

 dscout

12 Ways Innovative Companies do More Impactful Research with dscout

Designing product features based on rich, in-context, hyper-localized user data.

Real-estate site Trulia was asking themselves the big questions: What do people say about their platform? What were they using their platform for? What needs does their platform not yet meet?

One such need they uncovered was the user's knowledge gap between "what's the listing's address?" and "what's that neighborhood really like?"

So they decided to ask some people what they looked for, valued, and wanted to know about in a neighborhood.

"dscout allowed us to 'go to' these different neighborhoods to collect the data without the additional cost, travel, and time that's typically involved with ethnographic research," says UX Research Manager Vito Loconte. "We were able to get out of our own backyard but still move quickly on this phase of the research."

The team recruited 50 participants (aka scouts) to tell them the story of how they chose their current neighborhood and what factors impact that decision.

"We also had them give us a photo and video tour of the neighborhood and talk about why the things they chose to focus on mattered to them," says Vito. "dscout allowed us to drill deep and find location-specific information so that we could understand not just facts, but context, too."

Ultimately, their findings were impactful enough to shape the build of an entirely new product feature set. When sharing out results with their stakeholders, they leaned on quotes, videos and sound bites to communicate with greater resonance.

"I think the videos really made an impact on this project," says Vito. "When we launched into the idea that 'It's not just what's important to the neighborhood, but it's how the city shapes those decisions'—[our stakeholders] had a tangible understanding of what that meant because they had seen it."

Building robust, impactful, product-shaping personas.

When Jasmine Hentschel started as Steady's sole user researcher, she knew the first order of business was making introductions. Namely, she had to get her marketing team, product team, and company's leadership acquainted with their users.

"...as I did stakeholder interviews with different teams, the question that came up consistently was, 'Who are we even designing for? Who are our target users right now?'" Jasmine says.

After selecting a wide sample of 50 best-fit participants, they used dscout to explore four different aspects of users' relationships with extra spending money or additional sources of income. Broadly, they wanted to learn:

- What are people's high-level financial goals, in the short term and long term?
- How do people research ways to make money?
- How do people manage their money?
- What are their day-to-day feelings about money?

For Jasmine's team, a longitudinal study design turned out to be invaluable for getting representative data.

"One of the differences between in-person research and remote research is the longitudinal aspect. With dscout and diary studies, we can engage with a particular group over a period of time," she says. "That's so valuable for us in talking about things like money and work, because it's not something that people feel the same way about every single day—so being able to interact over a long period of time is important."

Moving from understanding the “in-app” experience, to the “app-in-your-users’-lives” experience.

For insights on cellular usage that move the needle, T-Mobile needed mobile, longitudinal, in-context research. The kind of research that, before dscout, could be hard to manage on their team’s agile timeline.

“When we launched T-Mobile Tuesdays (a customer rewards program), we had a lot of behavioral analytics data within the associated app. But once people save offers and go to redeem them—they’re out of the application,” says Principal User Experience Researcher Andrea Lindeman.

“We lose track of what they’re doing, what happens to them, and what their experience is. dscout allowed us to really effectively track where our users go and helped us to better understand their experience.”

Without the constraints of a specific prototype or single app, participants recorded their screen and uploaded their actions. And they were able to “show” researchers what it was like to redeem offers in a physical store—allowing the T-Mobile team to better understand the in-store experience.

“It was the first full picture that we had of customers redeeming various offers,” Andrea says. “And naturally, we found the experience wasn’t always delightful. So we were able to then go back to our partners and say, ‘Hey, the experience redeeming your offer isn’t as good as it could be.’”

Crafting qualitative journey maps that make a lasting impression.

ShopRunner relied on dscout to power robust, useful customer journey maps. That meant moving beyond sterile, on-site data points—and toward a more human understanding of their user’s experience.

For Design Research Lead Autumn Schultz, participant transparency was key to injecting this humanity—challenging the team’s assumptions and getting to the real voice of the customer.

“Using dscout made folks more open about their feedback and frustrations, which I wasn’t able to get when I was in people’s houses while they unboxed things,” Autumn said. “These authentic experiences transcend the focus group, the quantitative survey, and the hypotheses of your stakeholders.”

Better engaging these stakeholders was key to the success of the project.

Autumn used dscout’s easy-filtering features to quickly sort out “high” and “low” moments from her study, and then shared those moments easily across teams in video formats that humanize user concerns.

“With the projects I work on,” Autumn says, “I always ask, ‘How do I make this feel human?’ We’d print out stills from videos and blurbs next to people’s faces. And having those photos and videos helped a lot.”

From there, the team became more invested in their customers’ journeys, and more engaged in building for user centricity on the whole.

“When we were synthesizing information, we did that as a group. So instead of me saying ‘here’s a journey map, you’re welcome,’ we were synthesizing it together—and talking about what people are experiencing together brings additional buy-in, but also, makes stakeholders feel like ‘we made this together, and we’re all working to fix these problems together.’ ”

Building products that truly meet users' needs, expectations, and usage patterns.

People use Dropbox to host and share files—often relegating it to passive “background” usage.

So when the company began development of their new desktop app, they wanted to put their product front-and-center for clients to more actively use.

“We wanted the desktop app to, hopefully, be able to provide more value with the flexibility of having a foreground service,” says Dropbox Design Researcher Meghan Earley.

The team wanted to conduct extensive user testing for their research.

Since the product was newer, they needed to broaden the scope of insights and data beyond just usability insight.

And on top of that, she needed a way to look longitudinally at product usage, pain points and issues over time.

And so, she turned to dscout.

“I looked at dscout because we wanted to do a longitudinal study,” she says. “It was the first time we had people using the product outside of interviewing and surveying.”

Leaning on dscout’s platform, Dropbox was able to conduct a more thorough study that expanded the breadth of their insights.

“dscout offered a combination of understanding,” Meghan says. “Usability problems are glaringly important from an evaluative perspective. In a typical usability test, we'll see someone encounter something once over the course of an interview. But when we're seeing people encountering things over and over, it's definitely a signal that they're more important.”

Priming, augmenting, and enhancing field work.

Audio tech company Bose wants to build products that add value for their users in new and unexpected ways. To accomplish that, they rely on dscout as a complement to other tools—a critical supplement used to unearth insights they couldn't otherwise attain.

When it comes time to do field work, Bose's Senior Researcher, Innovation Insights Sara Ulius-Sabel and her team discovered that dscout actually helps deepen insights by continuing the research during periods in which they couldn't be there in person.

“We see dscout being complementary to traditional research methods,” says Sara. “For example, a team that I was on earlier this year did some ethnographic work. We went in-context to understand people, how they lived, and the role of the various products we had played in their life.

“In between our visits, we had them do dscout self-journaling as a way for them to actually think about the problems we talked about and reflect on them. They had time and space to think more deeply than they could if we were just asking them in the moment.

“When we came back, and in repeat visits, we were able to use those entries as prompts for digging deeper into the conversation.”

Ensuring their research makes a real, company-wide impact.

“dscout helps non-researchers empathize with our users. The research platform enables us to capture the voice of the customer and share their perspectives throughout Lenovo.”

Dilip Bhatia
Chief Customer
Experience Officer
Lenovo

“We asked 180+ leaders and decision makers to view [dscout participant responses] as an hour-long highlight reel. To our astonishment, every leader came to the summit intimately familiar with all the different customer reactions and perspectives. Attendees were even using the names of research participants they connected most with. It was a game-changing moment! Everyone who watched this video effectively fell in love with these customers and became energized by them.”

Matthew Doty
Head of Strategic
Experience Design
Best Buy

“With dscout, designers and product managers can watch the videos at their leisure, when they have free time. And so they do. A three minute video they can watch at their desk is a lower barrier to entry than observing a full session in a lab.”

Andrea Lindeman
Principal User
Experience Researcher
T-Mobile

Understanding their participants in-context—no matter how hard-to-reach their environments seem.

“We’d recruited scouts in the path of Hurricane Irma before it made landfall. We were simultaneously watching reports from scouts come in at the same time as we were seeing events unfold on the news.”

David O’Donnell
Director,
Strategic Innovation
Salesforce Ignite

“We needed a better way, a more useful tool, to really reach elite athletes where they wanted to be reached. So we chose dscout, which we knew that they could have with them at all times. The cell phone was the one thing that would allow us to do that.”

Vanessa Dillof
Former Senior Director of
Consumer Insights
The North Face

“[Usually] small business owners are just too busy [for a diary study]. But we attempted one using dscout, because we were able to create a flexible study that worked well with the participants’ schedules. They were allowed to progress through the research at their own pace and use the phones that were already used in their day-to-day lives, which was key to getting as many to complete the study as we did.”

Joanna Vodopivec
Former Senior
UX Researcher
Groupon

Deriving intimate, perspective-shifting views into their audience's day-to-day lives.

“Mobile ethnography on the dscout platform allowed for tremendous depth of understanding about our users—more than any other project that I’ve worked on. We built relationships with our participants, and got prolonged exposure into their mental models, life situations and emotional journeys.”

Irfan Pirbhai
User Research Team Lead
TWG

“With dscout Diary, you’re really getting the moment in context. You see real stuff going on. People are submitting videos from the bathroom, just out of the shower, or lying in bed at night. It’s very real and very intimate.”

Jasmine Hentschel
Director of Research
Steady

“Participants are so much less self-conscious on dscout. They’re hanging out and talking to you, and they’re getting super real. My clients are amazed—they can’t get over the fact that people will do this.”

Ann Pistacchi-Peck
Design Research Lead
Empathy

Making big-picture, strategy-shifting product and design pivots.

“We’ve pivoted entire strategies as a result of what we’ve learned through video ethnography. There would have been no way to capture that product-shifting data through a different approach.”

Jeanette Fuccella
Principal User
Experience Researcher
LexisNexis

“During the product test we saw that participants... were using a word with a negative connotation to describe their experience. The product team was contemplating design changes as a result. However, because we also sent products to participants using the dscout panel, we were able to dig in deeper and ask, “What do you mean when you say this?” We learned that although people were using a word with a negative connotation, they actually meant the product was working exactly as it should. Without this richer customer story we could have made costly product changes solving a problem that didn’t exist.”

Hannah Ferguson
International Market
Research Analyst
PetSafe

“The answers that we got [via dscout] really clarified for us what our beachhead market is, and what value people are finding from using the product today, in beta. What we heard was a lot of people say that if they hadn’t vocalized their thoughts to Maslo, they wouldn’t have said it at all. That was pretty powerful.”

Irfan Pirbhai
User Research Team Lead
TWG

Recruiting and empowering candid participants—faster, more affordably, and more reliably.

“In addition to being able to speak to consumers across the country from our office, dscout’s panel allows us to save on recruiting costs—which is huge. If you look at the number of projects we field on dscout, the cost savings, it’s incomparable.”

Hannah Ferguson
International Market
Research Analyst
PetSafe

“With dscout, we can target really specific audiences. I’m not necessarily going to find somebody that’s local in Seattle that uses the T-Mobile Tuesdays app once a week—and I certainly won’t find enough of them to recruit a whole study. But I can screen for that in dscout and get hundreds of participants that are willing to participate tomorrow. Reaching those targeted audiences is really powerful.”

Andrea Lindeman
Principal User
Experience Researcher
T-Mobile

“We had folks who were experiencing real-life stuff throughout the diary study, and they were pretty candid in sharing what was going on. All of these things just brought a level of basic humanity to the project. The subjects weren’t just consumers of media content, and possible new audiences. They were people going through all types of experiences. Having that as the bedrock context really made it more of a three-dimensional study.”

Ann Pistacchi-Peck
Design Research Lead
Empathy

Conducting research that keeps pace with their lean and agile timelines

“Everyone wants to get things out quickly and address problems they’re seeing...Since we’ve discovered dscout, we’ve been able to reach a larger number of participants and get more in-context mobile data—and we still get that data super quickly. We can also reach out to the same participants over time and follow up post-study as needed.”

Andrea Lindeman
Principal User
Experience Researcher
T-Mobile

“Being able to start a project on a Monday and finishing the entire study itself in one week is something you cannot do anywhere else. We’re able to speed up the rest of the process that allows us to make time for ample analysis.”

Hannah Ferguson
International Market
Research Analyst
PetSafe

We sent dscout our creative concepts on a Wednesday evening and test results were ready for viewing Thursday morning. This impressed our clients and cemented our relationship with dscout as a go-to research partner for innovative requests.

Jen Shadowens
Partner and Strategist
Zeus Jones

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use dscout to get closer to your
customers.**

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