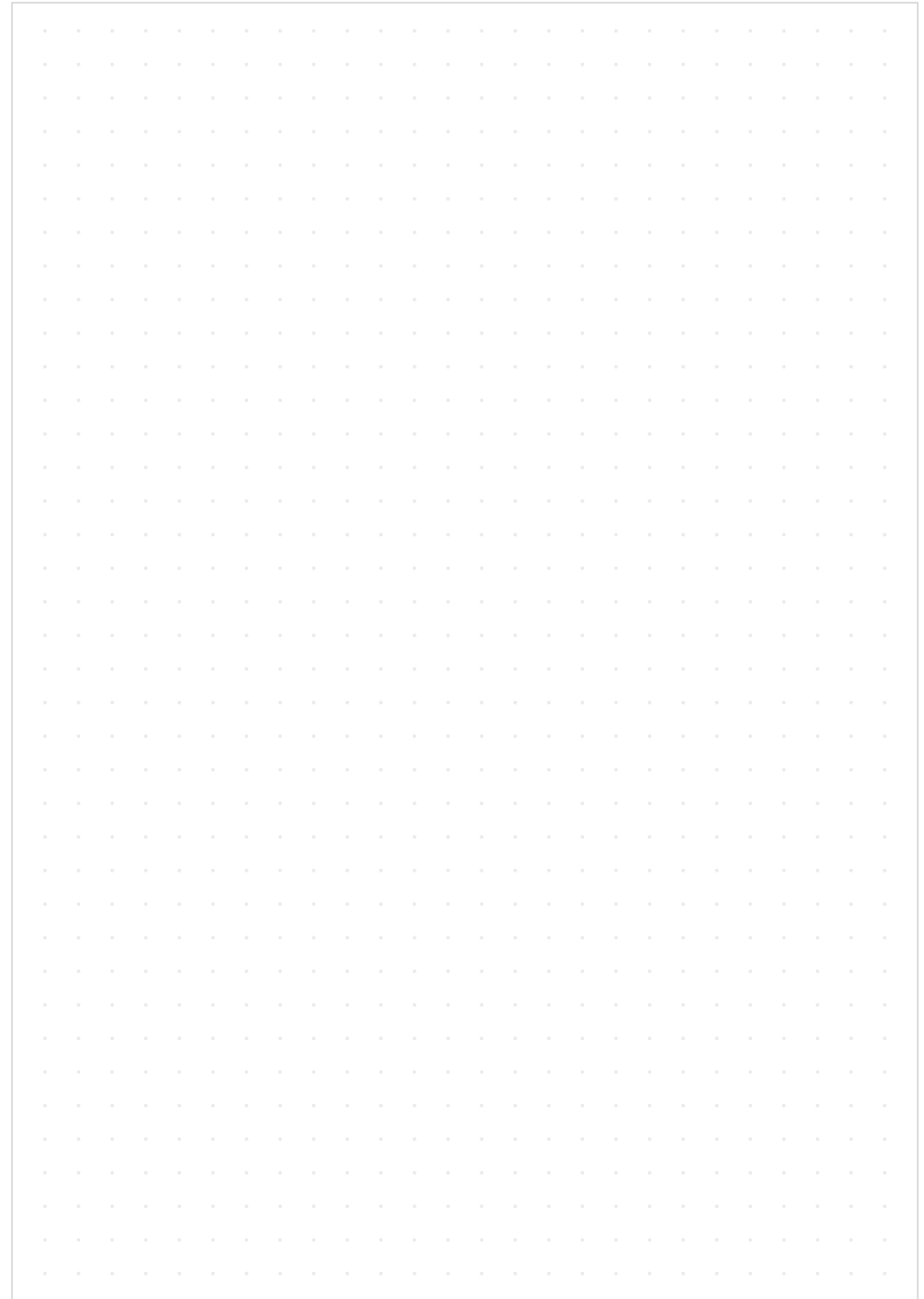
Consider these questions:

Can we...

Create situations or moments where users can passively share a common history, place, interest, love, or activity?

Surface something new that is common to more than one user?

Help users co-experience: an event, an activity, a story, a meal?



## Tell a story

Create an opportunity for users to tell a story and be listened to, or create an opportunity for users to listen to someone else's story.

Consider these questions:

Can we...

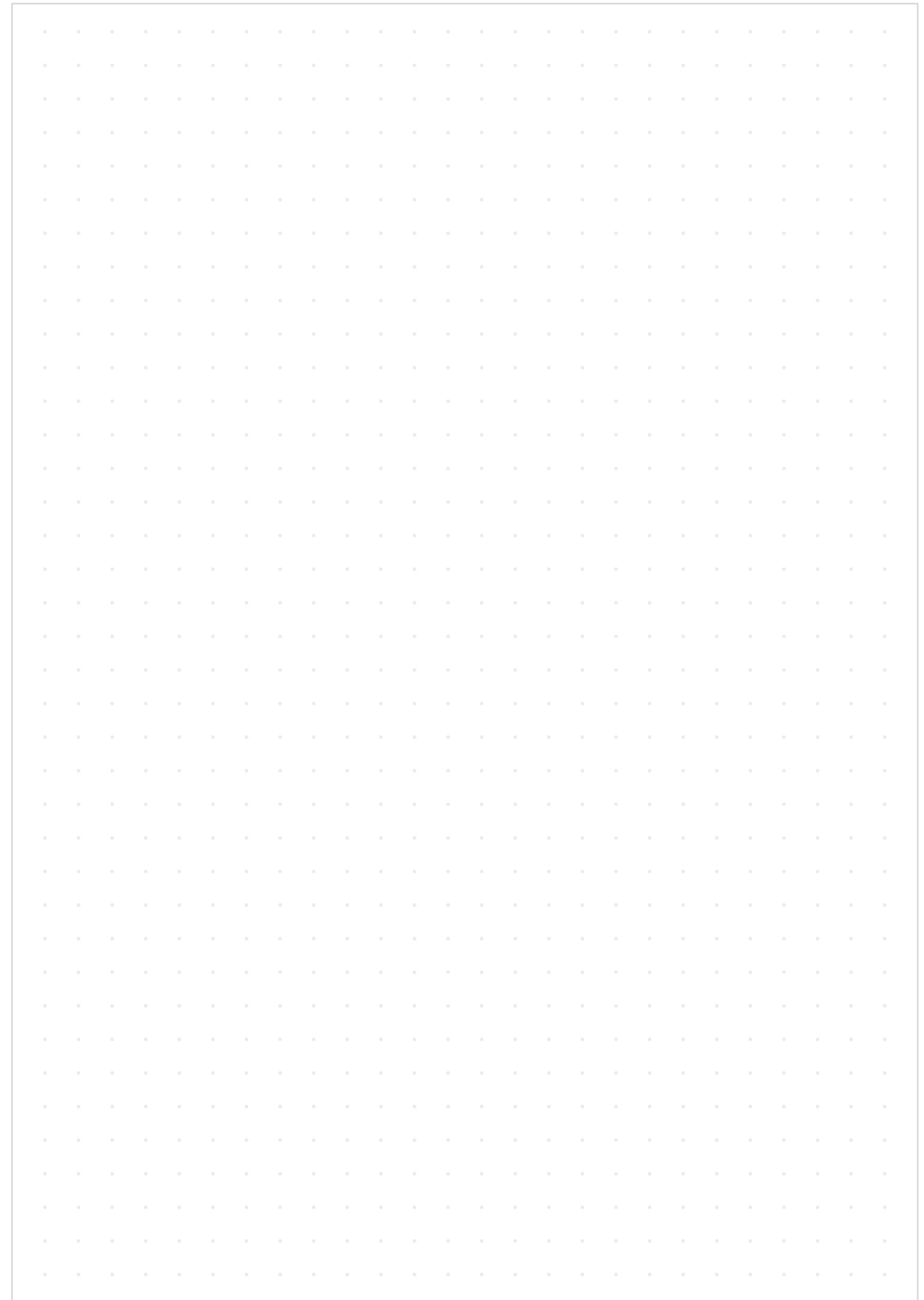
Transform moments of ordinary interaction into opportunities for storytelling?

Transform current communication or information exchange into personal stories?

Transform shared stories from scripted to unscripted?

Help frame current stories or communications with a sense of humor?

Make relevant the experiences and stories of one group of users to another with an insight or a title that translates or characterizes the meaning?



## Access

Create an opportunity to gain access to people or communities to which one normally does not have access.

Consider these questions:

Can we...

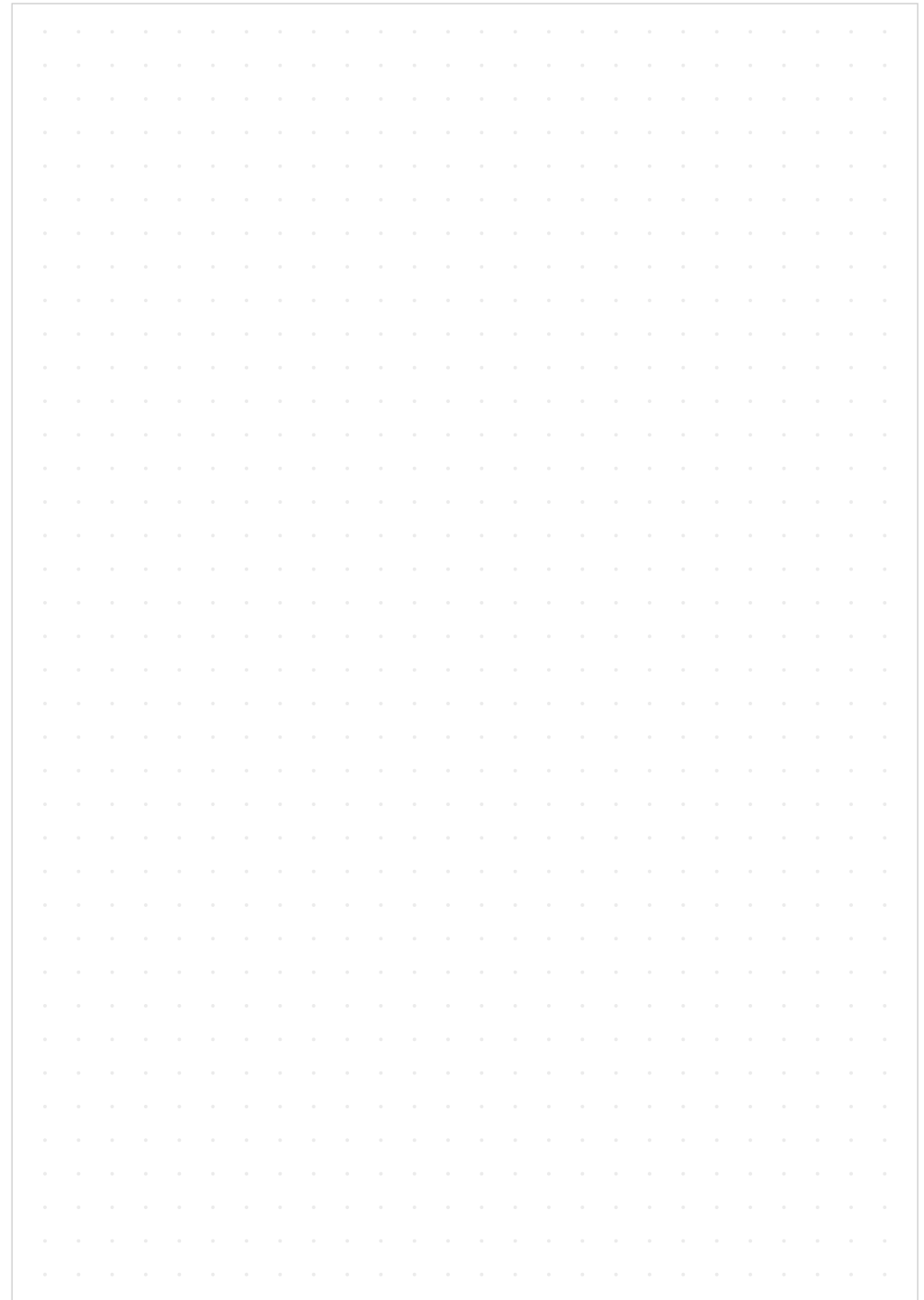
Bridge divisions between users with more communication and interaction?

Find opportunities for users to learn more about one another through new forms of interaction?

Open up new perspectives on users?

Reveal or relay information about a less powerful group of users, or about a peripheral interest group?

Invite and promote richer connections across in-groups and out-groups?





## Membership

Create an opportunity for users to experience a new form of solidarity with others, or to become members of a new community.

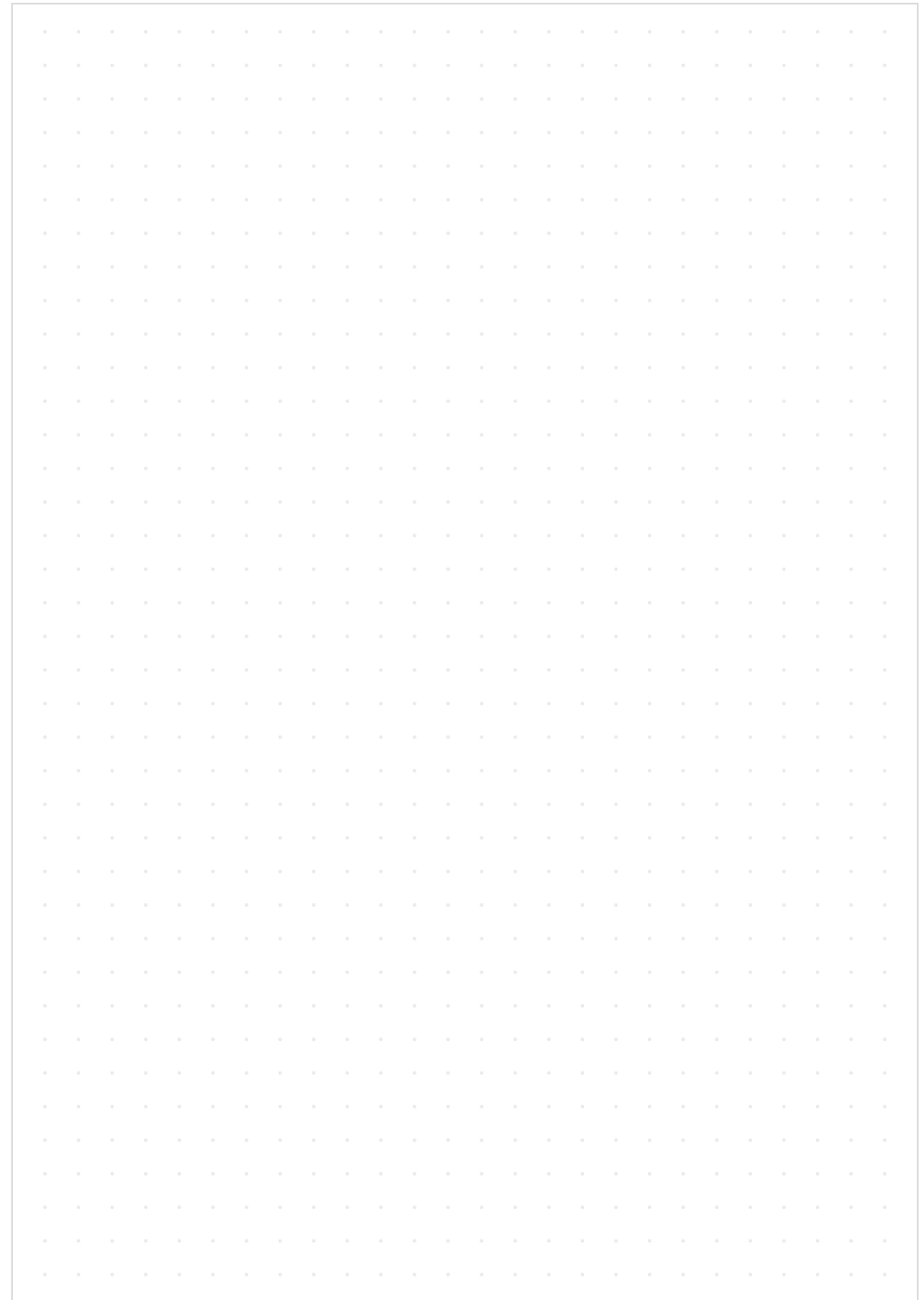
Consider these questions:

Can we...

Help users discover new solidarity with others who share a common trait, experience, history, or habit?

Help users join in on a collaborative process toward a shared goal?

Help users find new identification with one another around one thing?

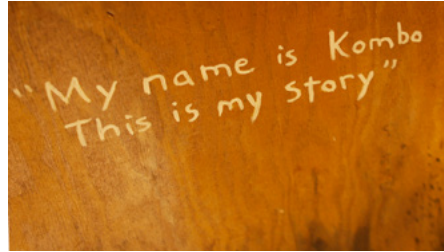


## Examples of designing for empathy



### Add meaning

The U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington D.C. uses the passport of a person who lived during the holocaust as the admission ticket to the museum. This transforms a banal interaction into something more interactive and meaningful.



### Make it personal

World Vision tied an abstract idea to personal connections and community by creating an interactive, travelling exhibit for first-world people to experience what it is like to live as child in Africa. Participants take on a child's persona and go through the experience of being diagnosed with HIV, using life-like audio, video, and physical stimuli.



### Human-ize

If it cannot be live and interactive, video or photography can help tell the story or represent a user. In the "It gets better" project, real people submit videos telling of their own experiences enduring harassment while growing up. These videos human-ize the issue to ensure young LGBT that it does indeed get better.



### Reveal the process

WWoofing farms allows city dwellers to experience what it is like to be an organic farmer, thereby giving a better understanding of the work required to bring food to the dinner table. By revealing the story behind the story, the hidden processes or activities, the experience becomes more real.



Hello, **Nicholas**  
Your Account ▾

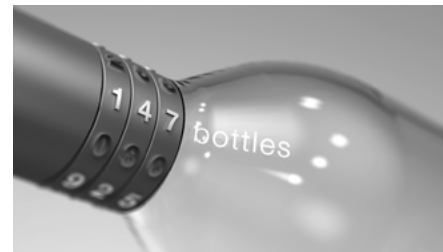
### Shift the tone

A personal address, such as the user's name, or use of 2nd person ("you"), can make communications more personal. Amazon.com and other retailers do this to make users feel that recommendations are just for them.



### Enhance visibility

Create new ways to recognize and support users whose work or role is usually invisible. Hotels have started to place cards on guests night stands with a handwritten note from the housekeeping staff, recognizing that "Sofia has kept your room clean today."



### Encourage good behavior

Artefact's concept, called '999 bottles', is a re-usable water bottle that encourages users to refill rather than use plastic bottles. The dial enables users to keep track how many plastic bottles they've saved from the landfill and socialize their positive impact with others.

