

EMPATHY IN MARKETING

The Gamechanger
You Are Looking For.

a strategic guide for marketers
by Neo Matsau & Team





**Empathy is not a soft
extra in marketing.**

It is the mechanism by
which strategy becomes
relevant to real people.

The Illusion of Data vs. The Power of Understanding

WHAT Data Shows	WHY Empathy Explains
— Demographics & Segments	— The Human Context
— Impressions & Click-Through Rates	— Jobs-to-be-Done (JTBD)
— The Dashboard Reality	— Emotional Tensions & Frictions

How Humanity Gets Filtered Out



Teams become completely absorbed in media plans, brand guidelines, and performance targets. Briefs rely on demographics instead of tensions. Research is reduced to bullet points.

The real human being on the other side of the message disappears. The result is technically competent, but emotionally generic.

The Five Commercial Jobs Jobs of Empathy

1. Define the exact right problem to solve.

2. Sharpen positioning to cut through noise.

3. Create stronger, deeply resonant creative work.

5. Build trust that compounds into pricing power and loyalty.

4. Improve customer experience and recovery interactions.



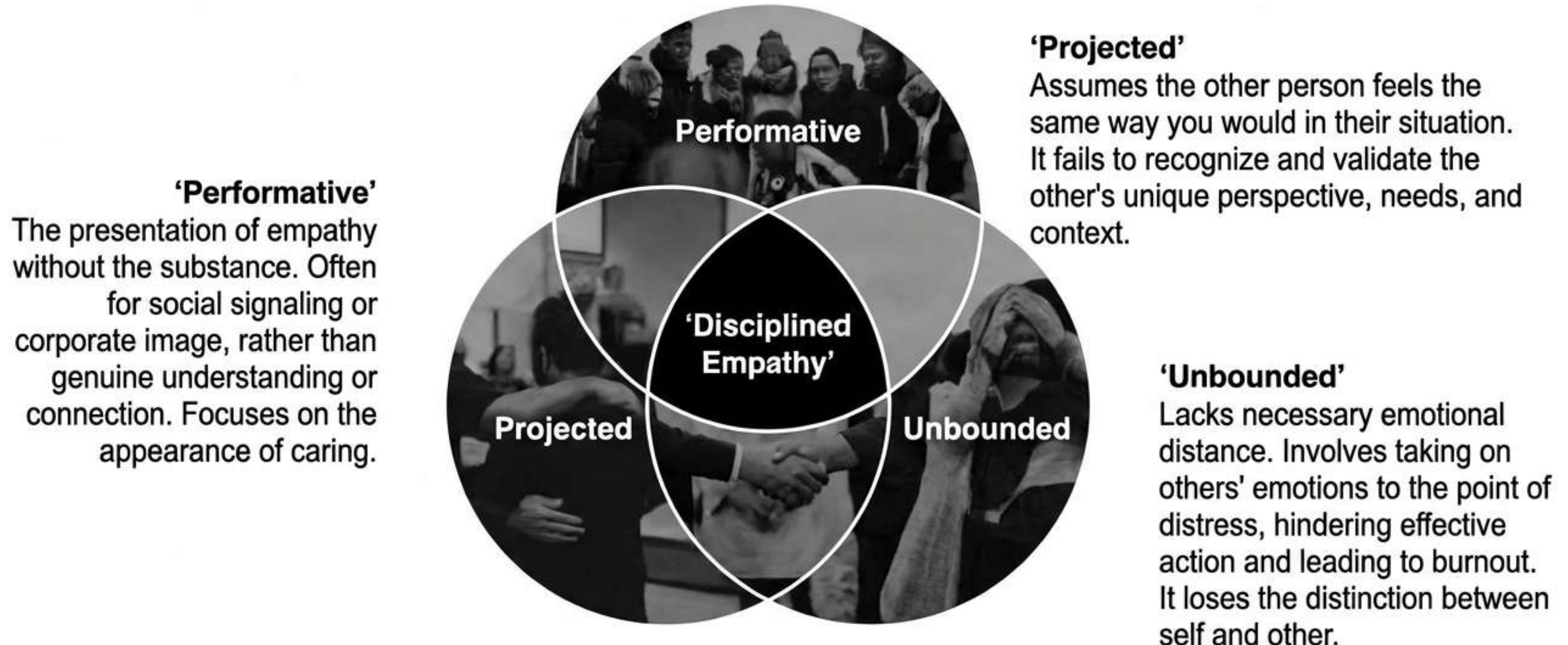
**Disciplined
Disciplined Perspective-Taking
+ Evidence + Action = Empathy**

~~Not “being nice.”~~

~~Not “agreeing with the customer.”~~

~~Not “writing emotional copy.”~~

The Three Empathy Failures





Empathy Dies in Committee Without Candor

- The internal team dynamic dictates the external customer connection.
- Psychological safety drives innovation. If teams cannot challenge a brief or say "this will feel off to the customer," agencies will simply tell clients what they want to hear.

Leadership Mandate: Model curiosity over certainty. Ask, "Where are we projecting our own tastes?"

STP is enhanced by empathy

S

Segment

By Moment, Mindset & Friction. Discard simple demographics. Segment by decision state and emotional context.

T

Target

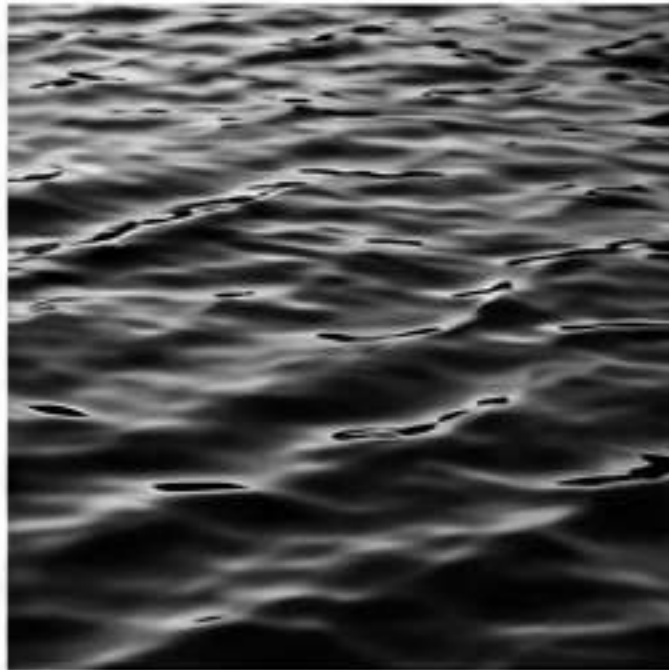
The Moments of Misunderstanding. Target problem discovery, onboarding, and complaint handling—where misunderstanding is most expensive.

P

Position

As Humanly Precise. “We understand real lives better than competitors, and we turn that understanding into clearer choices.”

Segmenting by Mindset and Emotional Context

				
First-time buyers require Reassurance.	Switchers require A Reason to Change.	Existing customers require Recognition and a smoother experience.	Complainers require Fast, Competent Recovery.	Loyalists require To Feel Seen, not spammed.

The Empathy Operating System

Phase 1 - Culture & Input

(Getting out
of the building)



Phase 2 – Process & Mechanics

(Rewriting
the rules of
engagement)



Phase 3 – Output & Experience

(Mapping
empathy to
the funnel)

A black silhouette of a person walking from left to right, positioned on the left side of the slide. The person is in profile, wearing a short-sleeved shirt and trousers. The background is a light gray gradient.

Phase 1: Culture & Input

Mandatory Contact: Do not outsource empathy to the insights team. Strategists must have 2 customer conversations per month. Creatives need 1 immersion session. People become abstractions when only met in slides.

Train Cognitive Empathy: In complaint management, cognitive empathy outperforms emotional warmth. Customers want competent understanding (“I know what happened and how to fix it”), not just “I’m so sorry you feel that way.”

Phase 2: The Briefing Engine

Traditional Brief



Target Audience:
Millennials 25-34.
Laundering uncertainty
into PowerPoint with
zodiac-style personas.

The Empathy Brief

- What is the customer actually trying to get done?
- What are they deeply anxious about?
- What is the lived contradiction they are experiencing?
- What would make our message feel patronizing?

Agency scopes must fundamentally change to fund this immersion. Empathy cannot be second-hand.

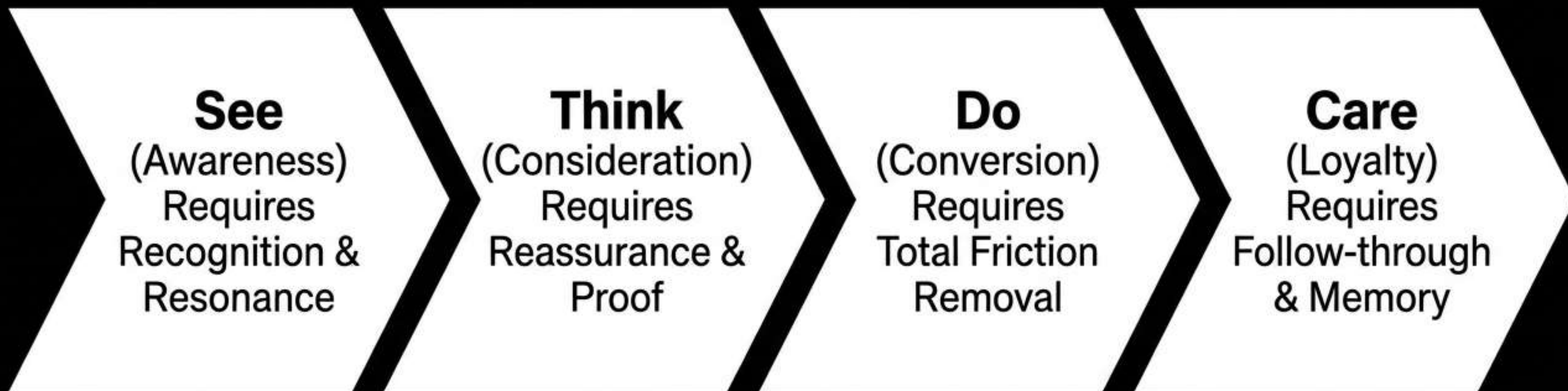


The Creative Reality Check

- 1. Is this about the customer's reality, or our internal narrative?**
 - 2. Would a real customer say, "Yes, that's exactly me"?**
 - 3. Is the emotion earned and specific, or generic and manipulative?**
 - 4. Does this respect the audience's intelligence?**
-

Implement a "tone-deaf risk review" for any work touching culture, grief, or sensitive life moments. Relevance without specificity is corporate theater.

Phase 3: Empathy Across the Funnel



Empathy dictates channel choice. A customer on social media with a complaint needs resolution, not a brand film.



Operationalizing Value Beyond Advertising

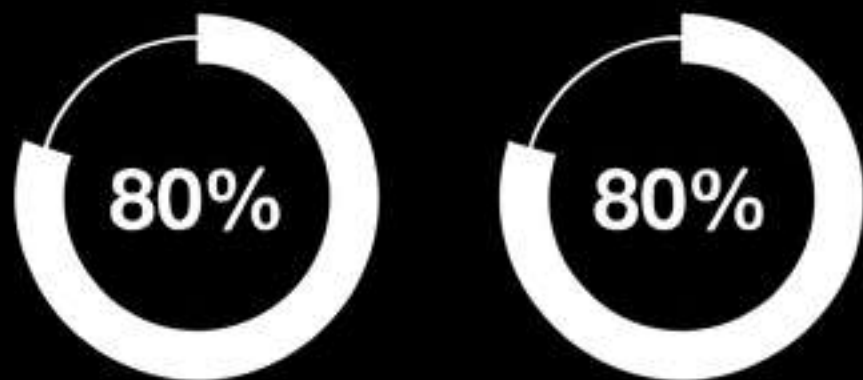
Empathy is not just for comms. It must feed the product roadmap, onboarding flows, returns policies, and pricing frameworks.

The Golden Rule of Pricing

When customers resist price, first investigate confusion, mistrust, or weak framing before reaching for a lazy discount. Often, the problem is not the number, it is the meaning. Friction destroys trust; empathy rebuilds it.

The Measurement Scorecard

Input Metrics



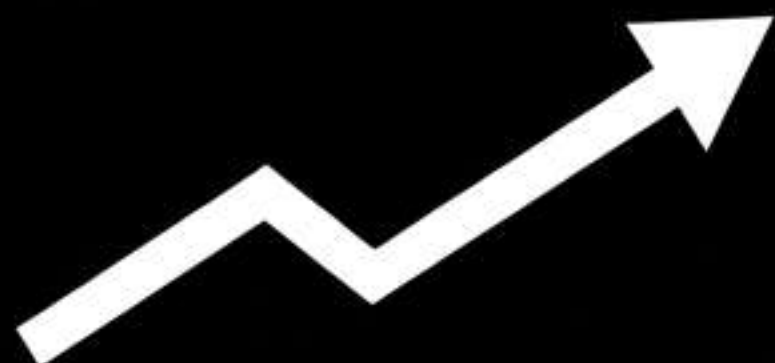
Number of customer immersions.
% of briefs featuring real
verbatims and tensions.

Process Metrics



First-contact complaint resolution.
Message relevance scores.
Creative review scores on respect
and specificity.

Outcome Metrics



Retention rates. Brand trust & NPS.
Commercial lift and reduced churn
after service recovery.

The Kaizen Loop & The AI Trap

Empathy decays as culture changes.

- Plan: identify tension
- Do: launch response
- Check: measure relevance
- Act: standardize or kill

The Warning:

Artificial empathy requires careful, deliberate design. AI can summarize transcripts, make transcripts, but empathic bots backfire when customers are stressed. Machine warmth is never a substitute for human judgment.





The Bottom Line

Empathy improves the quality of the problem you define, the insight you uncover, the experience you design, and the trust you earn.