

KJ+ Method

Interviews and Affinitization

The KJ+ Method is different than what you have learned in traditional user interviews and brainstorming sessions. KJ+ is about more than finding requirements that stakeholders discussed. KJ+ is about finding requirements that no one mentioned.

Language as we *find it* often is the least usable. It may contain emotion, judgment, inference, and vagueness. Language as we *need it* contains richer context material. Traditional methods ask stakeholders what they want and summarize the results. The KJ+ Method uses probing interviews to ask not just “What do you want?” but also “Why?” “What experiences have you had with this?” and “What impact would this have?” KJ+ affinitization then looks for unobvious themes emerging from the resulting interview data.

Figure 1 illustrates what might be obtained with a traditional user interview approach followed by affinitization about which amenities travelers think are important when deciding to reserve a hotel room.

Figure 2 shows how probing for more information, a hallmark of the KJ+ interview technique, reveals more details about the travelers’ requirements.

ID#	Traditional Interviewing Statement	Check-In/Check-Out Affinity	Room Quality Affinity	Room Service Affinity
1	Clean room		●	
2	Reliable room service delivery			●
3	No-hassle check-in/check-out	●		
4	Friendly staff	●		●
5	Room service food fresh and hot			●
6	Don't lose reservation	●		
7	Room service available			●
8	Nice towels		●	
9	New bathroom		●	
10	Good room service selection			●
11	Mini-refrigerator in room		●	
12	Attractive furnishings		●	
13	Big TV		●	
14	Express check-out	●		
15	Quiet heater/air-conditioner		●	
16	Non-smoking room available	●		

Figure 1: Example of a Traditional Affinity Grouping
Data adapted from <https://www.moresteam.com/toolbox/affinity-diagram.cfm>

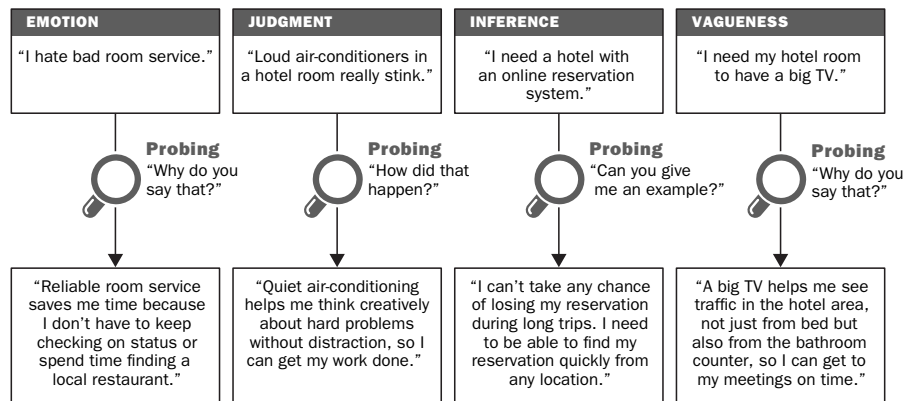


Figure 2: Gathering Better Data with Probing Interviews
Data adapted from <https://www.moresteam.com/toolbox/affinity-diagram.cfm>

In the next step of the KJ+ Method, the requirements team analyzes the raw output from the probing interviews to form contextual need statements. They then conduct KJ+ affinitization to identify themes of experience. Using these themes of experience, they formulate unstated requirements and brainstorm candidate innovative solutions.

To illustrate how KJ+ can lead to deeper insight into travelers' needs, the traditional interviewing statements from Figure 1 have been revised to incorporate additional context of the kind achieved through probing interviews. This additional information results in the contextual need statements displayed in Figures 3 and 4 (the words in bold represent added context).

Figure 3 gives an example of using travelers' contextual need statements about making reservations, checking in and out, ordering room service, and monitoring traffic to brainstorm an innovative solution for a hotel-specific app that will help a traveler with all of these details.

Figure 4 gathers need statements about the hotel environment—the way it looks, sounds, smells, and feels—to brainstorm an innovative solution to have sensors in the room that monitor temperature and noise and alert hotel management if they sense a problem.

ID#	Contextual Need Statements	One theme of experience could be:
2	I expect reliable room service delivery so I don't have to keep calling on status	As a very busy traveler, I need help looking up information, contacting remote agencies, and tracking a lot of detail without human assistance or delay.
3	No-hassle check-in/check-out helps me avoid tracking a lot of detail during a business trip	
5	If my room service food is not fresh and hot, I have to spend time finding a local restaurant	
6	"Don't lose reservation" is a message I don't want to hear because I do not have access to my travel agent on the road	An innovative solution could be: A free application for a smartphone or on a hotel-issued device that (1) enables precise SIRI-like queries and (2) communicates with the TV and interactive displays in my room, balcony, and other areas of the hotel by sensing my location.
7	I like it when room service is available because I can avoid worrying about logistics	
13	A big TV helps me see hotel area traffic, whether I am in bed or on the hotel room balcony	
14	Express checkout helps me a lot as I am forgetful about the time and logistics to check out	

Figure 3: Example 1 with KJ Affinitization
Data adapted from <https://www.moresteam.com/toolbox/affinity-diagram.cfm>

ID#	Contextual Need Statements	One theme of experience could be:
1	I prefer a clean room with a fresh smell to give my hotel stay a pleasant start	I need to recover from a busy, stressful day and regenerate my entire being during my stay in the hotel.
4	Friendly staff pick up my spirits when I am tired on a business trip	
7	I like it when room service is available because I can avoid worrying about logistics	
8	Nice towels put me in a good mood when I have to get up early in the morning	An innovative solution could be: I need a complete, relaxing, and rejuvenating experience during my stay in the hotel based on a strategic treatment of my five senses, including sensors in my vicinity that can read and provide feedback when things are amiss.
9	A new bathroom gives me a clean feeling and adds energy to my day	
10	A good room service selection keeps my stress level down and reduces anxiety about my diet	
11	A mini-refrigerator in the room gives me choices as I decide about food and snacks while working in my room	
12	Attractive furnishings put me in an energetic mood, enabling me to get more work done in my room	
14	Express checkout helps me a lot as I am forgetful about the time and logistics to check out	
15	Quiet heater/air-conditioner enables me to think creatively on hard problems without distraction	
16	Non-smoking room available is a must or I will have a headache while trying to work in my room	

Figure 4: Example 2 with KJ Affinitization
Data adapted from <https://www.moresteam.com/toolbox/affinity-diagram.cfm>

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