

## TOOL DESCRIPTION

# Cultural Probing



**Cultural probes are small excerpts/artifacts from the life of the target group, such as photos or videos of personal surroundings. These give small insights into the thoughts or feelings of people in general or direct clues if a specific question should be answered.**

Cultural probing describes a method that is classically used to create empathy and understanding of the customer needs in the innovation process and to stimulate new thoughts and ideas. In addition, the method can also be used as an element in change projects in the analysis phase.

This visualization technique can help go beyond customer demographics and develop a better understanding of the customer's or user's environment, needs, emotions, behaviors, concerns, desires and perspectives.

The method is a valuable tool to establish a basis for product development, to identify different customer groups, to develop marketing strategies and to support user-centeredness in the company.

### Duration

depending on the importance of the process and the number of cultural probes collected, 2 weeks–3 months





### Participants

a project team collecting the probes and unlimited number of probes

### Facilitation

no special material needed

# Cultural Probing | Process

<b>Clarification of the objective</b> 20–30 min 	<b>Choice of method &amp; preparation</b> 10 min 	<b>Collection of cultural probes</b> 1 week up to 3 months depending on the importance of the project & number of probes 	<b>Evaluation of findings</b> 5–10 min per cultural probe 
<p>To clarify the objective, answer the following questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Is a basic understanding or specific insight to be gained from the target audience?</li><li>• What do we want to learn about whom?</li></ul> <p>Cultural probes can also be used for process innovation.</p>	<p>In terms of methodology, the following decisions need to be made:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What kind of cultural probes would we like to collect: general or specific?</li><li>• Should images (with image descriptions) or videos be collected?</li></ul> <p>How exactly will we collect the cultural probes? To answer this question, determine in advance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Number of cultural probes.</li><li>• For video: Maximum length.</li><li>• Target group.</li><li>• Access to the target group.</li><li>• How you will convince people to participate?</li></ul>	<p>Invite the target audience (e.g., send out emails, see next page), collect the responses and thank people for participating. Prepare the cultural probes for the evaluation. This is most suitably done in a workshop by the project team or as a preparation for a workshop by individuals ahead of time.</p>	<p>The cultural probes are evaluated either individually or in a workshop. During the evaluation/idea generation process, the following questions should be asked:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Which challenges/problems/needs of the target group were identified in the cultural probe?</li><li>• What could help the target group make their everyday lives easier or solve their problems?</li><li>• Which ideas are triggered by the cultural probe?</li><li>• For process innovation: What do we learn from the cultural probes so that our process can be optimized/innovated?</li></ul>

## Cultural Probing | Example

Dear workshop participants,

we are very pleased that we will be able to examine the topic "XY" with you on the XX and to generate many innovative ideas. In preparation for the workshop, we kindly ask you to complete a short task in advance.

To collect as many different perspectives and customer needs as possible and use these as a basis for generating ideas, we would like to bring your personal preferences into the workshop as "cultural probes".

Cultural probes are small excerpts/artifacts from the client's life, such as photos or short videos of personal surroundings. These give small insights into people's thoughts and feelings.

**The task:**

Option A: Take a picture of your personal "XY-environment" at home and describe the picture (see example attached).

Option B: Ask X friends to take a picture of your personal "XY-environment" at home and to describe the picture (see example attached).

Please prepare the photo and description on the following PowerPoint slide. Send the completed PowerPoint by... to ...

The results of the preparatory task are then presented and discussed in the workshop. The collected customers' wishes and needs as well as further collected hints and ideas form the basis for the idea generation activity that follows.