



CASE STUDY

USER-CENTRIC DEEP DIVES TO EXPLORE TELEWORKING EMPLOYEE NEEDS

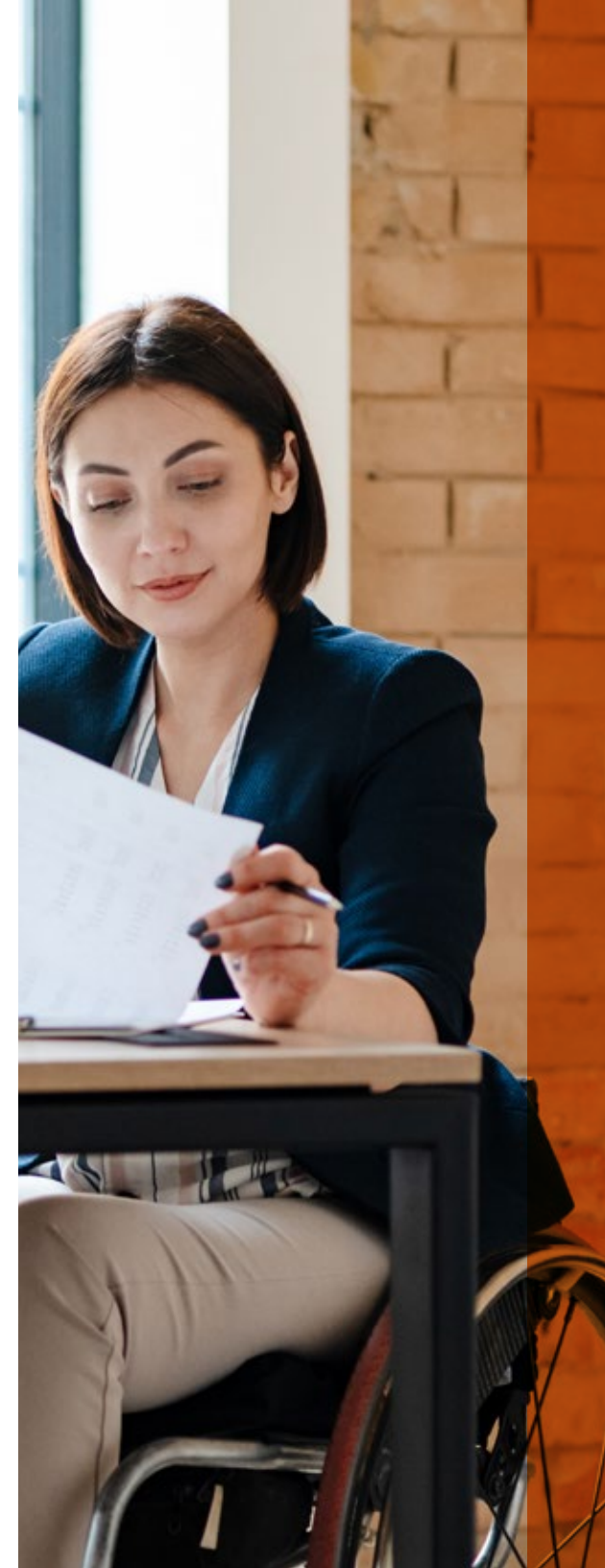
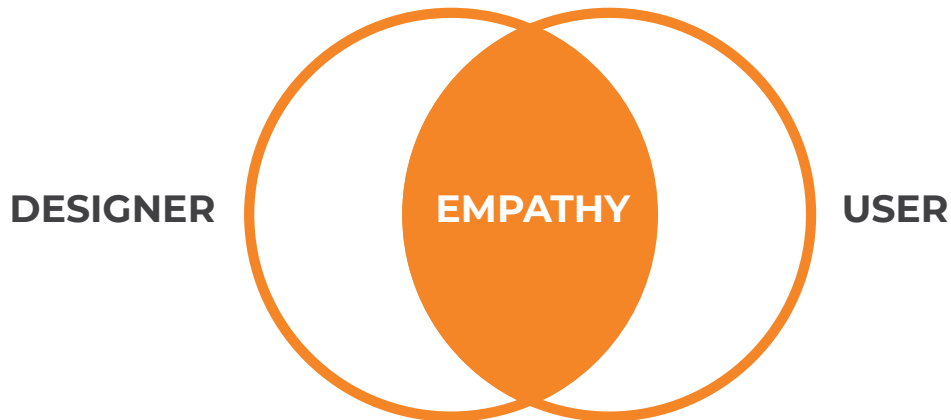
Empathizing with Teleworkers
During COVID-19 | Shared Services
Canada (SSC)

INTRODUCTION

As the world shifts with the onslaught of COVID-19, organizations have to adapt and change to overcome the challenges presented by this shift.

Shared Services Canada (SSC) enlisted the help of Spring2 Innovation because they wanted to understand employee needs and identify any potential “silver linings” or opportunities found during this time of crisis. Specifically, they were interested in ensuring that the organization provided their employees with the tools and support they needed to continue to work effectively from home during the COVID-19 pandemic climate.

To achieve this goal, Spring2 Innovation leveraged the first step in design thinking, *Empathy*. This step is key to understanding end users. It involves observing and engaging with the people you are designing for and discussing their experiences and motivations to gain deeper insights into their needs and wants.





METHODOLOGY

Spring2 Innovation led and held four user-centric sessions to take deep dives into understanding the teleworking needs of four core groups of employees within SSC. The sessions were held virtually and participants created a persona using a digital whiteboard to outline their goals, challenges, values, fears, measures of success, and expectations.

SSC divided employees into four groups, characterized by their work roles.

These groups were:

- Contracting Officers
- Power Users
- Supervisors/Managers
- Trainers/Facilitators

Spring2 Innovation held an initial Introduction to Design Thinking session on April 7, 2020, for 60 SSC employees to explain what design thinking is at a high level and allow employees to learn and ask questions about the process.

During the deep-dive sessions, the first 30-40 minutes were used for introductions and to share one another's work environment using their cameras. It was a great way to humanize everyone's situation and break the ice for the upcoming creation of personas and journey mapping.

All groups used the same method for creating their personas. Each group then identified their goals, challenges, fears, values, measures of success, and expectations while working at the office pre-COVID and then teleworking. Participants were asked how these categories would change in both scenarios



if they had children, denoted in different colours on the personas themselves. In the final step, participants voted on their top 2-4 challenges on the personas.

The participants created journey maps using a similar method in which they outlined their pre-COVID office journey and their new teleworking journey in a step-by-step diagram. Participants then added how the steps in both journeys would be different if children were involved.



Everyone's ideas were contributed and built upon using the virtual whiteboard to ensure everyone's voice was equally heard.

Finally, employees identified any silver linings in the circumstances presented by COVID-19 and anything that SSC could do to improve or help support them while teleworking.

OBSERVATIONS & ANALYSIS

Participants were eager to share their teleworking experiences and their work environments on-camera. While creating the personas and journey maps, stories emerged around people's experiences that revealed the nuances in how different employee groups were adapting, for better and for worse.

Spring2 Innovation was able to identify specific examples of how work was being affected and pinpoint employee's specific concerns and determine what aspects were within the organization's control and what was not.

In terms of silver linings, one employee indicated that now that he has adapted his home office to work from home more efficiently, using the equipment SSC supplied, he may work from home more often in the future when the new government workplace emerges.

The employees appreciated the opportunity to share their experiences and provide feedback on SSC's efforts. There were commonalities with all personas around the challenges of balancing work, life, and family, especially the separation of work and life. They noted that the organization had communicated changes and ways to help employees get the equipment they needed to do their job.

A broad challenge that emerged from the discussion surrounding all employee groups was the importance of informal, unplanned communication throughout the day, during coffee breaks, post-meetings, etc., that contribute to the onboarding process, continual learning, and generally feeling more informed about colleagues' work. On multiple occasions, participants brought up onboarding in a virtual setting during discussions with all groups. The ease of asking questions and getting immediate responses was not there in the virtual environment, and neither was getting to know the team members.



Given the challenges around unplanned communication and difficulties with the current approach to onboard, employees were not aware of each other's work and stress levels at home (with or without children). In the future, managing performance may need to be adjusted when employees are working remotely.



Some participants noted that they were learning new technical skills and adaptability competencies that they would not have otherwise had to learn if not for the pandemic. They also felt that they would continue to work from home more after employees can return to the office.





CONCLUSION

SSC responded to their employees' needs more quickly than other Government of Canada (GoC) departments due to their rapid decision-making in reserving office equipment first and sending equipment accurately on a standardized basis. First, the project team determined what the minimum amount of equipment needed to work from home was. Equipment was then sent to requestors in as quickly as 10-14 business days before the demand for equipment across the GOC reached its peak.

The empathizing session provided employees a therapeutic and much-needed opportunity to vent their frustrations and fears surrounding COVID and working from home. It was essential to communicate that employees' well-being mattered to the organization and that their department was making efforts to respond to these feelings.

The empathizing session acted as a point of connection for employees to recognize each other's realities while working from home. It also provided the project team insights into how much communication employees expected from SSC and how they wanted to communicate, providing the foundation for the path forward for the organization working in a virtual environment.



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STRETCHING THE BOUNDARIES
OF WHAT IS POSSIBLE**



About Spring2 Innovation

We are innovators that inspire unlimited thinking. Driven by curiosity, creativity, and empathy we love experimenting and making an impact. Seeing the lightbulb go off for our clients when they break through their perceived limitations is what drives us. We remove barriers for governments and businesses to help them become limitless and *#DoUnlimited*.

What We Do

We provide innovation training, coaching, and consulting for governments and businesses who want to innovate better and get processes, policies, products, and services to market faster and more successfully.

To learn how we can help your organization, contact us at:

consulting@spring2innovation.com

