# PAINS-GAINS MAP

Goal: Customer Understanding

The object of this framework is to develop an understanding of the motivations and decisions of the customer. Many decisions often boil down to basic choices between benefit and harm. By capturing these specifics for a key demographic or a specific person, you may uncover the most relevant points to bring up when influencing this group or person.

The Framework

Start by writing the name of your target demographic along the top of a sheet of chart paper and then divide the chart paper into two columns. Write "Pains" at the top of the left column and "Gains" at the top of the right column. Feel free to add a quick sketch of your target group to help your team empathize with the target demographic better.

Next, ask your team to step inside the target demographic's mind in order to think and feel as they do. Use these questions to prompt their imagination:

- What does a bad day look like for them?
- What are they afraid of?
- What keeps them awake at night?
- What are they responsible for?
- What obstacles stand in their way?
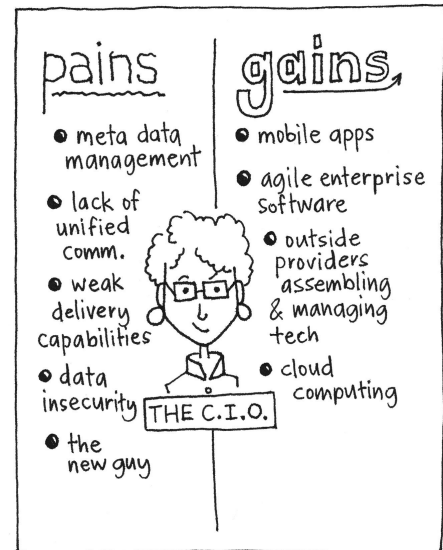
Write down their responses - one per post-it note. Often times, gains can be the inversion of the pain situation or can go beyond. Capture gains in the right column by asking these questions:

- What does this group want and aspire to?
- How do they measure success?
- Given the subject at hand, how could this group benefit?
- What can we offer this group?

Write down their responses - one per post-it note. When complete with gathering all the pains and gains, spend about five minutes to summarize and prioritize the top pains and gains identified in the exercise.

How to Use the Framework

This is a simple collaboration framework that can take no more than thirty minutes to play, but often yields very interesting insights about customer motivations. While this technique can be played by a design team imaging the various pains and gains of the customer, I have found Pains-Gains Map provides much more accurate results when you ask the target demographic to provide their own responses. In this case, be sure to hand over the pen and paper to the customer and let them write their own ideas unfiltered.

Sometimes customers are puzzled by this exercise, so I have found asking them a targeted question around your value proposition to be a helpful prompt to get the idea process started. The goal of the targeted prompt question is help the customer starting thinking about your problem space, but not about your specific engineering solution. For instance, "What sort of pains and gains would you experience if you used less plastic in your life?" or "What sorts of pains and gains would you experience if you cell phone never needed to be charged?" is enough to get the ideas flowing. Only when the generation of ideas begins to slow down, then will I use the prompt questions to encourage customers to go deeper.

So when do you know that you are done? When the customer has identified _at least_ fifteen pains and _at least_ fifteen gains. The only way to get this number of ideas is for the customer to think deeply around the problem, so keep asking them to revisit the various prompt questions. In my experience, the ideal number of people playing this framework is from four to six participants. If you have that many people, then generating thirty ideas is a piece of cake.