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The Employee Journey

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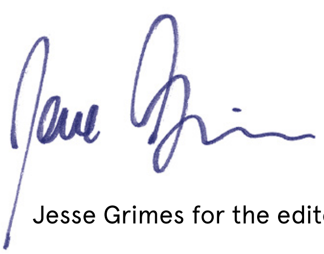
The Employee Journey

Employees are integral to service delivery, and the service design community has long recognised that employee experience is inherently interlinked with customer experience. But it’s not just the drive for happy customers that pushes organisations to focus on their employees; in the US alone, unemployment is hovering around its lowest level in 20 years, putting power in employees’ hands. Furthermore, Generation Z bring new expectations into the game. For them, career decisions do not drive their life plans in the way they have done for previous generations. As a result, employers must focus more than ever on factors such as working environments, remote working, work-life balance and DEI.

As we learn in this issue of *Touchpoint*, organisations large and small are applying the same rigour – and many of the same tools and techniques used to focus on customers – to make sure that employees perform at their best, and are fulfilled in their work. And it’s become a natural domain of service designers, who are taking on this challenge around the globe.

If you’re a service designer with a focus on how your organisation serves your employees, you will find inspiration from a rich selection of articles in this issue. If you’re not, but you know who is, I hope you’ll tell them about this *Touchpoint*. And if you’re in an organisation that isn’t applying service design to the employee experience, well, what are you waiting for?

On a closing note, I’m excited to say that this issue marks the start of *Touchpoint*’s 14th year of publication. While the journal goes from strength to strength (this is one of the biggest ever issues!), we’re also going to be making some small changes, starting with this issue. One of them is that we are proud to be working with Logos Verlag Berlin, whom we have teamed up with to publish *Touchpoint*.

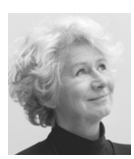


Jesse Grimes for the editorial board









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Way out
The Shard
Guy's Hospital

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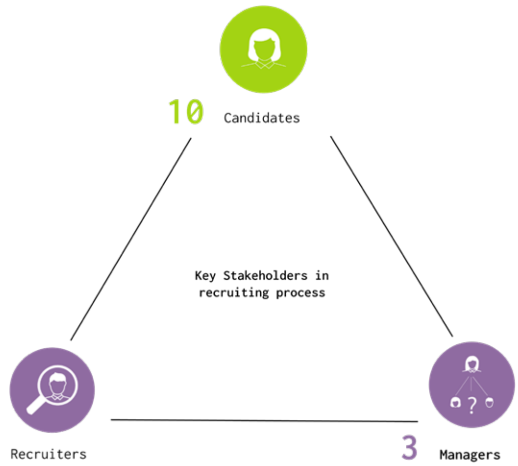
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Managers

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www.example.website
KEI scores
Filter by journeys
Filter by daily usage
Set time range
Set comparison
Performance
Experience
Digital Culture
Ease of Use
95%
Target achievements
(average of all metrics)
Automated
50%
Target achievements
(average of all metrics)
Autonomous
65%
Target achievements
(average of all metrics)
Personalised
25%
Target achievements
(average of all metrics)
90% of users know where to get assistance
(Feedback form, target: 95%)
65% of users consider guidelines as helpful
(Feedback form, target: 95%)
0.7 workplace related tickets per user
(SNOW, target: 0.5)

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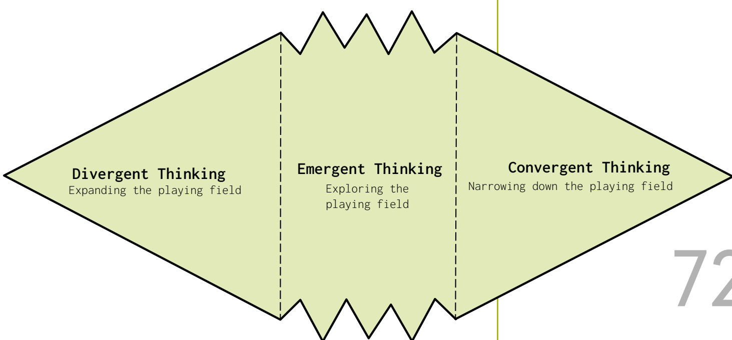
Divergent Thinking
Expanding the playing field
Emergent Thinking
Exploring the playing field
Convergent Thinking
Narrowing down the playing field

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Designing Employee Experience for Customer and Talent Retention

A case of B2B services in the energy sector

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French industry in general, and the country's energy sector in particular, is facing a massive shortage of qualified talent. The employee experience is becoming a key issue in the ability of companies within the sector to both operate their services, and gain (and retain) their customers.

An industry looking for talent

The nuclear energy sector, which has 3,000 companies and more than 220,000 employees, represents a French strategic choice for the development of a low-carbon energy mix, and major investments are planned to take place in the future.

Faced with this ambition, companies in the sector need to reinvent the experience they offer employees, to attract talent in a market that will have to recruit nearly 100,000 people in a decade, according to an April 2023 report by the Gifen Union (a group of French nuclear energy manufacturers). Understanding and mastering the levers of employee experience will become an issue throughout the sector.

Employee experience as a service

Employee experience is a service system whose objective is to produce solutions that have a positive impact on five dimensions of people's experience of - and at - work. Solutions that:

1. Enable employees to create impact by fulfilling meaningful roles in which they create value and positively influence society, the company, colleagues and themselves.
2. Give employees the means to successfully perform tasks through a positive and simple physical and digital work environment. The work environment should be supported by a clear culture and identity, reinforcing the sense of belonging to the collective.
3. Ensure the capacity for personal evolution, through a regular increase in knowledge, and development of know-how and interpersonal skills, as well as the conditions to allow self-fulfilment.

Service playbook

4. Take care of the employee by organising work that facilitates wellbeing and performance, in a safe, healthy and respectful environment.
5. Give collaborators the ability to interact with their ecosystem, with an appropriate frequency and quality, in which everyone supports the work being done and understands its purpose.

These five dimensions can be embodied in many ways within the employee journey, and all have a direct impact on the creation of value and the performance of the company. This is illustrated by two projects carried out in collaboration with Orano, a significant employer in the nuclear energy sector, with 17,000 employees worldwide. These projects were part of Orano's strategy to renew its business model and associated services.

Project one: Retain the main customer and re-engage the teams

The first project concerns an Orano entity which supplies radioactive sources, such as which are used in medical devices like MRIs. The services for making and supplying these sources are intended for major international equipment manufacturers, as well as for hospitals, who use them to calibrate machines.

The difficulty of the project was based on the long duration of the customer journey (as a result of the long life of the radioactive sources involved), including a limited number of interactions with the customer, operated only by few players on the Orano side, as well as low visibility of the contribution to value creation by the back-office teams.

The project's two objectives were to ensure customer loyalty by improving the service delivery experience, as well as transform Orano's internal collaboration models to create a better employee experience.

We used the classic 'double diamond' methodology, with an ethnographic understanding phase, prototyping/testing loops and co-designing with Orano's team, as well as the equipment maker customer, and its customers within hospitals.

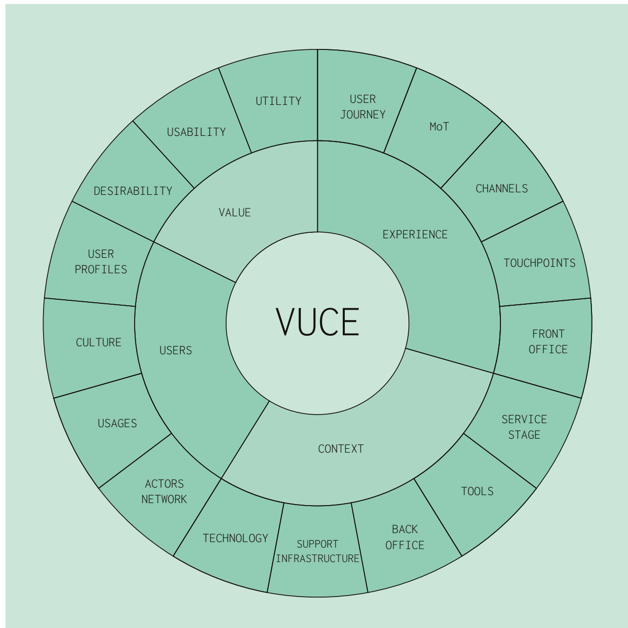
The work made it possible to consolidate the customer relationship between Orano and the equipment manufacturer by introducing a new common approach for hospital customers.

It also accelerated the alignment of Orano teams around the customer journey, and was made possible thanks to the involvement of the back-office teams throughout the project and in particular during the co-design workshops with the client's teams. Their involvement made visible to the equipment maker the wide variety of expert skills that make up its service. It also created the conditions for a transformation of Orano's operational teams by clarifying their roles in creating value (and the associated experience) for its customer.

In order to anchor these transformations over time, a service playbook was created to operationally standardise the service, in terms of relationships, collaboration rituals, meaning of actions and missions.

The challenge of this service playbook was to create a direct link between customer experience and employee experience, and to allow its homogeneous delivery on a daily basis. The goal was to limit the variability of the service for the customer, by training the teams to know how to do and say the right things, and how use the right touchpoints at the right time. It also enabled the differentiation of the service, by translating Orano's unique relational signature into the attitudes and behaviours of the teams.

The 'VUCE' model



Project two: Create pride and visibility of actions by renewing touchpoints and collaboration practices

The Orano group wanted to redesign its waste management offer for hospitals dealing with nuclear medicine. The aims behind this were customer retention and gaining new market share. The age of the operating model, as well as an industrial culture steeped in safety and security, presented key challenges.

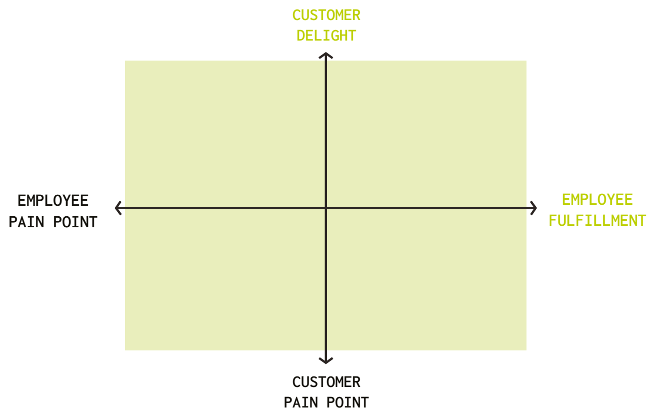
The process and contractual conditions left little room for the individuals and relationships between the Orano teams and its customers to properly develop, making it difficult to create a memorable experience.

In order to design the solution within these constraints, we used the 'VUCE' model developed by Aktan, which allows the detailed analysis of 17 dimensions of a service, organised into four major areas ('Value', 'Users', 'Context', 'Experience'). The objective was to enable a fine mapping of the system, including its pain points, and then to design solutions addressing each of the dimensions. The model also had an educational objective, aimed at making it easier for Orano's teams to understand that a service is a system and that its performance can be impacted by many factors

The project highlighted the fact that in an industrial environment, it is even more essential to make hidden aspects visible than it is in a B2C approach, because the culture of the process dominates and erases the contribution of daily actions, with a direct negative impact on the feeling of pride within the teams.

The project also demonstrated that employee experience can be at the heart of the reinvention of industrial models. Indeed, enhancing the role of employees' soft skills in the creation of value and providing new tools (touchpoints, rituals, etc.) serve to simplify and enrich their daily professional life.

In the context of industrial services, transparency and trust are major success factors. Mapping and highlighting employee actions is decisive in proving the value created, because they rely on many technical actions that are rarely understandable and visible to the customer. This requires a particularly strong touchpoint strategy in order to punctuate



Engagement matrix

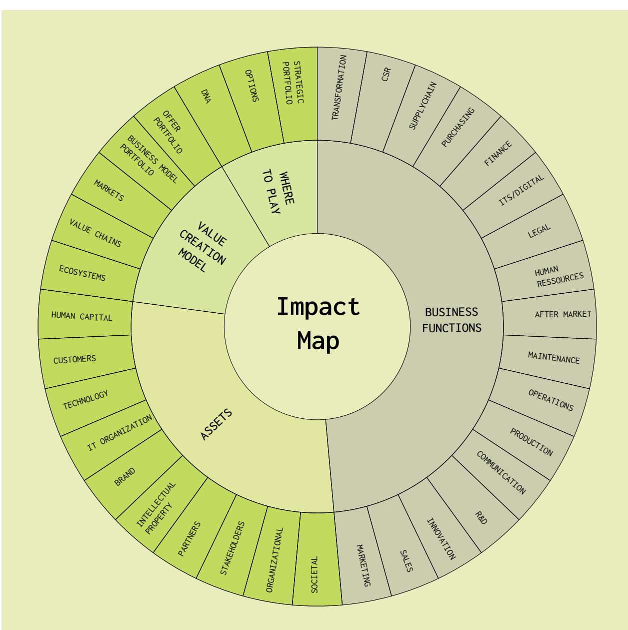
the customer journey with numerous proofs of the value created. This touchpoint focus upon the customer journey also enables strong differentiation, by each time recalling the relational signature of the service provider.

Transforming the company for the benefit of employee experience

The strength of these Orano examples is not to consider the service design projects individually, but to identify their impacts at the level of the company. This involves analysing projects to identify transformation needs, whether in terms of simplifying operational models, HR models or, for example, communication approaches.

With this in mind, it is possible to consider each project learning as a tool for strategic insight for the transformation needs of the different components of an organisation, using a mapping tool such as the 'Impact Map' developed by Aktan. The challenge is to rely on the data specific to each field to identify the scalability potential of the topics (e.g. 'Is it possible to generalise a touchpoint strategy?', 'Is it possible to create a new global training program?', etc.). It is therefore a question of identifying whether local learning can be transferred to other entities or subsidiaries, then of structuring the group level action plans involving all the stakeholders.

Impact map



The two projects highlight the key role of employee experience at the level of service delivery within a given service offer. They encourage us to consider the implementation of a dedicated employee experience strategy, based on the analysis of the service offers portfolio in terms of key moments in customer and employee journeys.

The goal is to identify the recurring moments of truth which introduce a risk in terms of employee experience and/or customer experience, as well as those which create a positive impact in terms of commitment. The engagement matrix developed by Aktan may support this approach.

Based on the matrix, it is possible to develop:

- **Ad hoc training programs** to reduce the level of risk through new employee behaviours and new managerial models.
- **New recruitment strategies** which rely on the moments of truth in order to allow future employees to project themselves into meaningful job tasks.

To achieve this, it is necessary to develop a dedicated governance whose objective is to interweave the voice of employees, the voice of customers, portfolios of offers and business issues, to feed and regulate strategic decisions.

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Bridging the Gap Between Distant Disciplines

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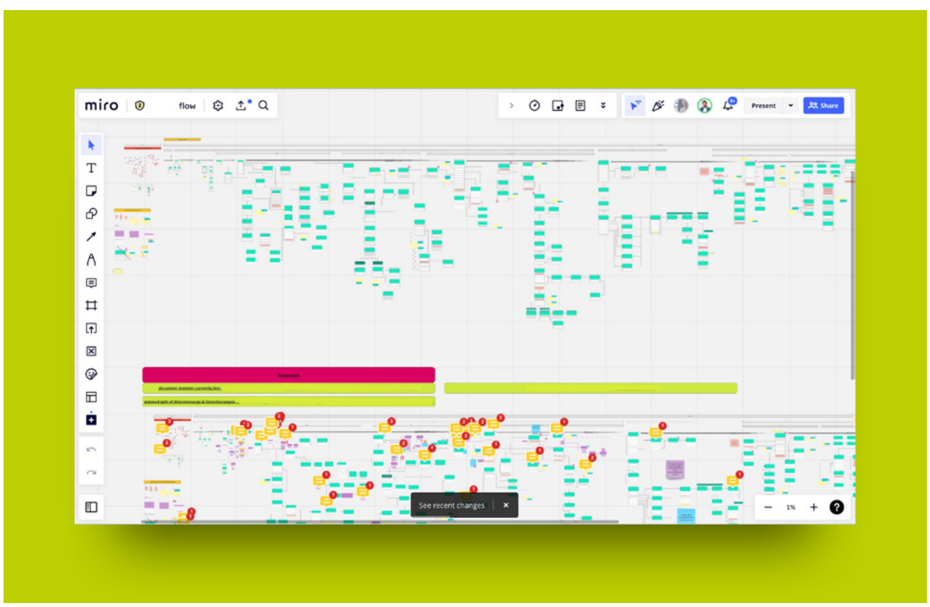
At Taxfix, we specialise in providing consumer-facing tax services at scale, for the German market. Achieving this requires close collaboration between tax advisors and service designers. Tax advisors are traditionally trained to be precise, avoid mistakes and vigilantly guard against errors. This contrasts sharply with service designers, who are inclined to take risks, embrace uncertainty, and value creative experimentation. In this article, we share insights on our recipe for how to find a productive mode of collaboration between two disiplines which on the face of it seem to be worlds apart.



Example of how visual tools between service designers and tax experts break down complex tax logic

Dive deep and become a (semi) expert in each other's discipline

Initially, it was important for us to recognise that we are different from each other. We acknowledged that it was imperative for us to cultivate empathy for one another. Therefore, we endeavoured to familiarise ourselves with each other's domain as much as possible.

Credit: Taxfix

Involving tax experts in user research

Juliane (tax expert): "I actually started to listen to Design Thinking podcasts. It helped me understand the design mindset better. I also asked designers to show me their designs and get walkthroughs from them. That way, I became familiar with the thinking process, and I understood the design work and the designers' goals better."

Manuel (service designer): "I believe it is my job as a designer to try to understand the world of taxes as much as I can. So, I read internal resources and talked to various tax experts at the company. I asked them many questions about tax regulations so that I would be able to talk to them on their same level."

Establish a shared vocabulary

The biggest challenge when working together is ensuring clear understanding between both parties. The terminology used both by tax experts and service designers can be very specific and not self-explanatory.

We found it beneficial to collaborate visually instead of just verbally. We visualised tax logic on virtual whiteboards and sketched early concepts of user flows. This helped us to overcome the communication gaps which we faced when relying only on words.

Juliane: "When I'm working with other disciplines, I need to do more explaining than I do with other tax experts. But the explaining is important so that we are actually aligned and talking about the same things."

Treat the other discipline as true team members

Within product development, designers typically have ownership of the solution definition based on user insights. But in our case, the solution also needs to comply with tax law, meaning we need close involvement of tax experts. To avoid back and forth (which can lead to frustration on both ends), it is important to treat each other as team members, rather than just stakeholders.

In our case, this means involving tax experts early in the process, rather than doing check-ins only in the later stages. We do ad-hoc sanity checks on new solutions as well as involve tax experts in user interviews. This helps them to understand our users better and means we need to have fewer discussions afterwards because we are already on the same page. Additionally, the tax experts add valuable context by bringing their tax knowledge to the insights derived from our research.

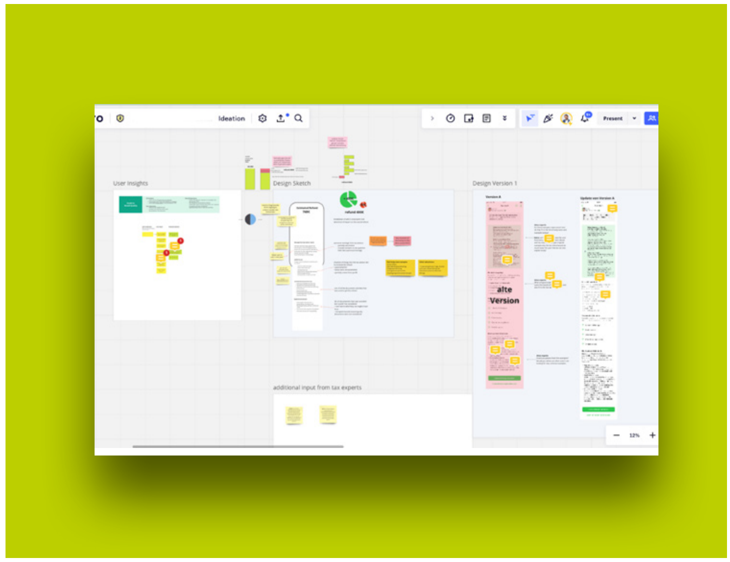
Manuel: "Usually I do the user research by myself or with design peers and then present the results afterwards. I was thrilled when the tax experts asked me if they could join the user interviews."

Find similarities in ways-of-working to overcome differences

Although we have different skill-sets, we both work towards the same goal: Making it simple for the user. Therefore, it can be beneficial to identify similarities rather than differences. As service designers, we often think of ourselves as the experts in user-centricity. However, tax experts work closely with clients too, explaining processes and reducing complexity. Acknowledging this helps to overcome differences. Once this is established, we can focus on bridging gaps.

Juliane: "My biggest learning was that, as a tax expert, I have to take a chance to see what works best to better serve the user."

Manuel: "I thought I would have to fight for users and against boring tax laws. But the tax experts are very aware of the sometimes-ridiculous complex rules in the German tax system, and are happy to come up with ideas for improvements."



Tax experts give feedback on very early-stage design concepts

Anchor the collaboration in the organisation

Our aim is to establish a mode of collaboration that scales across all tax experts and designers. Therefore, we have set-up structures and formats that help mutual understanding and collaboration.

Structures

Designers and tax experts are equal participants within the product development organisation. We recommend integrating domain knowledge experts fully inside product development teams to have constant access to expert knowledge and create a team culture that fosters trust over time.

Formats

In addition to the team structure, we have introduced formats that strive to bridge the gaps between design and tax experts.

1. Each employee takes part in a 'Taxes 101' crash course in which they learn about basic German tax laws and regulations.
2. We have documentation about German tax law available in our company's 'Notion'. It was written specifically for non-tax experts and serves as a knowledge hub for the most common tax questions.
3. We have an open Slack channel called "taxknowhow" in which everyone in the company can ask any tax question. Employees from across the entire organisation use it, and tax experts usually answer within minutes.

Challenges and outlook

Like any evolving organisation, we also see challenges and room for improvement. Our company has grown to more than 500 people. It is not always as easy to run workshops now as it was in the early days when we all used to sit in a room and throw ideas on a whiteboard. That's why it has become more important to embed tax experts in the structure of any user-centred design project. It can be especially daunting for younger designers to work with seasoned tax experts. Here we need to focus more on team-building in the future.

To guide the teams going forward, we will run an offsite between designers, tax experts and product managers to identify best practices within our current set-up and develop them further.

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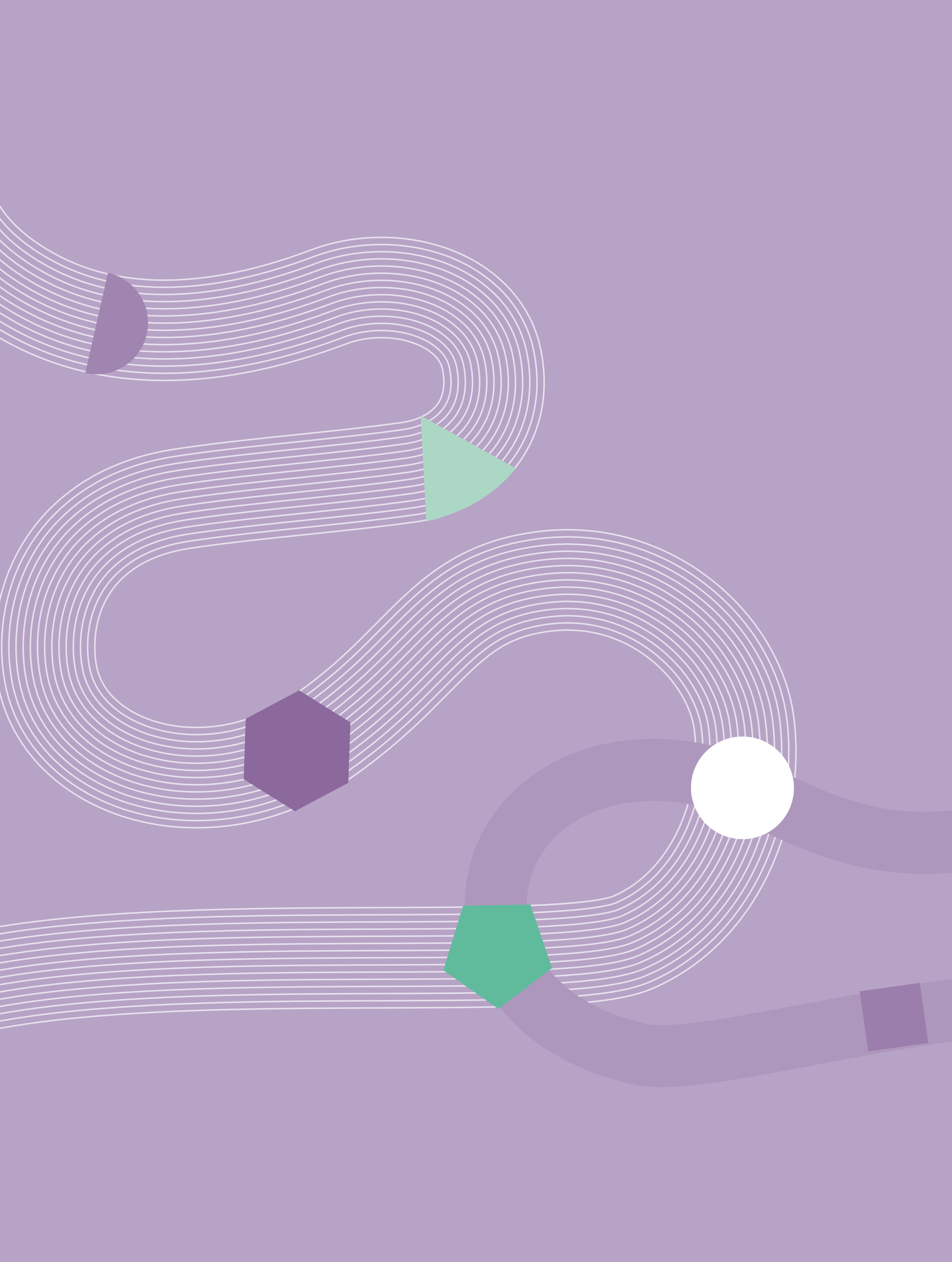

FEATURE

The Employee Journey

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Equity-infused CX, EX and Service Health at NASA

Differentiating, defining and measuring equitable experience and operations

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Because services typically have multiple products and subservices, designing a service and measuring its health is complex. We share our approach to (re)designing a NASA service to improve customer experience (CX), employee experience (EX) and service health, whilst incorporating equity into all three.

Service design in government

Within the U.S. federal government, I have seen five different definitions of service design. The first definition is akin to digital product design. Some designers believe that if they are designing a digital product that offers a service, they are doing service design. For instance, Google Search is a digital product that offers a search service, therefore, if I'm a Google Search designer, I must be a service designer too.

The second definition relates to the design of multiple digital products. For example, the U.S. Department of Education's Financial Student Aid office has a digital product to find a loan, another to apply for a loan, and another to manage the loan. Designers responsible for those products also believe they do service design.

The third definition is a mindset. Service design is the mindset of breaking-down silos, crossing barriers, and helping people to work cross-functionally. So, if I am a product manager or a designer or a data scientist who is bringing people together across silos to collaborate and make decisions, I am also a service designer.

The fourth definition of service design is design strategy and research for a digital product team. The service designer frames the problem and solution strategy. However, the service designer does not prototype. Prototyping is completed by a UX designer.

At NASA, we use a fifth definition. Service design is researching, analysing, synthesising, defining, ideating, conceptualising, prototyping, testing, measuring and iterating both a service – and the mechanics behind the service – to improve both CX and EX across all touchpoints (digital and non-digital) and all interactions, offline and online.

Differentiating service design and product design

Our definition of service design highlights three important ways in which service design is broader than product design. First, product design is performed to improve the user experience (UX), whereas service design aims to improve CX. We intentionally say CX to highlight that we are not designing the experience of one product or one interaction. Instead, we are designing the experience across multiple interactions, touchpoints, products and subservices, both offline and online.

Secondly, we see that product design focuses on UX, while service design focuses on both CX and EX. We know that great EX can infuse energy and delight in the employee service to the customer. The relationship is bidirectional because a great CX can instil pride in employees, improving their experience and inviting potential employees to apply to work in our service.

Thirdly, digital product design includes what I will call technology design: UI/UX, visual/graphic, content strategy, information architecture design and more. Service design involves technology design, but goes beyond that to include process, props, policy, communications, organisation, and business design and more. Any design that helps to improve CX/EX is part of the toolkit we use in service design.

As we do service design work, there are various roles our team carries out. These are roles rather than people, so in some instances a single person can fulfil multiple roles.

- Qualitative researchers
- Quantitative researchers
- Research analysts
- Research synthesisers
- Strategists
- Data visualisers
- Storytellers
- Workshop facilitators
- Social impact measurement and evaluation specialists
- Service prototypers
- Designers
  - Learning
  - Props
  - Policy
  - Process
  - Communication
  - Technology
  - Business
  - Organisation
  - etc.

All these roles and skills help us improve CX/EX, as well as operational excellence.

Differentiating CX, EX and service health

What are the differences between CX, EX, and service health? First, CX, EX, and service health are multidirectional. Great service operations improve both the CX and EX by facilitating and expediting their tasks, removing unnecessary, frustrating steps or approvals. Additionally, when customers and employees have great experiences especially with giving feedback, they are more likely to suggest improvements to the operations and functions of the service, thereby improving service health.

The NASA Small Business Innovation Research and Small Business Technology Transfer programs (SBIR/STTR) serve innovators and investors, as a broker between the two. On one side, SBIR gives financial and technical assistance to small businesses (SBIR) or partnerships between small businesses and research institutions (STTR) who have technologies facing the technology ‘valley of death’ due to a lack of network, crucial skill sets, or resources such as money to further technology development. We help mature these technologies through a phased funding service (see Figure 1). On the other side, SBIR/STTR tries to transition funding these technologies to another investor, such as a NASA program/project manager, a PM at other government agencies (OGA), or a private investor (INV).

Our customers are small businesses, researchers at research institutions (RIs), and investors at the organisations cited above: NASA PMs, OGA PMs, or private investors. We define employees as people who help run and administer the services. This includes PMs, outreach and communications staff, program executives, legal representatives, finance and operations staff, program directors, digital service teams, service designers, CX teams, senior advisors, centre technology transition liaisons, mission directorate liaisons, mission directorate representatives, centre transition chiefs, data analysts and data scientists, help desk staff, new tech representatives, help desk employees, contracting officers and specialists, contracting officer representatives, technical reviewers, evaluation panels, senior signing officials, etc. That list alone highlights the complexity of the organisation compared to the simplicity a customer desires. In other words, our organisational structure and service operation are neither service-oriented nor customer-oriented, and this also highlights two ways in which improving CX and EX are very different.

First, EX is broader than CX. We research customer goals, motivations, behaviours, core values, pain points, tasks or jobs, tools, and positive emotions. We design discrete service interactions to improve CX. The employee journey is not composed of discrete interaction points, but a continuous relationship, occurring day in and day out. Beyond our focus areas, we also look at eight different dimensions of employee work life.

— Work
— People
— Places
— Well-being
— Organisation
— Technology
— JEDAI (Justice, Equity, Diversity, Access and Inclusion)
— Professional development

JEDAI and professional development are cross-cutting dimensions affecting the first six. Though not independent, we measure them because they greatly contribute to improved EX.

Second, much of what influences EX is out of our direct control due to organisational structures. Only 20 SBIR/STTR staff are directly employed by our programs. The others fall into three categories: contractors, NASA employees who focus on our programme but report elsewhere, and volunteers with other jobs.

For these groups, we have little or no control over EX dimensions such as professional development, well-being or places. We have only partial control over dimensions such as people, JEDAI, technology, work and organisation, where they relate to our program. However, employees' holistic experience with people, JEDAI, technology, work and organisation do affect how they show up and do their work when working on our programme or their division or company work. We must work to improve EX through the influence of leadership and management of contractor companies and other parts of NASA where they work.

For service health, we follow all the dimensions of components we can change through design.

— Communications
— Learning
— Props
— Policy
— Processes
— People
— Technology
— Organisation
— Business

The people, technology, and organisation categories overlap with EX dimensions. Through EX, we look at the employee's experience or relationship, whereas through service health, we are looking at performance and goal achievement.

Building CX, EX, and service health equations

With so many ways to measure CX, EX, and service health, we chose to avoid the common pattern of delivering a data dashboard that overwhelms executives. Instead we wanted to create a simple dashboard with three numbers, from 0 to 10. They would measure CX, EX, and the Service Index (SI) metric for service health; the same foci we attempt to influence that will also be visible from the website, inviting customers or employees to give feedback if their experience doesn't match the current rating or score (see Figure 1).

When the executives see any low metric, they can click it, and it disaggregates (see Figures 2-3).

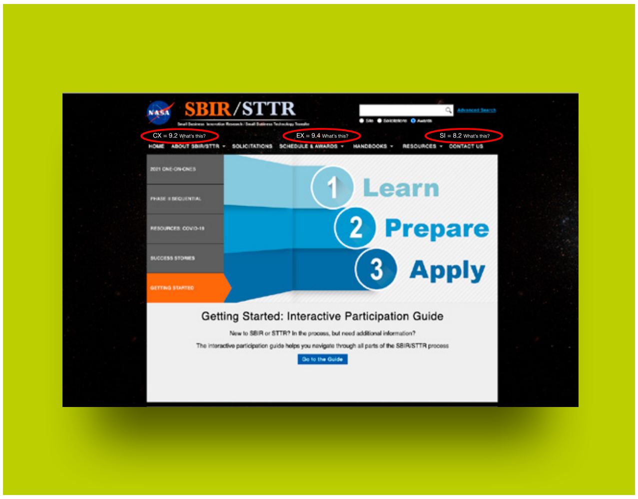

Fig. 1: Landing page prototype displaying three metrics

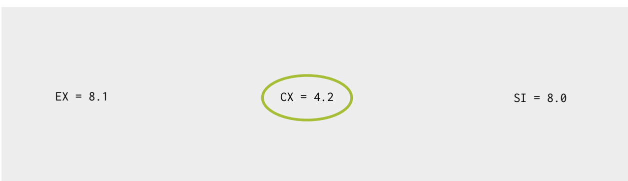

Fig. 2: Dashboard with three metrics

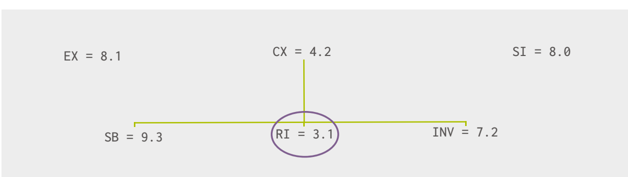

Fig. 3: Dashboard with CX (disaggregated)

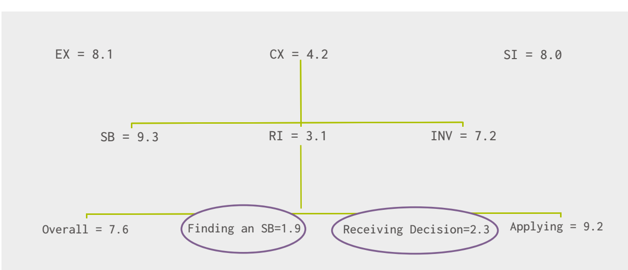

Fig. 4: Dashboard with RI CX (disaggregated)

Again, when executives see that the RI CX is low, they can click it, and it disaggregates (see Figure 4).

Then executives can decide to focus on the RI experiences of finding a small business partner and receiving the proposal funding decision. The executives can then set a strategy for the quarter, half-year or year to focus on improving the RI experience of finding a partner and receiving a decision, as a way to improve the overall RI CX, as a way to improve overall CX. The dashboard then becomes a decision-making tool that is initially simple, whilst still allowing the executive view more information to make strategic decisions.

Using a customer journey map, employee journey map and a service blueprint, we built the equations for CX, EX and SI by deciding which parts of the journey or blueprint we wanted to measure, and determining their corresponding weights in our equation. Next, we incorporated equity components into those equations. Finally, we chose what metric we wanted to use to measure each point of the journey or blueprint that formed part of the equations.

We share an example of the large set of equations we built for CX, EX and SI. We broke the CX into an SB, RI and Investor component.

$$CX = 0.45*CX_{SB} + 0.15*CX_{RI} + 0.40*CX_{INV}$$

We then broke each component down. The SB CX is broken into the CX of the three different possible macro journeys small businesses can take through our programme: either SBIR, STTR or the ‘Ignite’ program which allows companies to pitch ideas for funding.

$$CX_{SB} = 0.60*CX_{SBIR} + 0.30*CX_{-SB\_STTR} + 0.10*CX_{IGNITE}$$

We then broke each component down, again, based on the different micro journeys through each macro journey. For simplicity, we show the Ignite program as an example since it only has one phase.

$$CX_{IGNITE} = 0.40*CX_{IGNITE\_OVERALL} + 0.15*CX_{AWARENESS} + 0.15*CX_{APPLYING} + 0.15*CX_{PITCHING} + 0.15*CX_{IGNITE\_P1\_WORK}$$

Similarly, we built an EX equation:

$EX = 0.10*EX_{Well\_Being} + 0.20*EX_{Career\_Dev} + .20*EX_{Onboarding} + 0.10*_{Training\_for\_Job} + 0.10*EX_{Tech\_Tools} + 0.30*EX_{People} + 0.20*EX_{Org}$

and an SI equation:

SI = 0.30*Transition_Goal_Achievement + 0.10*Infusion_Goal_Achievement + 0.10*Commercialization_Goal_Achievement + 0.20*Diversity_Goal_Achievement + 0.05*First_Response_Time_Goal_Achievemnt + 0.10*Ticket_Resolution_Time_Goal_Achievemnt + 0.05*Phase_Completion_Rate + 0.10*Repeat_Customer(Application)_Goal_Achievement.

Infusing Equity into CX, EX and SI

Finally, we infused equity into the equations. For example, we wanted to prevent a situation where the CX, EX or SI was high even though the average CX for targeted, underrepresented groups was low. Because of that we broke the above components further:

$CX_{COMPONENT} = 0.05*CX_{Hubzone} + 0.10*CX_{VOSB} + 0.05*CX_{SDVOSB} + 0.20*CX_{WOCB} + 0.05*CX_{BOSB} + 0.05*CX_{LOSB} + 0.05*CX_{IOSB} + 0.05*CX_{AAPIOSB} + 0.40*CX_{OTHER}$

- Hubzone: specific regional zones in the US targeted for economic development
- VOSB: veteran-owned small business
- SDVOSB: service-disabled veteran-owned small business
- WOSB: women-owned small business
- BOSB: Black-owned small business
- LOSB: Latinx-owned small business
- IOSB: Indigenous-owned small business
- AAPIOSB: Asian American and Pacific Islander-owned small business

We use the same CX breakdown for components of SI.

$EX_{COMPONENT} = 0.30*CX_{W} + 0.10*CX_{B} + 0.10*CX_{L} + 0.10*CX_{I} + 0.10*CX_{AAPI} + 0.30*CX_{O}$

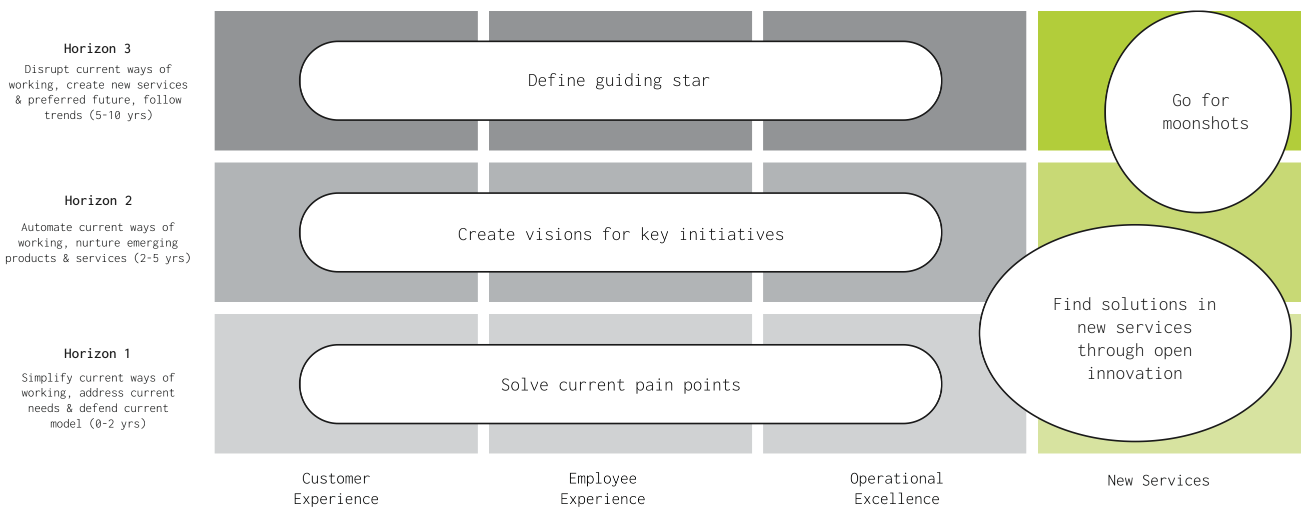

Fig. 5: Dashboard with RI CX (disaggregated)

By creating equitable breakdowns, if only white men have an amazing EX, the highest EX possible is 3 out of 10, regardless of demographic percentages. Similarly, the highest CX or SI possible if only white-male-owned small businesses have great experiences is 4 out of 10.

We built equations for overall and component metrics including equity through collaborative workshops involving various stakeholders. We used our vision, mission, values and programme strategy to guide us in choosing various weights and components as opposed to a deficit-based approach. Any component of a journey/blueprint that was not chosen for an equation will still receive improvement by the specific team working on that step of the journey/blueprint. The question we addressed is which components are important enough that they should constitute the high-level, overall CX, EX and SI metrics the executives see and use to make decisions. As the weight of a component increases, the executives are increasingly forced to improve it to achieve a high overall score. If the weight is small, executives can achieve a high overall score while ignoring the component.

A futures roadmap for CX, EX and operational excellence

Using an HCD-driven process and our baseline metrics, we created a near-term future-state service concept. Using a futures-driven process, we created a long-term future-state service concept situated ten years in the future. We then populated our innovation board to list the various initiatives and new ideas we would complete to move our current state to the near-term future state in the next 0-2 years, as well as to the long-term future state over the next 2–10 years[1].

1 Udoewa, V. (2022). Five Modes and Nine Variations of Integration between HCD and Futures Design. Journal of Design Thinking, 3(1).

Outlook: Towards an equitable design system

Lastly, we built a design system that includes service vision, mission, values, principles, positioning statement, brand, common scripts, common critical moments, common customer journeys, common employee journeys, accessibility guidelines and equity guidelines. One of our equity guidelines is ‘infuse all experience and service metrics with equity’. Defining and measuring CX, EX and service health with equity is continuous work, and we hope a design system increases the consistency of equity across the service.

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Building Trust and Employee Engagement

Co-creation of the employee journey during a regional integration

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As service design consultants, we spend most of our time thinking and crafting experiences for our clients, we often use our skillset to engage with users, understand new global trends and deliver value to all kind of industries. This time we had our heads down thinking about our own experience as employees and seeing ourselves as end users. We thought we had overcome the steep learning curve, the one we usually have in a rush when starting a project in a new industry. Little did we know that digging into our own employee experience would take us to another level of exploration.

This paper describes how service design can support organisational transitions with a collaborative approach, building the employee experience service blueprint to foster business and organisational awareness, identify opportunity areas to increase employees' ownership and engagement at scale in various geographies.

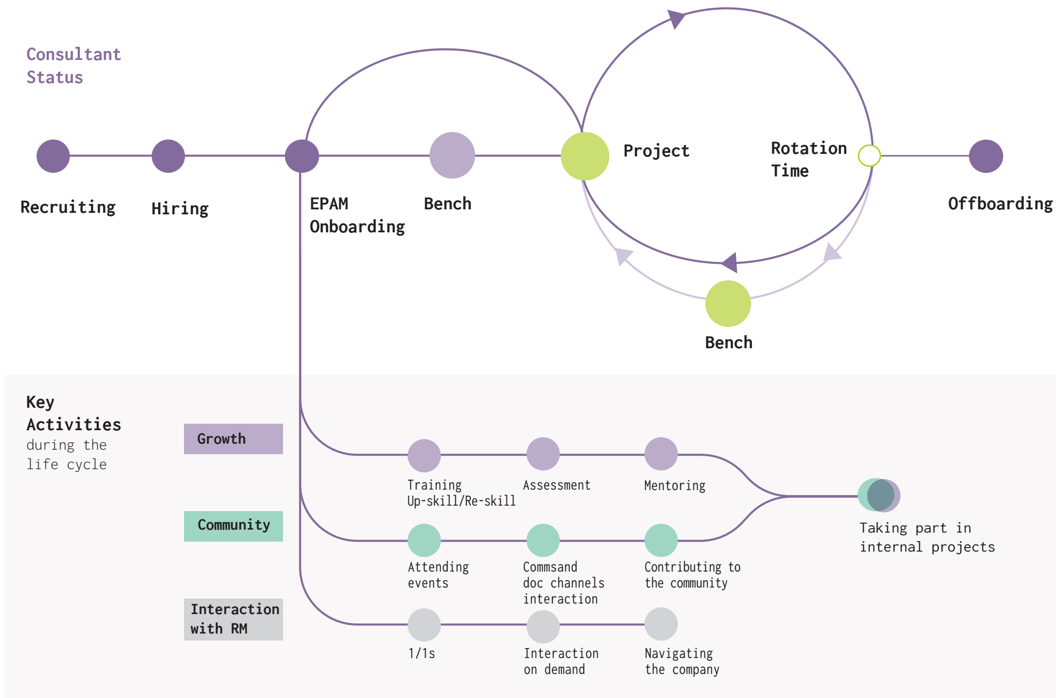
The business context

EPAM has been helping clients to achieve their digital transformation goals for over 30 years. We are a global engineering services company combined with our strategic business and innovation consulting, Design Thinking, and physical-digital capabilities, with 57,000 employees operating across 50 countries.

EPAM has acquired 38 companies in different regions. Having to understand and embrace a wide range of capabilities, organisational cultures and operating models, EPAM has gone through iterative processes to ensure that talent goes through an engaging employee experience, to strengthen our operations, organisational values and culture.

The consulting model journey

EPAM operates under a consulting model, in which human talent is a key asset and the main



The consultant journey

source of revenue and employees are delivering client value by creating solutions using their knowledge and expertise.

The employee journey begins with the hiring process during which we assess the candidate's skillset and present a compelling offer commensurate with their level and aligned with their career path expectations. During the first days, new employees onboard and learn how to navigate the organisation and get familiar with the new work environment, its culture and values.

In the consulting model, there is a resourcing process to match projects' demand with employees' skillsets. The aim is to get the right people assigned to the right projects. Some of the newcomers might have a match even before being hired, others would have to wait until a new project demands their skillset.

After the onboarding, an employee can start a project or spend time boosting their professional profile and get ready for a new assignment. In both situations, consulting companies provide resources for employees to keep learning and developing deep expertise in their crafts to keep up with changing market needs.

Once resourced on a project with a team, the employee will perform and interact with clients delivering the best quality work, in this part of the journey the employee will receive feedback from clients and their peers. This allows them to identify their strengths and opportunities for improvement. Clear, up-front expectations and constructive feedback is key to the growth process.

Eventually, the employee will end the engagement and begin the assignment process again to find their next project.

Simultaneously, employees will be building their career path, looking for opportunities to grow and be promoted in the company, as well as finding a professional community that can support and enrich their work environment.

In EPAM's case the employee journey is supported by an ecosystem of managers, peers, mentors, learning opportunities through digital platforms and resources available to assist employees throughout the lifecycle.

The design unit expansion in Latin America

Aiming to expand its footprint in Latin America, in 2015, EPAM started its operations in Mexico as an engineering leader and began hiring engineering talent. Over time we went on to add digital design talent. While expanding to other countries in Latin America, geographies grew at different paces with diverse business reasons. Some were started from scratch, others were acquisitions, and each had a different mix of design skills offered.

To avoid silos, align processes and strengthen the region, a merging process was required to achieve the following objectives:

— Integrate diverse teams coming from different backgrounds, generating a shared sense of belonging through a consistent employee experience.

— Adapt global guidelines while retaining and enhancing a strong local culture.

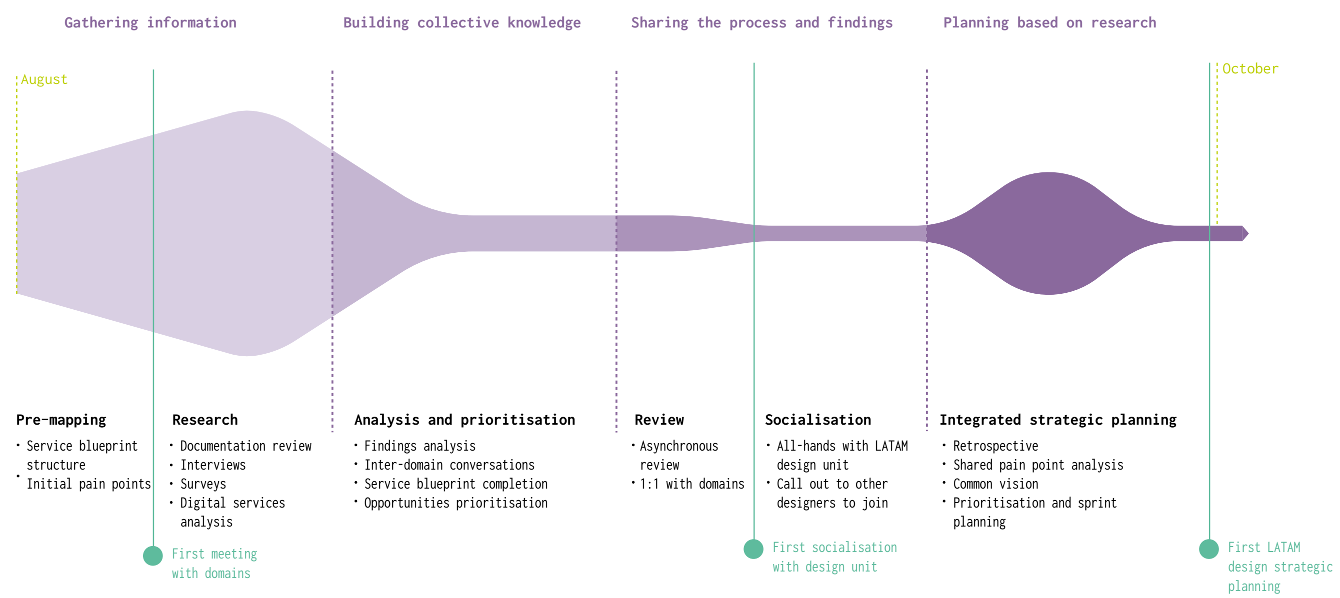
— Establish a baseline of existing talent and skillset as employees were hired through different recruiting processes.

Methodology and implementation

The 'domains': A collaborative approach

The best way to achieve the objectives mentioned above was through creating a baseline of current employee capabilities to map gaps and opportunities. The understanding of the employee journey based on service design principles aimed to map the end-to-end journey, considering processes involved and relevant stakeholders.

A collaborative approach was proposed to build the employee service blueprint and initiate the transition towards a distributed governance that enhances employee engagement with the design unit. Six teams called 'domains' were created, each responsible for the following sections of the journey:



Building the employee service blueprint

1. Service mapping: responsible for the initial structure of the service blueprint and its final consolidation, identifying opportunities, domain articulation, roadmap creation and guidance.
2. Hiring: focused on attracting the best design talent in the region, identifying and engaging with stakeholders from EPAM and maintaining consistency throughout the process, while ensuring the retention of a local flavor in the interaction with candidates and new employees.
3. Onboarding: ensuring the first weeks of new EPAMers run smoothly, considering regional factors, with consistent and scalable documentation open to constant iteration and improvement.
4. Design practice: accountable for the Latin American design practice structure and management, adopting EPAM's design mindset and values, incorporating key ceremonies based on the regional context. Promoting adoption of global EPAM design standards within the Latin American context.
5. Community: strengthening international relationships within the broader EPAM community and promoting a sense of belonging, considering communication inside and outside the design unit.
6. Career path: understanding training, skills evaluation and regional career path needs, aligning them with EPAM's global digital services available.

The main goal was to identify opportunities to create a cohesive Latin America team that retained its authentic voice. Team members were empowered to lead a domain and choose their own methodology, led by the service mapping domain which established a timeline and expected outputs. Additionally, the management team ensured representation from all countries within the Latin America EPAM footprint, within each domain to guarantee the inclusion of all regional perspectives.

The process

First, the leadership layer and the service mapping domain built the blueprint skeleton and pre-mapped its phases and key activities. Then, the domain facilitated a session to delegate each section of the blueprint and highlight the initial dependencies.

In the second phase, domains gathered existing data from previous research and EPAM's global archive to create an inventory of existing resources. Additionally, domains conducted interviews and surveys to better understand the current state of their purview within the journey. This opened the door for new relationships with the staffing team and design units from other regions, thus participants gained visibility within the organisation and closer collaboration with North American peers and leaders.

In the third phase, the domains analysed the information to identify insights and prioritise pain points through internal and inter-domain discussions. The findings were documented in the service blueprint format, reinforcing a systemic approach by encouraging teams to think about the different layers of the employee experience and their correlation.

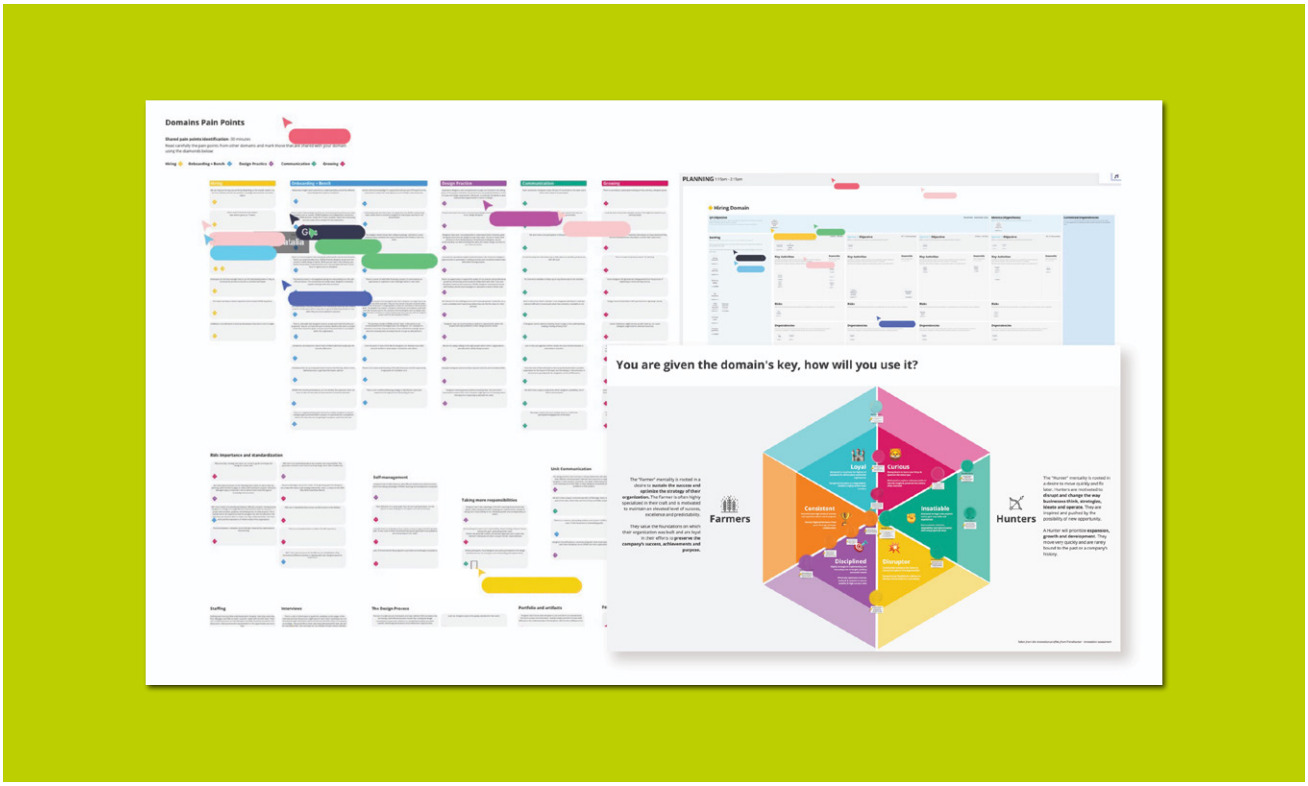
In the fourth phase, the service mapping domain met with each group to review progress, solve doubts about format and provide guidance regarding the findings and next steps. Discussions around how to map transversal or reiterative activities came up, as well as synergies among different domains. Opportunities that emerged included the need for homogenisation of processes and artifacts used during the onboarding and community activities, and legacy structures from pre-acquisition.

In the fifth phase, each domain shared their process and main findings with the design unit and other stakeholders, seeking to attract new volunteers to join the domains' initiatives. Finally, the first integrated planning session was held with designers from four different countries. It started with a retrospective of the work done, followed by a shared pain point analysis and a common vision consolidation. To achieve the vision, the domains prioritised the opportunities identified and planned the following quarter activities by sprints and epics.

Outcomes and impact

Employee engagement

Each month, the design unit in LATAM measures employees' satisfaction with the unit, their project with client and



Strategic planning, a digital collaboration

EPAM's work environment. Before starting the domains collaboration, the rate of response was 46 percent; once the domains started to work together, the response rate increased to 96 percent, with an average satisfaction with the LATAM Design Unit of 4.24 out of 5.

Additionally, domains' participation increased from 40 percent to 53 percent after sharing the results with the unit. The opportunities found and the process itself resonated with the rest of the team, increasing their interest in participating in internal initiatives and triggering their drive to propose solutions.

Collaborative strategic planning

The service blueprint mapping uncovered over 120 opportunities to better integrate recent acquisitions while retaining the cultural nuances of the four different countries. Each domain established a framework to grow the design unit in Latin America and leverage EPAM's internal digital services to the local needs.

The domains generated a project diagnosis to understand specific skills that clients were requiring from LATAM designers, which helped to prioritise some opportunities. Other domains created a personal development plan to support designers in their career path, adapting EPAM's digital services to specific needs within the LATAM context. And other initiatives such as an onboarding and portfolio guide were recommended to move forward in the next quarter.

Knowledge transfer for acquisitions and cultural transitions

The case was documented and shared with internal stakeholders from other regions, sharing not only the process but also the lessons learned and outcomes of the experience. This information is useful for other regions going through acquisitions or similar cultural transitions. It acts as a guideline to overcome the challenges that this type of process entails, such as engagement and ownership of employees from acquired companies. It also demonstrates EPAM's processes for incorporation and consolidation in new regions, as well as the establishing a common vision on which to build a strong unit prepared to grow and scale their operation.

Lessons learned

Incentives and reward systems to encourage employee participation

Working on the employee journey improvements was a side project for our team, it was time-consuming and needed considerable effort to execute all the tasks. Although our team was very motivated to enhance their own employee experience, we understood that keeping track of their collaboration was necessary, we acknowledged their efforts by giving contribution badges, mentioning their participation in townhalls, showcasing their work to relevant stakeholders, and most importantly implementing their ideas.

Start with small changes that are under the local control

As a result of the as-is employee journey mapping our team outlined possible interventions, we realsed that some improvement opportunities were systemic decisions that should be carried out globally not only from our location. Those changes might take time as they need to be discussed with a larger team. Our approach was to start working on local changes that we could implement in a short period of time, which gave our team a sense of progress. On the other hand, we could provide visibility of systemic changes and start meaningful conversations with key stakeholders from other locations.

Involved employees are better prepared to embrace organisational changes

Our team members gained visibility of our backstage operations and obtained a better understanding of the roles and tasks of the units at EPAM supporting our internal services. This awareness allowed them to comprehend and be empathetic with the processes, time constraints and systemic changes needed to implement their proposed solutions.

Employees could improve their skillsets by participating in the employee journey activity

The project provided a scenario for team members to show their strengths and design capabilities, work with new peers and hone skills they have identified as opportunities to improve. With a mixture of different profiles in the workstreams they could learn from each other. Additionally, the design unit could spot emerging leaders.

A collaborative approach provides shared accountability for incremental enhancements in the employee experience

Traditionally the responsibility to improve the employee experience relies on few people, normally the leadership layer. In our case, the responsibility is distributed among the contributors who took ownership across key moments in the employee journey. As a community, we are committed to keeping track of our implementation progress.

Conclusion

In summary, this case study demonstrates how service design applied to the employee experience can empower collaborators to embrace organisational changes. By gaining visibility into internal operation,s employees become more empathetic and better-equipped to lead solutions. Furthermore, this approach enables skill development and fosters a sense of shared accountability for enhancing the employee experience.

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The Teacher Journey Map

Creating better faculty experiences through service design



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Companies often celebrate their anniversaries with parties, heartfelt messages from leaders, corporate gifts, or awards to commemorate the occasion and show appreciation for their employees' contributions. But what better way to mark the occasion than by striving to improve the internal experience of employees? This article tells the story of when that took place within a university in Colombia.

Let's Celebrate! Ten years of innovation: What needed to change

The Centre for Teaching Excellence (CEDU[1] in Spanish) is a unit within the university which has the aim of supporting faculty members in the creation of innovative, engaging and meaningful learning experiences for students. The CEDU offers more than 25 voluntary programmes and services for teachers, ranging from book clubs and teaching certificates to faculty learning communities and a teaching innovation award.

Each year, the centre collects feedback from participants through satisfaction surveys, interviews and focus groups, in order to gain insights into the perspectives, interests and needs of teachers. However, as is typically the case in the field of educational development, feedback is often gathered at the end of the programmes, which makes it difficult to identify obstacles or to gain a holistic view of the teacher experience. To celebrate its tenth anniversary, CEDU partnered with the university's design department to undertake an analysis of its current portfolio using a service design approach

Fig. 1: Team members working on Teacher Journey Maps

Elements Affecting Teachers' Experiences with CEDU

Support	Administrative Issues
- Impact on user satisfaction. - Pressures CEDU employees.	- High operational workload. - Stifle innovation and collaboration.
Information and Communication	**Classroom Challenges**
- High level of information sent to users. - Misleading programme information. - Lack of programme records.	- Reluctance to participate due to impact on reputation with students or colleagues.

Fig. 2: Elements affecting teachers' experiences with the CEDU

to gain a deeper understanding of teachers' experiences of the various programmes and services it offers.

The primary objective was to create 'Teacher Journey Maps' (TJM) for three programmes offered by the centre, in order to determine faculty members' motivations and obstacles to access their services, brainstorm ideas to improve them, and to enhance both the faculty's experiences and students' learning environments.

Using a service design approach to map teachers' journeys

Implementing a service design approach to enhance the experience of university faculty members posed a challenge for the project team. While comprised of enthusiastic and innovative CEDU members who had always considered the needs of teachers to create the programmes and services, the project team lacked a complete understanding of faculty members' experiences throughout the entire journey, including their workload and how they felt at specific moments of the programme or service. This was a significant knowledge gap.

To create the initial drafts of the TJM, the team used information from previous programme evaluations. The preliminary analysis of the TJM enabled project members to identify pain points, hurdles, expectations, anticipated outcomes and moments at which teachers may potentially feel motivated or disengaged. To validate the previous insights, the CEDU team triangulated the TJM's first drafts and the assumptions by conducting seven focus groups with a total of 22 teachers who had previously participated in CEDU's services. This allowed the team to understand their motivations, obstacles and emotions throughout their journey within each service. The qualitative information was combined with quantitative data about faculty participation by academic areas, as well as the satisfaction surveys that the CEDU conducts each academic year.

By using TJMs, the CEDU was able to recognise pain points and expectations, as well as areas where teachers may need additional support. Significantly, they successfully identified four elements that affected teachers' experiences within the CEDU and require addressing in order to promote faculty participation, enhance engagement, and improve the centre's efficiency. These elements encompass support, administrative issues, information and communication, and classroom challenges.

In relation to the 'support' element, team members found that it was essential to maintain high levels of satisfaction from teachers. Faculty members demanded and appreciated elevated levels of personalised support while participating in a programme, therefore putting a lot of pressure on the CEDU's employees, who in turn must 'be available at all times' to address faculty members' requests and needs. In terms of 'administrative issues', team members found that the CEDU's employees had heavy day-to-day workloads, which affects their ability to be innovative or propose new products

In regard to the 'information and communication' element, faculty members expressed their annoyance with the amount of information received from the CEDU, which in some cases was also misleading about the real content of a specific programme. In this element, team members also found that many of the results from faculty members' participation in specific programmes was not being officially recorded, which sometimes results in lost work or lost opportunities for improvement and measuring of impact of the CEDU's services.

Lastly, with respect to the 'classroom challenges' element, faculty members expressed their concern about participating in specific CEDU programmes, because it may affect their reputation as teachers either with their own students (who may reveal it in their evaluation) or with colleagues or superiors within their departments (who may frown upon their engagement with faculty development initiatives).

Identifying these four critical elements allowed the project's team to acknowledge what needed to be improved to promote faculty participation. More importantly, the identification and understanding of these four critical elements allowed the CEDU to discover that amongst faculty members, there were five segments that needed to be recognised to develop tailored services.

Understanding the different teacher personas within the university

As part of the service design approach, five different teacher personas were developed, which was a breakthrough in understanding how faculty members – key employees of

Teacher Persona	Goals and Motivations	Level of Involvement
Conservative	Keep reputation as an expert in their field. Committment to share knowledge with students.	Low levels of participation in CEDU´s programmes. They get involved in specific services.
Enthusiast	Desire to improve their teaching practice and offer quality in education. Satisfaction through student learning.	High levels of participation in CEDU´s programmes. They get involved in innovation services.
Expert	Contribute to the improvement of education quality. Implement teaching methodologies to foster reflection.	High levels of participation in CEDU´s programmes. They share expertise with colleagues.
Strategic	Obtain tangible goals and comply with institutional performance indicators. Advance in their professional career.	Medium levels of participation in CEDU´s programmes. They get involved when it's convenient.
Rookie	Adapt to a new working environment. Acquire teaching skills and adapt them to their specific discipline needs.	Medium levels of participation in CEDU´s programmes. They get more involved as they learn.

Fig. 3: The five teacher personas identified in the project

the university – experience each of their journeys. The five teacher personas that were identified were: 'Conservative', 'Enthusiast', 'Expert', 'Strategic' and 'Rookie'.

The identification of the five personas was essential to identify potential improvements to each of the services that the CEDU currently offers. For the university leaders, it is especially important that teachers aim to innovate within their classrooms and enhance their students' learning experiences, which is why the CEDU was created over ten years ago.

However, its services were not designed considering the different motivations, expectations and obstacles that faculty members may experience throughout their journey within the centre. These results allowed team members to rethink the way in which the CEDU's programmes are provided, and the centre is currently redesigning its portfolio to offer catered routes of services for each persona, allowing faculty members to improve their teaching skills and enhance students' experiences.

Key learnings

This project allowed the CEDU to understand the relevance of using service design to improve employee participation and engagement and its challenges, considering the complexity and many factors involved in providing educational services. During the project, its staff members were trained in using a service design approach to enhance and develop faculty services, and this knowledge is being shared and continuously applied within the centre to improve its portfolio.

Moreover, this initiative allowed project and university leaders to identify the elements that affect the overall journey of its faculty, including such things as personal, professional and institutional variables that need to be accounted for when designing or improving services.

Due to the impact that this project has had on the CEDU thus far, the university started to implement a service design approach to analyse other processes and services aimed at students and faculty members.

Faculty members that participated in the project demonstrated eagerness to share their perspectives and acknowledged the impact that this initiative has had on the improvement of faculty services and programmes. The project is still being developed, and the vision is to continue to implement a service design approach within the CEDU, while advocating for its implementation in other university endeavours.

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1 https://www.uninorte.edu.co/web/cedu/cedu

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Service Design for Talent Development

An Asian experience

Though service design has been frequently utilised to enhance employee experiences, it is rarely applied for talent development in an Asian healthcare context. The article discusses service design's use in the redesign of the Management Associate Programme in Singapore's Tan Tock Seng hospital and distils three key insights from this exercise.

Jia Xiang Chua is an experienced service designer currently serving as the assistant director and principal service designer in transformation office (kaizen) at Tan Tock Seng Hospital. With his team, Jia Xiang focuses on driving design innovation to enhance various aspects of healthcare delivery, from patient experience to staff efficiency.

Regina Tan Ching Yin is a senior executive at Tan Tock Seng Hospital's management development office. She recruits and supports graduates through the Management Associate Programme. She uses service design principles to understand and meet users' evolving needs. Regina believes that a strong learning environment is essential for fostering the potential of individuals.

Understanding the context

The competition for talent is pervasive in many industries, including healthcare. To build a viable pipeline of future leaders, Tan Tock Seng hospital runs a talent development initiative called the 'Management Associate Programme' (MAP).

The Management Associate Programme is a two-year programme that aims to nurture graduates with outstanding leadership qualities for a challenging and fulfilling career ahead. Figure 1 illustrates a typical trainee's journey, which includes exposure to a spectrum of healthcare operations through three job rotations, each lasting 7-8 months, to develop a holistic understanding of the hospital's various functions.

As the organisation welcomes a younger workforce, it has become clear that prospective employees are looking for work that provides a sense of purpose and meaning. Between 2020 and 2021, an exercise was conducted collaboratively to identify the underlying needs of trainees and create a more fulfilling experience.

The team which carried out this work comprised of a service designer and administrators from the department responsible for the Management Associate Programme, who together carried out user research to gather insights from current and graduate trainees, their reporting officers, and relevant senior leaders in the hospital. These insights offer valuable guidance for the design of talent development programmes in healthcare, especially in light of the changing needs and aspirations of the younger workforce.

Redesigning the experience

The team employed the UK Design Council's 'Double Diamond' approach to rapidly design and develop the engagements.

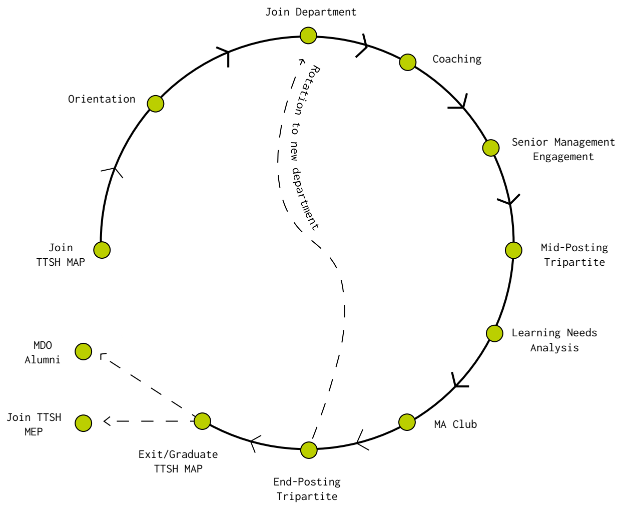

Fig. 1: Typical management associate journey

Discover & Define

Maslow's hierarchy of needs[1] framed the design of a 'pulse' survey crafted to measure the trainees' baseline experience, and distil key focus areas for the subsequent interviews. In total, 23 responses were collected.

Next, 13 stakeholders (trainees and supervisors) were interviewed to uncover their needs, pain points and motivations. The interviews uncovered three insights:

— 'Fulfilment': Refers to a culture that supports trainees to do meaningful and purpose-driven work.
— 'Development': Relates to greater autonomy in personal and professional development for their careers.
— 'Alignment': Seeks to align the unmet expectations of all programme stakeholders, to meet the programme and organisational goals.

Figure 2 breaks down these insights according to the trainee's and supervisor's points-of-view. Additionally, trainees spend most of the time with their host departments and supervisors. Therefore, having consistent coaching and support from their supervisors will enhance their programme experience.

Develop

With these identified opportunities, 14 stakeholders participated in a workshop for co-creating the future Management Associate Programme experience, including current and past trainees, as well as some supervisors. Three new user journeys and eight unique ideas emerged. To facilitate execution, the eight ideas were then curated into the following themes:

— Enable self-initiated professional development.
— Enhance reporting officer capability in coaching and managing Management Associate.
— Strengthen relationship building in Management Development Office Family and beyond.

Deliver

User testing sessions were conducted with six current trainees to validate that these ideas meet the needs of stakeholders. Critical feedback was obtained for refining the ideas to meet needs and provide a high-quality user experience.

Execution and impact

The successful execution of the refined ideas has had a positive impact on the Management Associate Programme experience, resulting in improvements across three key themes.

Enable self-initiated professional development

'Powerfolio' – a career portfolio concept – was rolled out in 2021 to facilitate self-directed professional development. A simple personalised document, this tool (see Figure 3) guides trainees to proactively self-reflect on their learning and development at various points throughout the two-year journey – e.g. at the two-month mark, three-month mark, six-month mark, etc. Feedback from trainees in the user testing group revealed that the tool increased their sense of ownership over their personal and professional development, with five out of six trainees recommending it to others.

Now, 'Powerfolio' is used by trainees to chart their development, and subsequently engage their supervisors in their learning. That way, trainees gain the autonomy to track and initiate their development.

"Before 'Powerfolio' was introduced, I struggled with translating my knowledge into actionable steps. Now I have clarity in connecting my learnings and areas of improvements from one posting to another. With

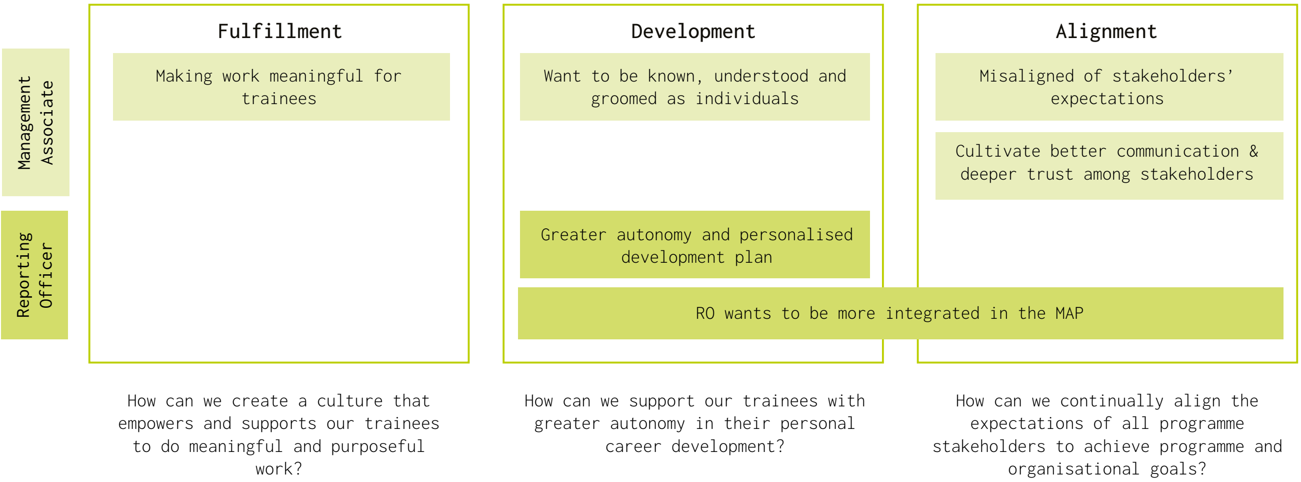

Fig. 2: Opportunity statements and key insights

the build-on knowledge, I feel energised to take on challenges at work." Management Associate (Batch 12)

Strengthen relationship building in Management Development Office family and beyond

In the local context, communal meals, and activities – in an informal setting – pave the way for open conversations. To this end, two platforms have been launched.

— 'MDO Get Together' is an informal event for trainees (juniors and seniors) to interact with senior management. Separated into small groups, participants performed hands-on/collaborative activities (see Figure 4 for examples), stimulating organic conversations. Since 2021, three such events have been organised, and participation rates have stayed high (above 70 percent). Trainees have provided feedback expressing their enjoyment of the informal atmosphere and interactions.

— 'Good Vibes Lunch' is a networking opportunity for junior and senior trainees, to share work experiences over an informal lunch. In total, 43 trainees have provided feedback, and all found the platform useful for navigating their work matters.

"The session allowed me to meet (senior) trainees in the programmes, and learn what they are doing in their respective roles. It provides clarity on the kind of roles I would like to take on in future." Management Associate (Batch 12)

"Want to say 'thank you' for spending the time and effort to share with us some really good tips and tricks in stakeholder management. Especially useful for me as my current job rotation is very heavy on project management work." Management Associate (Batch 13)

Fig. 3: The 'MA Powerfolio' tool

Fig. 4: Activities to connect trainees and senior management

Fig. 5: Practical points shared with supervisors

Enhance reporting officer capability in coaching and managing of Management Associate

Supervisor engagement was also enhanced following the co-creation workshop. The orientation for Management Associate's reporting officers was strengthened in three aspects:

— Tighter focus on the supervisor's role, and how they can support the trainee's development.
— The trainees' developmental components as part of the Management Associate Programme curriculum.
— Tips from past supervisors on managing the trainees.

This orientation platform also serves as a knowledge and experience sharing forum for the supervisors. Figure 5 briefly covers the above three aspects in practical terms.

A survey was conducted before and after the implementation of the initiatives. Post-implementation results showed a significant increase of +50 in the Net Promoter Score by respondents in recommending Management Associate Programme as a good development programme. This indicates the trainees' strong belief in the programme's ability to meet their developmental needs.

Concluding reflections

This case study emphasises the utility of service design in several aspects, particularly by reinforcing the significance of user research and testing. These practices are instrumental in validating and refining ideas to ensure their suitability and effectiveness. Though user engagement and user testing are fundamental service design tools, this article's example illustrated their role in ensuring that the final solutions were aligned with user needs and expectations.

It illustrates the versatility of service design tools in addressing the multifaceted needs of different stakeholders. In this case, it is seen through the concurrent focus on enabling self-initiated professional development, enhancing supervisors' capability in coaching and managing the trainees, and strengthening relationship building in the responsible department, while maintaining a consistent and cohesive experience for all stakeholders.

Finally, this article showcases service design's perhaps untapped potential for strengthening talent development initiatives. We have demonstrated that traditional training programmes can be transformed into personalised and engaging experiences that meet the diverse needs of users.

Acknowledgement
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This article has relied on their contribution.

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  Management Development Office project team, for its steadfast dedication to advancing this project.
· Mr. Tan Ghim Meng (TTSH, Kaizen Office), for his incisive editorial support in refining this article.

1 Maslow, A. H. (1943). A theory of human motivation. Psychological Review, 50(4), 370-396.

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Designing Cultures of Success

The value of employee engagement

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Employee engagement is a proven foundational component in driving better organisational outcomes. Research shows that companies with highly engaged employees outperform their competitors by 147 percent[1]. If an organisation seeks to enhance the design and delivery of their products and services, and increase ROI, it needs to first concentrate on creating the best possible employee experience. However, employee engagement has even more benefits. Improved engagement leads to less absenteeism, lower employee turnover and increased productivity.

A recent study found organisations scoring in the top 20 percent for engagement saw a 41 percent decrease in absenteeism, and 59 percent less attrition[2].

Engaged employees show up every day with passion, purpose and energy. The significance of an engaged workforce could not be more profound. This brings up the question – isn't understanding the employee experience just as crucial as understanding the customer experience when designing services?

Transport for London (TfL) certainly believe so. We've partnered with TfL on their annual 'Viewpoint' research for over a decade. As the heartbeat of London life, they've long recognised the importance of deeply knowing their employees if they are to deliver the best possible employee experience, which ultimately contributes to delivering top-notch service to customers.

Engagement in a unique environment

Every day, over 25,000 TfL employees help to move London forward safely, inclusively and sustainably, assisting Londoners with millions of daily journeys. Having an engaged workforce, eager to deliver a world class service to the public, is vital for the smooth operation of the city's transport network.

To build their own culture of success, TfL need to understand their employees. Our all-employee listening programme, 'Viewpoint', enables this.

Go-Ahead London employees celebrate the centenary of the first woman bus conductor

Designed around a custom ‘total engagement’ model, it provides a holistic and accurate picture of engagement tailored specifically for TfL. It serves as a key metric to measure and support TfL’s vision: to be a workplace where everyone can thrive.

Through ‘Viewpoint’, employee engagement is monitored and three key indices are tracked: ‘Total engagement’, ‘Well-being at work’ and 'Inclusion’. By periodically tracking engagement, TfL can monitor priority initiatives which influence engagement, as well as uncover emerging areas that require attention.

Addressing challenges together

Our partnership extends beyond ‘Viewpoint’. We’ve also aided TfL in overcoming specific challenges along the way. For instance, TfL had to address certain customer pain-points relating to bus journeys. A disconnect existed between what customers felt was important with bus travel and how bus employees perceived the experience.

To rectify this, we designed a strategic programme to help build a culture of customer centricity within their bus directorate. This involved facilitating interactive workshops to collaboratively design the ideal bus experience. Employees at all levels involved in bus services (including bus operators, the buses directorate and senior leaders) participated in the process. Workshop attendees were asked to arrive via bus so that they could understand the actual customer experience by putting themselves in the customer’s shoes – an aspect often overlooked.

A ‘Bus Customer Experience Strategy’ was then developed, with the findings used to shape significant new investment in customer experience training for bus employees. We were immensely proud when this work won the Market Research Society ‘Insight Management’ award, due to the innovative approach we took.

When the Covid-19 pandemic arrived, it presented new challenges. TfL needed to understand employees’ evolving wellbeing needs in order to be able to best support them. To assist them, we developed a simple online wellbeing monitor, making it available to all employees for feedback on their health and wellbeing needs. The insights it delivered allowed TfL to implement several operational changes, resulting in better employee support.

Subsequent changes included increased support from

Cleaning staff at London Bridge Underground station disinfect ticket machines as part of an enhanced cleaning regime during the COVID-19 outbreak their occupational health department as well as improved efficiency of their Display Screen Equipment (DSE) process. Remote workers benefitted from quicker access to necessary equipment, leading to an increase in employee wellbeing scores across the organisation within a 4-week window.

Harnessing data-driven methodologies to identify engagement drivers

We have also supported quantitative research techniques, which have delivered robust data, paving the way for evidence-based recommendations for change. This approach hinges on an online survey to collect feedback from employees, which is easily accessible to all workers, and allows them to answer questions on tablets provided by TfL, or via their own mobile device. Concurrently, we conduct a benchmark study with employees across similar industries, enabling TfL to gauge their performance against the wider market.

However, to extract real value from quantitative research, analytics, and – where feasible – data modelling is key. We employ driver modelling, allowing us to pinpoint the specific aspects of TfL's employee experience (such as communications, line management, leadership, etc.) that exert the biggest impact on their 'Total Engagement' score. Over time, we track and evaluate the performance of the drivers identified for improvement, fostering an ongoing culture of success.

London Underground staff using hand signals to communicate with driver regarding wheelchair ramp

The strategic impact – enabling effective decision-making

The 'Viewpoint' programme has empowered TfL to make strategic, evidence-based decisions at the C-suite level, zeroing in on areas that will deliver impact. Our data modelling has also helped TfL in prioritising customer experience enhancement areas, instilling confidence in such investments.

Total Engagement features prominently as a strategic priority on all directors' scorecards, serving as the primary people performance indicator. Its influence is visible in business performance metrics, which directly impact TfL's funding and reputation.

Augmenting value

With established, longstanding programmes such as 'Viewpoint', complacency is not an option. Improving efficiency and extracting the most value from the programme are integral to its success.

We take immense pride in having assisted TfL to transition to a completely 'paper-free' survey methodology, an approach which brought both environmental and financial benefits to the organisation.

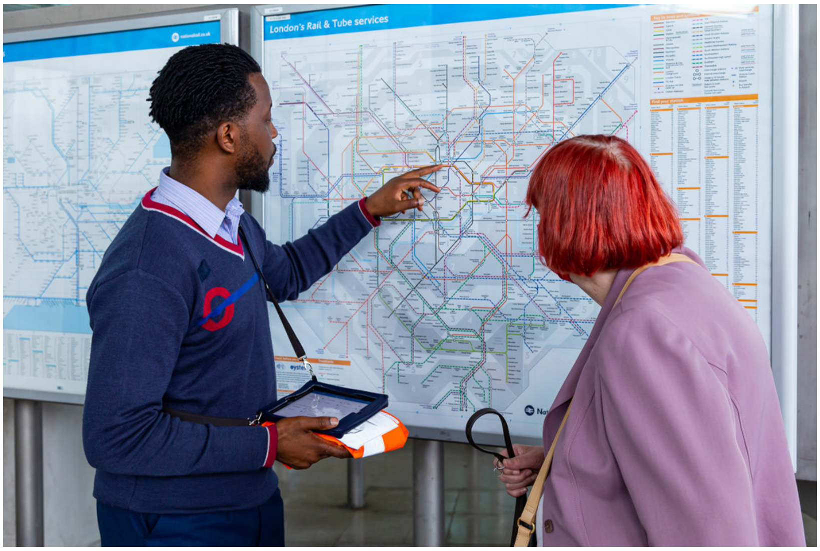
Moreover, TfL employees receive annual refresher training on how to effectively utilise the insights platform which houses all employee engagement data. By providing employees the autonomy to engage with the insights, we foster trust and stimulate engagement.

Taking employee research to the next level

By now, the value of employee research should be apparent. Engaged employees equate to not only higher productivity[3], but also to lower attrition and absenteeism.

Furthermore, the more we grasp employees' needs, motivations and concerns, the better equipped we are to design cultures of success that reflect them.

For TfL, a significant dip in employee engagement could spell disaster for the services Londoners rely on. In fact, the repercussions would be felt not just in the capital, but in the UK economy at large. Therefore, in our view, the employee perspective might be deemed as being even more important than the customer's, in certain respects.



Staff assisting a visually-impaired customer with navigation using a Tube map

How do we give employee research the recognition it deserves?

We believe that integrating employee research with service design methodologies to forge a comprehensive perspective on building and enhancing products and services is the way forward. These processes complement and necessitate each other.

There's no one-size-fits-all approach, nor is it a one-off exercise. Continually mapping the employee lifecycle through research, and correlating this with both employee and customer experience initiatives, can profoundly impact the organisation's success.

Values workshops could delve into what employees envision and aspire their organisation to stand for.

Journey mapping would then bring more granular insight. Needs are not static, requiring employers and businesses to adapt accordingly.

Mapping employee needs and pain points across different departments and overlaying this with customer insights could be invaluable. This could help identify critical moments and aspects of the employee experience where changes can have most impact.

Ethnography could delve deeper into these employee archetypes, to truly understand 'a day in the life': The environmental contexts and drivers that influence employee attitudes and behaviour in their work. The potential for discovery is vast.

From my perspective, if working on digital transformation studies has taught me anything, it's how powerful outcomes can be when talented teams employ a diverse range of methodologies and elicit valuable insights from a variety of users and bring these to life through storyboarding and content design.

Applying these techniques to employee engagement can enhance the impact of this research significantly.

Success starts from within. Making internal employee research the starting point for any service design project, and making employee participation central to the design process, will create the right culture for success. Furthermore, it will lead to the creation of more holistic final products and services.

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1 The Un-Ignorable Link Between Employee Experience and Customer Experience [https://www.forbes.com/sites/blakemorgan/2018/02/23/the-un-ignorable-link-between-employee-experience-and-customer-experience/?sh=1a9f830a48dc]

2 Employee Engagement Does More than Boost Productivity [https://hbr.org/2013/07/employee-engagement-does-more]

3 Five Reasons Employees Are Your Company's No. 1 Asset [https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbesbusinessdevelopmentcouncil/2019/12/12/five-reasons-employees-are-your-companys-no-1-asset]

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To Fit or Not to Fit?

Service designers' double-edged dilemma

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In recent years, service design has become increasingly important in driving organisational change. One contributing reason is the growing recognition that employee experience significantly impacts both customer satisfaction and the organisation's bottom line. Service designers are at the forefront of this change, responsible for designing service offerings and implementing and embedding change within organisations. However, this evolution towards becoming catalysts for change comes with challenges, particularly for service designers tasked with changing organisational culture while trying to fit into it.

This article describes challenges and failures faced by 41 service designers and adjacent professionals who have struggled to incorporate their practices into organisations. It outlines the main challenges they faced while navigating power dynamics and politics, addressing resistance to change reactions, and communicating the value of their work. This article also maps and frames these experiences as organisational failures.

The collected data informed a map of shared experiences to inspire and support service designers and related professionals (hereafter referred to as designers) to act collectively, rather than relying solely on individual approaches or self-blame.

Organisational culture can be viewed as a dynamic, emergent, constantly interpreted and reproduced political phenomenon or a text co-created by stakeholders in a specific social context.[1] This means that the organisational cultures designers work with are artificial narratives limited by stakeholders' knowledge and verbal skills. These narratives are sustained by history and the human quest for power in ways organisations cannot fully control.[2]

Therefore, it is reasonable to frame organisational change as a complex process that requires careful consideration, action and adjustment. Service designers can play a role in this process by providing organisations with adaptability to new realities and improving their service offerings to employees, stakeholders and customers. However, designing for change is not without its challenges. This article explores the double-edged dilemma that service designers face when engaging with that cultural landscape.

Organisational failures

Organisational traditions and culture, and their enactments of control, can be changed by considering that "even most genuine and pure tradition does not persist because of inertia of what existed"[3]. Essentially, preservation is as much a freely chosen act of reason and creativity as revolutions and innovations. Therefore, organisational change dynamics are not extraneous acts, but acts of reason as the control ones are.

The kind of failure experience focused on here cannot be attributed to either a single individual or a group, but rather to the social system they are part of. Although these failures are largely discussed "as personal troubles, and responsibility for them is located primarily in the individual"[4], they appear to be widespread issues, with no evidence that scapegoating will prevent them.

Power and history tend to frame these experiences in the realm of individual responsibility, what social scientists define as 'victim blaming'. This tendency is often used to justify inaction on social problems and to deflect attention from their root causes. Renaming the 'private' workplace failure as a collectively shared experience empowers all actors and encourages collective approaches.[5]

As academic literature suggests, workplace bullying is not just a problem caused by individual bad actors, but also a symptom of managerialist discourses. These discourses are promoted by the intensified performance management in organisations and are reinforced by the embedding of existing professionalisation discourses within the HR departments and practices of these organisations.[6]

The result is estrangement: designers are alienated or rejected by colleagues with whom they expected close work relationships, producing negative impacts on their performance and engagement with the organisation.

The structures that create what appear to be failures narrowly related to designers can instead be squarely framed as socio-economic and educational issues. Therefore, they can be more accurately named as 'organisational failures'.

Design's femininity

Traditionally, structures of power rely on harsh discriminatory tactics to perpetuate themselves. The lower a group of workers is in the social hierarchy and the more complex their intersectionality is, the more they are exposed to these tactics. Most workplaces and workers experience different combinations of the same ones experienced by designers.[7]

Decades of research indicate that the work structure within organisations is characterised by a strong gender division of labour, with 'masculinity' occupying higher positions and 'femininity' working as assistants. This research suggests that this division is not simply a reflection of the employees' biology, skills and abilities, but also a product of organisations' traditional gendered culture.[8]

It also indicates that workers in the creative industry are described in ways that align with cultural stereotypes of femininity. They are characterised as intuitive, emotional, sensitive to interpersonal relationships and community oriented. These descriptions construct a connection between the work of design and the concept of femininity.

From the traditional gender division of labour, femininity is seen as lacking symbolic support in terms of technical expertise and stakeholder relationships. To compensate for this, workplace sexuality is emphasised, and gender structures are perpetuated.

The ostensive presentation of 'masculinity' in organisations, no matter if by women or men, reaps benefits from its positioning in the division of labour. This dynamic allows bullying practices to assert 'masculine subject positions' and use gender as a resource to enforce determined viewpoints over others considered to be feminine.

Overall, this stream of research suggests that gender dynamics discrimination plays a role in shaping power relations within the workplace. Service designers and other creative professionals are associated with qualities traditionally related to femininity and, therefore, are treated as 'beautification assistants'.

It is worth mentioning that traits associated with femininity are not of negative value, under any circumstances.

For instance, many feminist works, like the 'Ethic of Care'[9] provide arguments discrediting the association between femininity, negative value, fragility and lower importance. On the contrary, these failure experiences can be attributed to the social structures governing organisations.

Business as designing

"Everyone designs who devises courses of action aimed at changing existing situations into preferred ones," wrote Herbert Simon, recipient of the prestigious A.M. Turing Award for his work in computer science and the 1978 Nobel Memorial Prize in economics.

His work demonstrated that the intellectual activity of designing artifacts is no different from devising a sales plan or a social welfare policy. Design, as such, is the core of all professional training and the principal characteristic of businesses.[10]

It positioned design not only as a skill or a method, but also as a mindset and a culture that enables businesses to cope with change, disruptions and uncertainties. It urged businesses to embrace design as an asset and a competitive advantage at strategic and tactical levels.

However, many businesses still do not have adequate knowledge about design and are not able to understand its necessity and value. They often perceive designers as 'beautification assistants' more interested in aesthetics than business. This misunderstanding leads to discrimination against designers, who may be treated as second-class workers or even ignored altogether. This discrimination is harmful to both designers and businesses.

By the same token, the usual call for designers to 'learn business' is a misguided attempt to address this discrimination. Moreover, it is based on a false assumption that design is a technical problem that can be solved by using the 'right' language or tools. It implies that designers are incapable of understanding the business world and need to adapt to the existing norms and practices. It also implies that businesses do not need to change 'existing situations into preferred ones' and can continue operating as usual.

Based on Simon's logic, businesses would be better off 'learning design'. Framed from a socio-economic and educational perspective, it would address the issue that the traditional ways of doing business are no longer sustainable. It would also address the fact that the old ways of exerting power by discriminatory practices represent liabilities organisations cannot afford to bear.

To succeed going forward, businesses need to take Herbert Simon's proposition to the core and seriously learn and embrace design. By understanding design as a political space that requires a collective and systemic approach, rather than an individual and isolated one, businesses can gain a competitive edge and ensure their long-term success. In an era where volatility is the norm, not the exception, with expected substantial impacts of AI, businesses focussed on striving for fit will have to learn fast how to redesign themselves for radical optionality.[11]

Designing a true-fiction workplace

Organisational cultures often bear the mark of people's struggles to produce a coherent account of that phenomenon. The result is a narrative composed of true experience pieces connected by fiction structures.[12]

A map of this 'true-fiction'[13] workplace was created from anonymised individual experiences. Through 24 interviews conducted between February and May of 2023, designers described their work experiences in a wide range of North American organisations.

To validate the initial insights, the challenges and incidents identified in the interviews were used to structure an anonymous survey. The survey's objective was to assess how much interviewers' biases influenced the interviewees' accounts. The 17 survey responses confirmed the interviews' saturation results, as the example below shows:

Interviewee 3: "The team and I went through multiple leadership changes."

Survey respondent 2.3: "Since the time I joined the organisation my role was changed and I was moved from team to team."

The majority of participants (80 percent) were between 35 and 54 years old. Most had a master's degree or higher (76 percent) and were employed full-time (88 percent).

The gender distribution was fairly even (51 percent male, 41 percent female). Most were currently employed full-time (56 percent), with 49 percent having been at their organisation for three or more years. The companies they worked for were large, with 71 percent having more than 7,000 employees. More than half of the participants (56 percent) had similar experiences at different organisations, with the majority (51 percent) having had this experience four or more times. The approximate number of designers at their companies was between 51–100 for 59 percent of participants. The date range for the collected experiences was 25 years, from 1998 to 2023.

The designers' experience accounts were clustered into three main challenge areas: Navigating power dynamics and politics, Addressing resistance to change reactions, and Communicating the value of design. The academic literature relates these areas to change management efforts. [14]

Within those areas, designers recount four categories of experiences at their workplaces. All four categories related to workplace bullying practices identified by academic research[9 15],: Verbal Hostility, Stereotyping, Obstruction and Social Exclusion.

Designers described being persistently exposed to such experiences over time and at different organisations. All participants mentioned exposures to these workplace bullying practices and their negative impacts on their well-being, job satisfaction, and performance. When all 41 accounts are combined, a landscape of systematic discrimination emerges, affecting designers at all levels, specialisations and tenures.

While workplace bullying is a widespread and harmful practice in North American organisations, it mostly targets individual workers, focusing on their personal characteristics, and not on their profession. What appears different with these 41 accounts is the fact the bullying practices focus on all designers, despite their personal characteristics and performances.

A true-fiction journey map

As illustrated by the journey map below, the 'designer's journey starts at 'Hiring', and goes through 'Expectation', 'Relationship', 'Revelation', 'Reaction', and ends at 'Results'. The collected individual journeys lasted from less than one to up to ten years, and were experienced at between one and four different organisations.

To preserve the identity of all interviewees and survey respondents, any data point that might lead to their identification was either removed or not recorded.

From the designers' experience descriptions, framed here as organisational failures, six journey stages were identified, as well as 15 'steps', and 65 'step types'. Based on the impact they had on the individual accounts, each 'step type' was associated to a positive, neutral and negative value. Description summaries of these elements are provided on the journey map.

As mentioned before, this study does not prescribe any specific strategy or solution for the challenges faced by designers, as each situation is unique and requires a context-specific approach. However, designers are encouraged to use this journey map to share their experience and expertise, and to learn from the feedback and perspectives of others.

Nevertheless, here are some specific action points that service designers can take to use the journey map:

- **Diagnose the current work situation.** Use the journey map to identify the challenges designers face in your current workplace.
- **Invite colleagues and managers to build common ground.** Share the journey map with colleagues and managers to build a common understanding of the challenges designers face.
- **Start a collaborative process toward an effectual solution.** Work with colleagues and managers to develop strategies for overcoming the mapped challenges.
- **No scapegoating tolerated.** Make it clear that neither designers nor organisations should be looking for scapegoats. Work together to co-design a more supportive and collaborative workplace environment.
- **Commitment to learn design.** Organisations should commit seriously to learning about design and apply that knowledge to redesign themselves for radical optionality.

‘To Fit or Not to Fit? Service Designers' Double-edged Dilemma – A Journey Map’

Here you can see the map in original size:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1TGW2TmcvIZSg6pV53wU4Z4I4ECHXUzGF/view

To Fit or Not to Fit? Service Designers' Double-edged Dilemm

What every service designer should be aware and prepared to face at work: 41 designers share their work experiences.

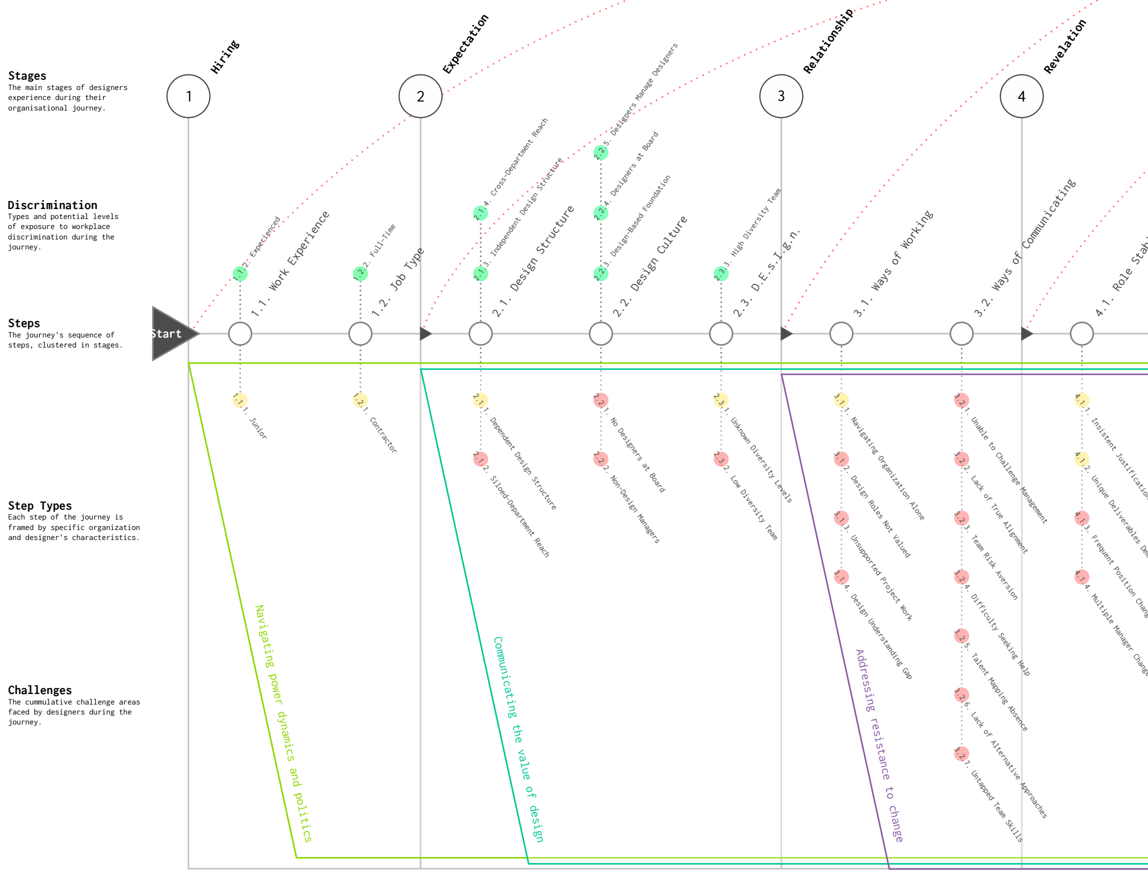
Based on the generous contributions of 41 people who shared their work experiences as designers, this journey map indicates what to be aware of and prepare for to face at the workplace.

As indicated on this journey map, designers might go through six Journey Stages, 15 Steps, and 65 Step Types when attempting to contribute with their knowledge and skills to their organizations. They might often experience organizational failures caused by power dynamics and politics, communication barriers and resistance to change that disproportionately hindered their work, frustrated their efforts, and undermined their credibility.

Despite these challenges, they did not give up easily. They tried to build strong relationships with stakeholders, demonstrate evidence-based results, and remain persistent and patient. However, their journey often ended in estrangement.

Overwhelmingly, they faced discrimination as the main weapon used by those who felt threatened by their work.

This journey map does not tell designers what to do or how to do it. Instead, it should be use to support conversations toward empowering and encouraging designers, their managers and colleagues to act collectively, rather than relying solely on individual approaches or resorting to self-blame.
It invites them to assess their own experiences and start a workplace conversation to design a better collective journey forward.



Descriptions

Summary of Stages, Steps, and Step Types' characteristics.

1. Hiring

This stage affects the designers' entry and integration into the organisation. Its elements influence the designers' expectations and perceptions of whether or not the organisation matches their career goals and values.

1.1. Work Experience

This step refers to the level of professional expertise and knowledge that the designers have when they join the organisation. An Entry-level (1.1.1) type happens when the designers have little or no prior work experience in design, which has a neutral impact on their journey. An Experienced (1.1.2) type of step occurs when the designers have significant or relevant work experience in design, which has a positive impact on their journey.

1.2. Job Type

The step refers to the nature and duration of the employment contract that the designers have with the organisation. A Contractor (1.2.1) step type occurs when the designers have a temporary or short-term employment contract with the organisation, which has a neutral impact on their journey. A Full-Time (1.2.2) situation arises when the designers have a permanent or long-term employment contract with the organisation, which has a positive impact on their journey.

2. Expectation

The organisation's design structure, culture, and diversity set the expectations for the designers' work and journey. These elements influence the designers' expectations of whether or not the organisation has a consistent design-driven culture.

2.1. Design Structure

The step refers to how the design team is organized, managed, and positioned within the organisation. A Dependent Design Structure (2.1.1) occurs when the design team lives inside another team or department and reports to a mid-level organisational manager, which has a neutral impact on the designer's journey. A Siloed-Department Reach (2.1.2) type happens when the design team only works within a department, which has a negative impact on the design outcomes. An Independent Design Structure (2.1.3) type arises when the design team stands on its own, is led by a top-level manager, and provides higher potential for positive outcomes. A Cross-Department Reach (2.1.4) situation occurs when the design team collaborates with other teams or departments across the organisation, which has a positive impact on the design outcomes.

2.2. Design Culture

The design culture refers to how the organisation values, supports, and recognizes design work and principles. Having No Designers at Board (2.2.1) happens when the organisation's board does not include any designers or design leaders, which has a negative impact on the design culture. A Non-Design Managers (2.2.2) step type occurs when the design team is led by managers who do not have a design background or expertise, which also has a negative impact. A Design-Based Foundation (2.2.3) type of step happens when the organisation was founded and evolved on design principles, which has a positive impact on the design culture. Having Designers at Board (2.2.4) arises when the organisation's board includes designers or design leaders who are recognized by external design communities for their achievements, which is positive. A Designers Manage Designers (2.2.5) situation is when the design team is led by managers who have a design background or expertise, which has a positive impact on the design culture.

2.3. D.E.s.I.g.n.

You cannot spell design without D.E.I. The diversity of the design team must reflect and embrace different backgrounds, perspectives, and skills among its members and collaborators. An Unknown Diversity Levels (2.3.1) means not having a clear understanding or measurement of its diversity levels, which has a neutral impact on the journey. A Low Diversity Team (2.3.2) is when the design team lacks diversity in terms of gender, race, ethnicity, age, education, experience, or domain knowledge, which has a negative impact. A High Diversity Team (2.3.3) situation arises when the design team has a high level of diversity in terms of gender, race, ethnicity, age, education, experience, or domain knowledge, which has a positive impact on the design outcomes and innovation potential.

3. Relationship

The ways of working and communicating affect relationships between designers and other employees. These elements affect whether the organisation values and supports their work and skills.

3.1. Ways of working

The ways of working are how the organisation assigns, manages, and evaluates design projects and roles. Navigating Organization Alone (3.1.1) happens when designers run projects and objectives independently, which is neutral for their work. Design Roles Not Valued (3.1.2) happens when designers are excluded from strategic discussions or project timelines do not account for design principles, negative. Unsupported Project Work (3.1.3) is negative and happens when designers face challenges or difficulties in projects and lack guidance or feedback from managers or peers. Design Understanding Gap (3.1.4) happens when designers perform all 4-D roles while treated as 'beautification assistants', negative.

3.2. Ways of communicating

The ways of communicating are how the organisation enables or blocks dialogue and feedback among designers and others, all step types are negative. Unable to Challenge Management (3.2.1) happens when managers ignore or dismiss designers’ opinions or suggestions. Lack of True Alignment (3.2.2) occurs when designers see a gap between what the organisation claims and does about design values or goals. Team Risk Aversion (3.2.3) arises when team members resist or criticize designers’ new or innovative ideas or solutions. Difficulty Seeking Help (3.2.4) happens when designers fear being judged or penalized for asking help or support. Talent Mapping Absence (3.2.5) occurs when designers don’t know the skills or expertise of their team members or others, hindering their learning and development opportunities. Lack of Alternative Approaches (3.2.6) happens when designers lack exposure to different perspectives or methods, limiting their creativity and innovation potential. Untapped Team Skills (3.2.7) arises when the organisation doesn’t value or use designers’ diverse skills or knowledge, hurting their motivation and satisfaction.

4. Revelation

The revelations are situations that challenge designers' expectations about the organisation.

4.1. Role Stability

Role stability is how much designers' work is subjected to frequent or abrupt changes in their roles, responsibilities, or managers. Insistent Justification Demands (4.1.1) occurs when designers must constantly prove or explain their value, neutral. Unique Deliverables Demands (4.1.2) is neutral, depending if designers are asked to produce unique deliverables with or without being provided the conditions to do so. Frequent Position Changes (4.1.3) happens when their roles or projects change without proper transition, negative. Multiple Manager Changes (4.1.4) is negative and occurs when designers report to different managers in a short time, affecting their workplace relationships.

4.2. Psychological safety

Psychological safety is the safety that designers experience when expressing their opinions, ideas, or concerns without fear, all step types are negative. Rejection of Differents (4.2.1) happens when managers or team members are hostile to designers' new or alternative ideas. Avoiding Mistake Discussions (4.2.2) occurs when designers are discouraged or punished for bringing up errors or problems. Lack of Open Discussions (4.2.3) arises when designers are not involved or consulted in important decisions or discussions. Fear and Blame Culture (4.2.4) happens when designers are not trusted or supported by managers or peers, and blamed for issues or failures, affecting their performance and motivation. Design Efforts Undermined (4.2.5) occurs when the organisation does not recognize or appreciate designers' characteristic approaches or contributions, hurting their satisfaction and retention.

ma - A Journey Map

Workplace Bullying
These discriminatory practices target all designers, despite their personal characteristics and performances.

Social Exclusion
Systematically being left out or ignored by colleagues or the peer group, including being intentionally excluded from social interactions, team activities, and important discussions. This created feelings of isolation, loneliness, and a sense of being an outsider within the workplace community.

Obstruction
Deliberately being hindered from progressing work or performing well, through colleagues withholding information, denying necessary resources, creating unnecessary obstacles, or intentionally undermining efforts. This lead to frustration, decreased productivity and job dissatisfaction.

Verbal Hostility
Persistently and repeatedly being subjected to hostile and offensive language, including insults, derogatory remarks, or aggressive verbal attacks. This caused emotional distress and undermined their sense of well-being in the workplace.

Stereotyping
Consistently being singled out and mocked in a demeaning manner within the department, often through jokes, ridicule, or public humiliation. This resulted in feelings of embarrassment, shame and social exclusion.

Legends

Journey

Journey Stages
A meaningful set composed of one or more Journey Steps.

Stage Starting Point
A visual sign marking changes of Stages.

Journey Step
A discreet Step in the journey.

Step

Positive Step
A Journey Step charaterised by a Step Type to which exposure might positively contribute to the journey.

Neutral and Negative Step
A Journey Step characterised by Step Type to which exposure might be neutral or negatively impact the journey.

Touchpoints
A particularly meaningful and memorable Journey Steps characterised by the combination of two or more Step Types.

Step Types

Positive Step Types
Step Types to which exposure might positively contribute to the journey.

Neutral and Negative Step Types
Step Types to which exposure might have neutral or negative impacts to the journey.

Challenges

Navigating power dynamics and politics
Service designers often face resistance when trying to change the way things are done in organisations. This can be due to organisational power dynamics and politics. While they were attempting to navigate this challenge area, no matter how much time and effort they put into it, service designers consistently reported failures to build strong relationships with stakeholders and communicate their ideas effectively.

Communicating the value of design
Service designers often face challenges communicating the value of their work to stakeholders, suggesting that many stakeholders still do not understand the benefits design can bring to their organisation, let alone what service design could contribute. This can lead to scepticism and resistance to proposed changes.

Addressing resistance to change reactions
Service designers consistently reported resistance when trying to implement new ideas and processes. They attributed this to a number of factors, including teammates' fear of the unknown, uncertainty about the benefits of the change, concerns about how the change will impact their work, and lack of knowledge about design itself.

4.3. Team dynamics
Team dynamics are how team members interact and cooperate in their work, all step types are negative. Lectured on Comfortableness (4.3.1) happens when managers lecture designers on 'right' ways to communicate or behave, dismissing designers' comfort, hurting their identity and belonging. Managers' Biased Views (4.3.2) arises when managers are discriminatory towards designers' intrisic characteristics. Hostility After Disagreement (4.3.3) happens when managers or colleagues resent or retaliate to designers after a different opinion or perspective. Fear of Direct Communication (4.3.4) occurs when designers consistently fear being judged or penalized for communicating openly or honestly with managers or peers. Retaliation for Concerns (4.3.5) happens when designers face negative consequences for raising concerns or issues in inter-office meetings, hurting their engagement and alignment.

5. Reaction

The reactions refer to how the organisation responds to the work and performance of the designers. These elements influence the designers' experiences of whether or not the organisation recognizes and rewards their efforts and achievements.

5.1. Performance assessment
The performance assessment refers to how the organisation evaluates and provides feedback to the designers on their work and results. A Feedback and Evaluation (5.1.1) situation depends if designers receive constructive and timely feedback and evaluation from their managers or peers, which has a neutral impact on their work. A Labeled as Underperforming (5.1.2) step type occurs when designers are designated as "underperforming" for not meeting expectations unrelated to designerly ways of working, which has a negative impact. A Blamed Amid Team Changes (5.1.3) is a negative type of step that arises when designers are belittled or blamed for their performance during team transitions or reorganizations, which disproportionately affects design's characteristic people-centred requirements of serendipity, incubation, relationship and trust nurturing. A Humiliation and Comparisons (5.1.4) situation happens when designers are humiliated or compared with non-design 'high-performing' colleagues during performance feedback sessions, which has a negative impact on their motivation and self-esteem. A Cost-Reduction Promoting Insecurity (5.1.5) is a negative step type that happens when designers are threatened as being non-essential and pressured by cost-reduction measures or budget cuts that affect their projects or roles, which also affects their performance and security. A Design as Tactical Work (5.1.6) type of step occurs when designers are not recognized or rewarded for their strategic or creative contributions, but only for their tactical or operational tasks, which has a negative impact on their satisfaction and retention.

5.2. One x Many
The One x Many step refers to how the organisation involves or excludes other people in the work and communication of the designers. A Designers Outnumbered (5.2.1) situation happens when designers are outnumbered by employees from different disciplines or domains in projects or teams, which has a neutral impact on their work. A Biased Ganging on Designers (5.2.2) step type occurs when designers face hostility or resistance from other employees who share similar biased views against design values or goals, which has a negative impact on their collaboration and alignment. A Designers' High Turnover (5.2.3) type of step happens when designers witness a high turnover rate among their design peers or colleagues, which also affects negatively their engagement and retention. A Design Managers Leave (5.2.4) situation happens when designers lose their managers who were supportive or influential in the organisation, impacting negatively their relationship and trust with the organization.

5.3. Ghosting
Ghosting refers to how the organisation ignores or neglects the needs or concerns of designers, all step types are negative. An Unsupportive and Biased HR (5.3.1) situation occurs when designers do not receive adequate support or guidance from the human resources department, especially when they face prejudice or discrimination based on their professional characteristics, which has a negative impact on their work and well-being. An Unresponsive D.E.I. (5.3.2) step type happens when designers do not receive appropriate response or action from the diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) department or initiatives, especially when they raise issues or suggestions related to D.E.s.I.g.n values or goals connected to their social identities, such as race, gender, ethnicity, etc., which also affects their engagement and alignment. A Socially Ostracized (5.3.3) type of step arises when designers are excluded or isolated from social events or activities that involve other employees, such as off-site gatherings, celebrations, recognition, etc., which has a negative impact on their belonging and relationship. An Important Meetings Exclusion (5.3.4) situation happens when designers are not invited or informed of important meetings or discussions that affect their projects or roles, such as strategic planning, decision making, feedback loops, etc., which also affects their engagement and alignment. An Undiscussed Project Changes (5.3.5) step type happens when designers are not notified or consulted of changes in their projects that affect their work or results, such as scope changes, deadline changes, budget changes, etc., which also affects their performance and satisfaction.

6. Result

The Result step refers to the consequences or outcomes that designers face as a result of their work and performance. These elements influence the designers' experiences of whether or not the organisation rewards or punishes their efforts and achievements.

6.1. Belonging
Belonging occurs when designers feel that they are valued and supported by the organisation and that they have a positive impact on their work and environment. A Positive Work Revisions (6.1.1) situation happens when designers receive revisions or improvements in their contracts or working conditions that reflect the recognition design's specific characteristics and contributions, which has a positive impact on their work and well-being. A Decisive Action on Bullies (6.1.2) step type occurs when designers witness or experience decisive action from the organisation against bullies or harassers who have caused them harm or distress, which also affects their trust and security. An Organisational Solidarity and Support (6.1.3) type of step happens when designers receive solidarity and support from the organisation in times of crisis or difficulty, such as personal or professional challenges, which has a positive impact on their relationship and engagement.

6.2. Estrangement
Estrangement occurs when designers are alienated or rejected by colleagues with whom they expected close work relationships, except the first all step types are negative. A Resignation (6.2.1) is a neutral situation happens when designers decide to leave the organisation voluntarily due to dissatisfaction or frustration with their work or conditions, which affects their career and well-being. A Demotion (6.2.2) step type happens when designers are demoted or transferred to lower positions or roles due to biased attribution of poor performance or misconduct, hurting their motivation and self-esteem. A Termination (6.2.3) type of step happens when designers are fired or dismissed from the organisation due to biased performance issues or violations, which has a negative impact on their career and well-being. A Designers Workforce Reduction (6.2.4) situation happens when designers are laid off or reduced in number due to cost-cutting measures or organisational changes, which also affects their security and retention. An NDA Gaging (6.2.5) step type happens when designers are forced to sign non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) that prevent them from sharing or disclosing any information about their work experiences, which has a negative impact on their freedom and voice.

Disclaimer: This is a true-fiction journey map. Any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, or actual events is purely coincidental.
By Mauricio Manhaes in Touchpoint - The Service Design Journal - Vol. 14 No. 1 - The Employee Journey

By taking these action steps, service designers can start to create a more supportive and collaborative workplace environment where they can thrive.

The journey forward

This article and the journey map that accompanies it are based on the generous contributions of 41 people who shared their experiences as designers. They faced and navigated the double-edged dilemma of trying to fit in and change the organisations they worked for. Together, they might help designers to reflect on their own work situations and design ways to manage their fit (and misfit) in their own contexts.

Service designers often must balance two worlds. On the one hand, they need to be creative and understand and empathise with all sorts of people and situations. On the other hand, they need to be analytical and work within the constraints of organisations.

This dilemma can be hard to navigate. A journey map can help designers understand the different stages of their own experience, the challenges and opportunities they might encounter, and how their different journeys might expose them to similar steps.

Designers can use this journey map as a practical tool to diagnose their current work situations. Based on that, with their colleagues, they can create the journey forward by mapping preferred paths and areas where their workplace needs to improve to help them to work better and meet the needs of their communities.

The resulting journey forward might lead designers to change existing situations into preferred ones, creating a positive impact on their work environment and performance, as well as on the service design field as a whole. Sharing a visual map and navigating their 'fit and misfit' journey more effectively, service designers can contribute to the growth of this service sector and create sustainable solutions and optimal experiences for clients, employees, stakeholders, organisations and communities.

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Beyond the Employee Journey

Co-design to foster change



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This article will uncover a project where an employee journey served as a starting point for a wider corporate transformation. What made this project unique was that we involved blue-collar workers, who are perhaps not the most common participants in co-design workshops. Our project is illustrated through our sharing of the company context as well as the relevant project phases, and we conclude with insights and learnings.

The 'Officina del Cambiamento': 'Change Workshop' project

Our client - a multinational producer of hydraulic system components – had observed a major workforce-related issue in its Assembly and Testing department. Within the overall issue, several sub-themes could also be recognised. On one hand, this part of the business was dealing with high operator turnover, with new employees sometimes resigning in as little as three weeks. On the other hand, long-time employees were unhappy with a new organisational structure, in what had been a family-run operation since its foundation. In this instance, the company's strong growth had strained familiar relationships, upsetting these senior staff, who held nostalgia for the old way of doing things.

An inability to solve the clash between the new hires and the long-term employees negatively affected the operations and the working atmosphere and resulted in the employee retention challenges cited above. To address this situation, the HR department decided to turn to us. We were faced with what appeared to be a typical 'wicked problem', and responded with a project we called 'Officina del Cambiamento', literally 'Change Workshop'. Within the workshop, we proposed to engage the workers themselves, and seek answers from them.

The overall objective of the project was to start an ongoing, Design Thinking-informed process, rather than a limited intervention. We wanted to deliver a virtuous company practice. To achieve this, we created a path involving both white- and blue-collar workers.

The path consisted of several stages. First, we organised a workshop involving the management team – HR representatives, area managers and sales managers

– in which we mapped and evaluated the Assembly and Testing employee journey 'as is'.

After selecting priority 'pain points' on which to focus – which were corroborated by a widely-distributed questionnaire – we developed two 'How might we…?' questions. The first tackled the operational complexity of the department, while the second was about narrating the professional growth within the company.

These design questions were the starting point for the workshops we held with the department's employees. They were invited on a voluntary basis, through project-branded posters distributed on company notice boards. In fact, the willingness to participate in the project was a fundamental requirement to ensure active contribution.

During the workshops we analysed the problems with the employees. We became aware of how harsh the relational frictions were amongst different roles within the department, and particularly between departmental leaders and their subordinates. Furthermore, we understood the impact of pandemic-related disruptions, such as the cancellation of regular meetings to assess departmental progress and share news and achievements.

Once aware of these pain points, we invited employees to brainstorm possible solutions and prototype the most impactful ones. These included an innovative recruiting experience, a newly-structured onboarding process and a novel learning and development programme.

Finally, we helped the employees set-up a comprehensive and convincing presentation, to present their ideas to the management team.

The project ended with an action plan meeting to integrate the proposed solutions. After this meeting, the management team decided to share the action plan with the entire blue-collar team, asking them to participate in checkpoint meetings to monitor progress. Their further involvement in the development phase was appreciated, and they have since been working on integrating the changes into employee journeys of the future, for both new and longer-term employees.

At present, the HR department is engaged in the development and execution of the proposed projects. In particular, we will accompany them in the next months in the definition of learning future scenarios by applying the futures thinking methodology, as a continuation of the 'Officina del Cambiamento' project.

Learning 1: Overcoming scepticism through real engagement

Gaining trust from the employees was not easy. Given the distress and discomfort amongst them, they initially perceived the project as a 'social-washing' initiative from the management, a sort of 'dissatisfaction container'.

We witnessed several instances where employees demonstrated resistance to the project. In fact, despite having held a kick-off session to introduce the project, some participants directly asked us who had given us the mandate, believing we were there to "spy on them" and report to the management.

Others also called us labour psychologists, indicating that they saw us as rehabilitation agents, instead of transformation enablers. Despite this challenging atmosphere, our steadfast focus on listening to their needs and difficulties gradually made them understand that we were there to truly help them.

Mistrust was finally overcome through the actual participation of management in the project milestones, proving to the employees that their proposals were actually being considered. It was particularly moving that some of the participants hugged us at the final session, something that would have been inconceivable to us during the first workshops.

Learning 2: External consultants as allies

Our team members were eventually recognised by the employees as neutral people from outside the organisation. This strongly and positively impacted the project development, because the employees felt free to tell us criticisms that they would have never directly raised with their internal HR department. Empowered by this external role, and having empowered the workers with design tools, we were able to turn grievances into structured and co-created proposals which were then shared with the management level.

Learning 3: Adapting the methodology to the participants

Methodologically speaking, service design tools are 'boundary objects'. That is, they use common means to establish a conversation with the involved stakeholders. But designers can achieve this goal only if there are no initial barriers to the conversation.

In the 'Officina del Cambiamento' project, this point was a core focus of ours. In fact, service design is filled with English language terminology, and words that come from a non-native tongue can make people feel excluded. Therefore, we adapted and translated our lexicon throughout the project to eliminate foreign words both in the way we spoke and what we wrote.

We wanted an equal and democratic access to the activities, to facilitate the proposal generation process. That is why we translated a variety of terms to homogenise language in communication. For example, we referred to printed visual templates as 'cartelloni' (an Italian word for 'posters'). From a content perspective, we translated all terms connected to the employee experience (namely 'vita aziendale') and to the framework 'ciclo di vita del dipendente' (employee lifecycle). Words such as 'attraction', 'recruiting', 'onboarding', 'learning and development' and 'separation' were introduced with their Italian counterparts. The end result of all this translation sounded quite odd to us as practitioners, but it allowed us to remove a linguistic barrier between us and the participants.

As designers, this realisation delivered the humbling effect of recognising that our tools are the means, rather than the end, of our transformation mission. From a practical viewpoint, in the prototyping phase we adapted the activities to the participants too. We ditched hand-drawn storyboards, providing employees instead with 3D illustrated figurines, so that they could leverage the manual skills from their day-to-day work into idea visualisation.

Learning 4: Retention beyond retention

The final goal of the 'Officina del Cambiamento' project was to foster employee retention and ultimately reduce turnover. The workshops led to projects that go towards that direction and are currently being implemented by the HR. We realised only afterwards that the project itself could serve as an 'unaware means' of retention.

In fact, the act of involving discontented employees to co-design the future of their organisation constituted a real driver of engagement, offering a safe space where they could be listened to and have their own point of view valued. For dissatisfied employees, having the possibility to express their lived experience and actively co-create change initiatives in an open corporate context was a tangible reason to stay, well before the enactment of the projects they developed.

Conclusion

'Officina del Cambiamento' was a hotbed of stimuli for us as designers, and it proved how employee experience design could serve organisational bottom-up change. We are strongly convinced that this project demonstrated how the analysis and re-definition of the employee journey could lead to a real and positive impact for people in their working environment, scaling to the organisational level as well.

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Happy Employees Drive Happy Customers

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VodafoneZiggo, a telecommunications organisation based in the Netherlands, has applied service design for many years in order to review and improve service delivery to its customers. In particular, customer journeys and personas have been embraced as useful methods. While these projects initially focused on customer experience, the service design approach is now also being applied to employee experience projects.

VodafoneZiggo's HR department clearly recognises that satisfied employees are key to successfully providing services which satisfy customers. This article describes a specific employee-focused service design project, combined with a more high-level reflection on how a large organisation such as VodafoneZiggo is gradually integrating service design into their core ways-of-working. This transition typically happens over the course of many different projects and takes several years. STBY, as well as other service design agencies, have supported the organisation in this transition. Through this work, the strong customer-centric culture of VodafoneZiggo is becoming more and more grounded in an employee-centric culture as well.

The candidate journey

The project described in this article was focused on mapping and improving the so-called 'candidate journey'. It involved our focussing on the various steps in the process a candidate goes through for a new job at VodafoneZiggo, from initially responding to a job ad until the first day of employment. We carried out this work from three perspectives: Candidates who are applying for a job, hiring managers who are looking for new team members, and recruiting managers who coordinate the hiring process. All three roles are intensely involved in the candidate journey, and the actions of any of them can each make or break the journey.

The HR department who commissioned the project was curious to apply the service design approach of mapping and improving journeys to the employee experience for which they are responsible. Their motto is that for an organisation to be customer-centric it also needs to be employee-centric; in effect: "We cannot have

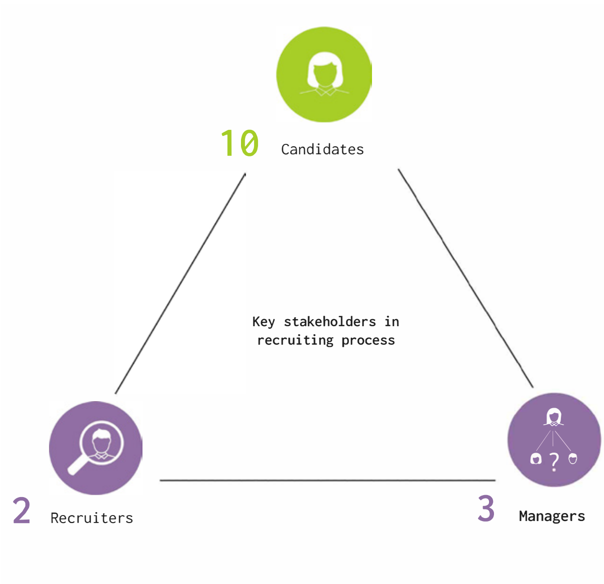

Fig. 1: Key stakeholders interviewed

satisfied customers if we don't have satisfied employees". To increase the pace of their adoption of service design, they initiated two parallel projects: one focussed on the 'candidate journey', and one on the 'onboarding journey'. Both are crucial parts of the overall employee journey.

The candidate journey covers the experience of applying for a job, being interviewed, being offered a contract, and agreeing on a start date. It starts from first becoming aware of a job opening, until the day they actually start work, and this typically spans a couple of months. The primary purpose of mapping and exploring the candidate journey was to better understand the candidate experience and identify opportunities for improvement. A secondary purpose was for the internal team to learn about and be inspired by service design itself.

STBY worked on the candidate journey, whilst another agency worked on the onboarding journey. Throughout the project, two client stakeholders were actively involved, allowing them to learn from first-hand observations. They also played an active role in inviting recently-hired employees to be interviewed.

Interviewing people who had recently undergone the full candidate journey gave us a good understanding of their perspective on the ups and downs. The client team took care of the initial invitations, which we prepared together to set the right expectations with the participants. For this project, we did not interview candidates who had not been successful in their application. By speaking with successful candidates first, we were aiming to identify an immediate potential for improvement, while at the same time laying a foundation for a follow-up project to investigate journeys which did not result in a job offer. The recruitment process for these profiles is more complicated due to privacy considerations, and that project therefore requires more time to prepare.

At the start of the project, we jointly decided to interview not only recent hires, but also hiring managers (the future employee's boss) as well as recruitment managers (the person coordinating the hiring process). During the candidate journey, these three roles interact regularly, and all have an influence on the process and overall experience. In total we did 15 interviews, ten with the candidates/employees, three with hiring managers, and two with recruiting managers.

In every interview, we mapped the candidate journey from the moment of first seeing a job ad, through to the start date. The accounts from all the interviewees were included in the resultant map. We identified the various steps in the journey, as well as the interactions, and the high and low points in each step.

Fig. 2: Interview documentation

Every candidate interview was documented in a personal journey map. In the analysis stage that followed, we compared all the maps to identify common themes and patterns. This helped us aggregate an overall candidate journey map synthesising the common steps and interactions from the candidates' perspectives, as well as their most notable pain points, as well as moments where they were delighted. This candidate journey is illustrated with quotes from interviews, ensuring the voices and perceptions of the various people we spoke to were well-represented.

One of the findings was that large parts of the candidate journey generated quite a positive experience (which itself was a positive learning for the client team). The processes of being invited and welcomed for a job interview, and later discussions about contract agreements, were largely positive. However, the later stage – between signing the contract and waiting for the first workday – appeared to be a period with limited contact, in which the excitement about the new job declined. We visualised an outline of this meandering experience to enable strategic reflection about this with the client team. This outline visual offered a useful starting point for a deep dive into specific insights and opportunities highlighted in the more detailed 'as-is' candidate journey.

We recognised a range of opportunities to improve the journey experience, not only in the final stage, but in earlier stages as well. To facilitate a discussion about this with the client team, we visualised an outline of the 'to-be' candidate journey that showed where the future candidate experience could be improved.

In our long experience of journey mapping and service innovation, we have learned that it is important to regularly zoom-in and zoom-out on the findings from exploratory research. Zooming-in provides a strong connection to the human experiences throughout the journey, which provides in turn a strong sense of the desirability of improvements. On the other hand, zooming-out enables a clear, high-level view of patterns and recurring themes, and allows for strategic considerations on suitability and priority. By providing both high level outline visuals as well as more detailed visuals of journeys maps, we enabled the team to see different perspectives during their conversations about insights and opportunities.

The results of the synthesis and analysis were shared and discussed in a follow-up workshop with people from several departments (such as HR, communication and marketing). This workshop aimed to trigger conversations about insights, as well as generate opportunities for improvement.

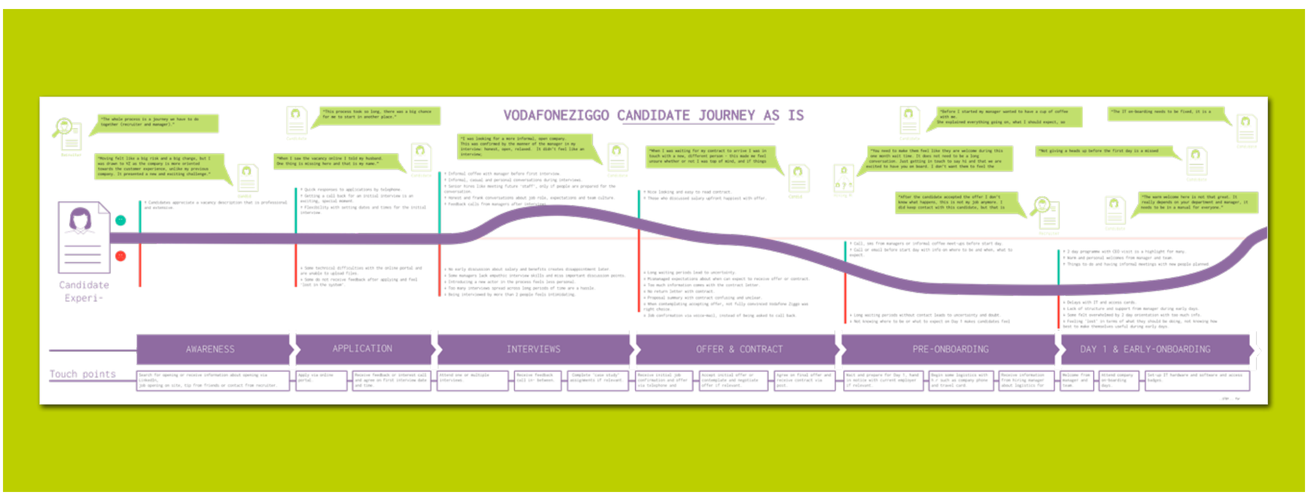

Fig. 3: Detailed map of the 'as-is candidate journey'

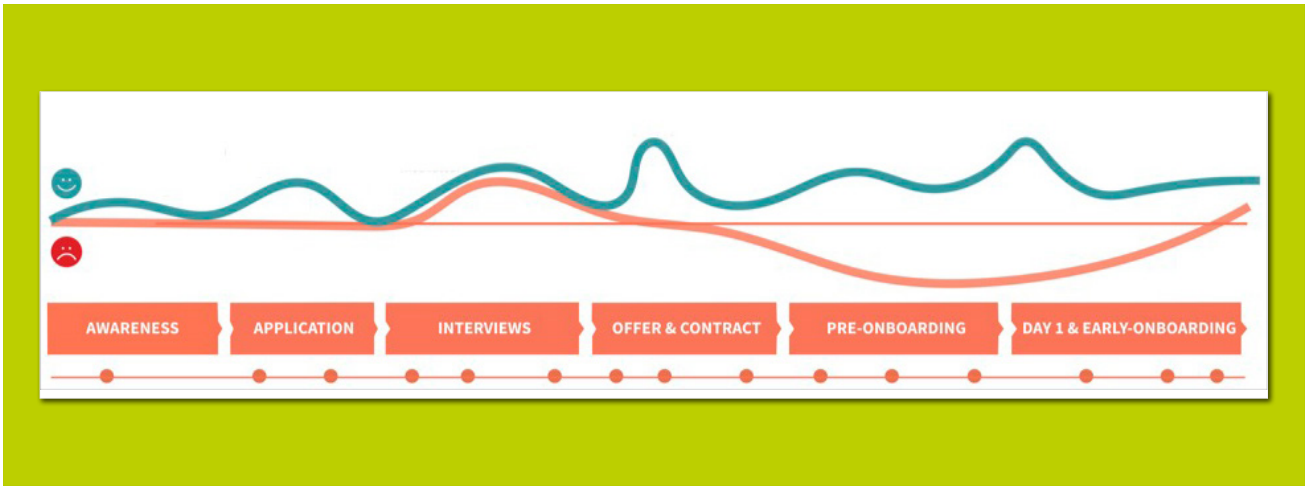

Fig. 4: High level map of the improved 'to-be candidate journey'

During the workshop, we had the candidate journey available on a giant poster that spanned the entire wall of the meeting room. This made it easy to add notes during discussions, such as ideas for improvement. We jointly deliberated the pain-points, moments of delight and opportunities, and brainstormed ideas to make the candidate journey experience even better. The result was a series of 'How might we....?' (HMW) statements, which we found worked well to trigger constructive and co-creative idea generation.

Based on the results from the workshop, we further developed the detailed as-is candidate journey into a detailed to-be candidate journey which illustrated the desired future experience.

At this stage we also added some extra layers, based on the format of a service blueprint. This format provides a useful layered structure to indicate in greater detail what the recommendations for future improvements per step in the journey entail. Some of these improvements are adaptations to the current journey, whereas others are service elements that could be developed as an addition to the current journey.

The service blueprint format also helps to indicate which parts of the organisation need to be involved in the implementation of each recommendation, because it distinguishes between front-stage and back-stage service delivery. The final version of the service blueprint was crafted in close collaboration with the core client team.

As the final deliverable of the project, we created a full report that included all the learnings from the 'as-is' candidate journey, as well as all of the recommendations for the 'to-be'. This report also contained 30 recommendations in the form of 'HMW' statements.

At this point in the process STBY, handed over all the assets from the research to the client team, and the project as initially commissioned was completed. From this moment, the client team took ownership of the next steps of the project. This entailed a further series of internal presentations and discussions with several teams and departments, which have led to several follow-up initiatives.

To support the communication about the project, STBY was also asked to make a video that explained the key principles of employee centricity, and how the service design approach was applied to the candidate journey. This video helped the client team with the internal communication about the approach and the value of it for both the organisation, its employees and its customers.

Furtherore, the video has also been used for presentations at HR conferences. As a result of being closely involved in the service design process, the client team were keen to create awareness within the wider organisation, ensure the insights and innovations were adopted in the business, and capability in the area of service design was strengthened.

Conclusion

STBY and VodafoneZiggo have collaborated on several service design projects over the years. This experience and long-term relationship helped us to jointly look back for this article at the various impacts of the project from a wider perspective. Reflecting on this candidate journey project, and its internal follow-up, we can recognise impact within four areas: 'Project', 'Portfolio', 'Mindset', and 'Collaboration'.

Project

The project achieved its primary objective to generate insights and opportunities to improve the candidate journey. The structured mapping of the candidate journey, the identification of pain-points and moments of delights, and the formulation of recommendations for improvement in the form of HMW statements was very effective. Looking back, the client team clearly recognises the value of this, not only for HR, but for the wider organisation. The results were initially shared with the recruitment team, and they now use the insights in their work where it informs their on-going service improvement. The recruitment team recently won a 'Digital Recruitment' award for the most customer centric website. This has of course not only come out of this single project, but the project has initiated the employee-centric way-of-working.

The HR team and wider organisation also have benefitted from learning about service design (the secondary objective) in the three remaining areas, which follow.

Portfolio

The HR team has continued using service design tools in other projects, including a project which looked at the employee experience of long-term sick leave, as well as the personal development and appraisal process. It is also currently planning a transition to a multi disciplinary approach and an end-to-end responsibility per journey. This demonstrates that the team does not always need to involve an external agency for every project. By learning about service design and re-applying the tools from the candidate journey project, the team is now equipped to do many things independently.

Mindset

The strong emphasis on empathy and personal experience in the service design approach places the perspective of

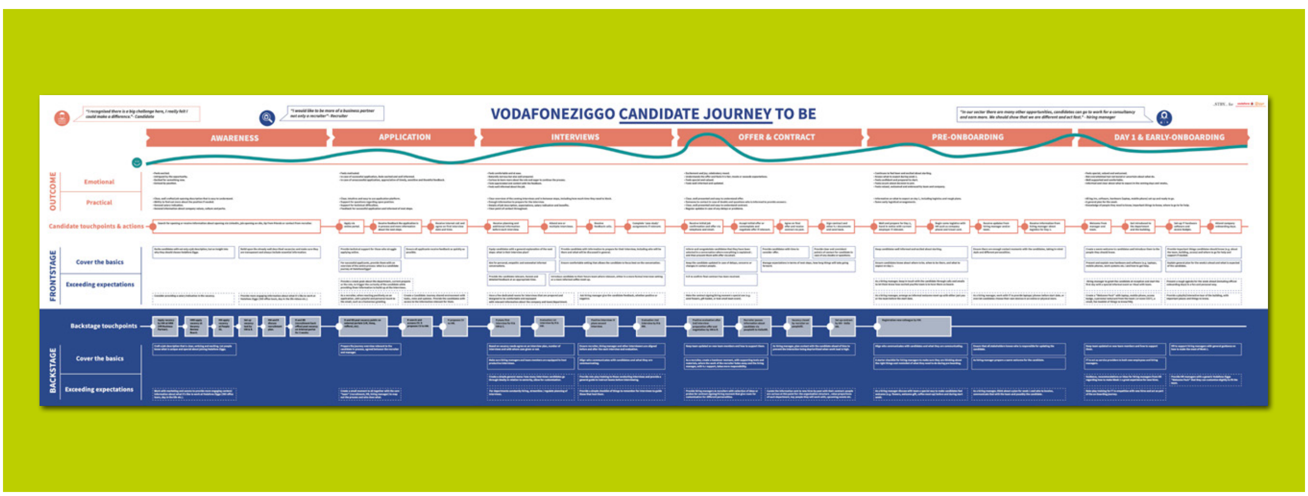

Fig. 5: Service blueprint of the improved 'to-be candidate journey'

Fig. 6: Multidisciplinary workshop to jointly explore future improvements

customers and employees firmly in the centre of the way the organisation works and communicates. The approach generates not only 'technical data' about a journey, it also generates 'emotional data'. Applying this empathetic perspective where it has the most impact drives value for both employees as well as the organisation. Furthermore, it helps to create the right focus: Doing the right things, as well as doing this right. This personal angle generated a lot of enthusiasm amongst the stakeholders involved, as well as a strong sense of commitment to improving the experience for future candidates. The personal quotes from interviewees that annotated the candidate journey surely helped reinforce this connection.

Several of the stakeholders who took part in workshops about the candidate journeys mentioned that they could apply this personal perspective immediately in their ongoing work. This effect has contributed to the broader transition towards greater employee centricity.

Collaboration

Central to the service design approach is enabling interdisciplinary teamwork.

The joint workshop with people from various departments was a key moment because it enabled cross-organisational conversation and ideation. Workshop participants really engaged with the human-centred reflection on their processes. They liked going through the candidate journey together, and specifically doing so from the perspective of the candidate, while thinking of improvements. There were some real eye-openers, and this also had a positive effect on team-building and team dialogue. It has contributed to a shift in the general mindset that is noticeable in the organisation over the past years.

After many useful journey mapping projects over the past years, which typically generated custom-made deliverables (for example, journey maps created by various agencies in slightly different formats), VodafoneZiggo has recently decided to adopt a more general journey mapping tool that will standardise the format of journey maps and make them more accessible for more people in the organisation. This is a useful step in integrating service design tools and principles into their core ways-of-working.

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Employee On-boarding Experience in a Hybrid, International Set-up



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How can a company deliver an effective on-boarding experience at scale, with high numbers of new hires, across different geographies? In this article we discuss how adopting an inclusive approach, embracing complexity and applying incremental innovation have been key to success in rethinking the employee on-boarding experience at Doctolib, a multi-national health-tech organisation based in France.

The first days within a new company leave a long-lasting mark on the relationship between an individual and the organisation which hired them. Poor on-boarding can lead to early attrition and underperforming employees, as well as limit the possibilities of business growth. If well designed, on-boarding can anchor not only essential knowledge, but more importantly, good practices, shared habits and perspectives.

Service design can contribute to designing an on-boarding process that puts the employees at the centre. This involves more than just creating an experience that is user-friendly for employees, as service end-users, and sustainable for the company, as service provider. It also implies thinking about employees as dynamic, and considering how they can develop and establish themselves within their company and community of practice.

In this article, we describe and reflect on the redesign of the on-boarding experience at Doctolib. This article is a joint conversation between us (Oblo service design practitioners) and the Doctolib's 'People On-boarding' team, who sponsored and implemented the new on-boarding experience.

The context: An international, high-growth, hybrid organisation

Doctolib[1] has always put employees at the centre and made their employee journey a tool for its success. In a period of rapid growth, Doctolib's on-boarding team faced the challenge of on-boarding more than 100 new employees a month in three countries, with remote and in-person participation.

The team has two main responsibilities. Firstly, they are responsible for the new employee's overall employee journey – from the moment they accept a job offer, up to six months in tenure. In partnership with other teams in the organisation, this is done by influencing the processes and behaviours of recruiters, hiring managers and other stakeholders which contribute to the journey. Their second responsibility is to deliver an induction programme to accompany all employees in their first week, known as the 'Doctolib Bootcamp'. This four-day bootcamp was originally designed for business school graduates hired across France as sales representatives. These new hires would typically have minimal work experience and limited knowledge of the healthcare market.

With international expansion – first in Germany and then Italy – the number of new employee personas began to multiply, and their needs evolve. The fragmented on-boarding experience reflected in the new joiners' feedback, who claimed they sometimes failed to see consistency and relevance in their first days. The pandemic also added a new dimension, requiring the bootcamp to be delivered more flexibly – fully remote, fully in-person, and most commonly in a hybrid set-up.

The Oblo[2] design team has helped to co-design a new and improved bootcamp experience, as the first touchpoint of a long, well-structured learning experience for every Doctolib employee.

In-person Doctolib bootcamp, October 2021

Designing an inclusive community-driven employee experience

On the face of it, designing for internal users means responding to the needs and objectives of specialists with tasks and roles usually well-defined by the organisation and its formal processes. However, the reality is much more nuanced, and analysis reveals significant differences between even similar roles in the same organisation[3].

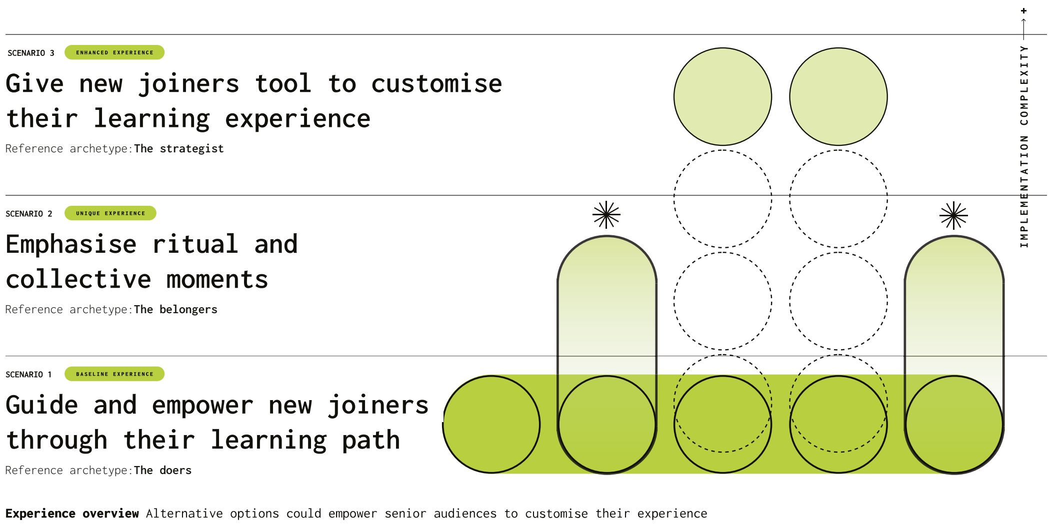
Our initial research phase revealed diverse attitudes and approaches among Doctolib's new joiners, which we summarised into behavioural archetypes to share the research results and inform the redesign of the on-boarding strategy.

'The Doers' approach their on-boarding with a practical-oriented mindset; they are eager to begin work as soon as possible and get acquainted with their team members. 'The Belongers' might be more enthusiastic and see the bootcamp as a special occasion to celebrate their arrival in the company, get to know new people, and immerse themselves in the organisation's culture. 'The Strategists' need extreme flexibility – even in these first days – to meet their already-busy schedule, and use this time to set the ground for future collaboration and projects.

How new joiners approach their on-boarding experience is influenced by contextual factors, including seniority, role, expectations, as well as professional and cultural background. This results in a range of different user behaviours and reactions to the same experience, which generate different tensions that must be considered when defining the new on-boarding strategy.

For example, some employees are interested to discover more about the company straight away, whilst others prefer to meet their teams at the outset. Some new hires join Doctolib for the international flavour and expect this to be part of the on-boarding experience, whilst others value the local dimension. Some prefer a lecture-style on-boarding experience, other want to interact and actively participate in sessions. Some expect to feel inspired, others are just interested in practical information. How could the bootcamp, and the on-boarding experience in general, fit all these different needs at once?

Shifting from the research to the strategy phase, we decided to take into account all of these behavioural



New bootcamp modular experience overview

tensions, rather than simplifying by compromising or prioritising specific attitudes over others. The design questions inspired by those behavioural tensions allowed us to create a fully inclusive experience, appealing to all the different new joiners' behaviours by mixing different aspects and paying attention to every necessity. As a result, we proposed a layered strategy composed by a basic experience (to guide and empower), enriched by collective rituals and customisable extra-options, all equally available and valuable either in presence or online.

From an experience strategy to an incremental roadmap

Moving from strategy to ideation, it was necessary to identify key design principles, a checklist to guide the project team in the redesign of the different experience's touchpoints. For example, does 'empowerment' increase the effectiveness of the learning experience? Does 'flexibility' ensure versatility and room for adaptation? Does 'inclusion' welcome every single individual in the community? And does 'rituality' contribute to creating a sense of belonging?

The new on-boarding strategy translated into more than 30 possible experiments, which were shortlisted into 20 that informed the team's roadmap for the whole year.

One of the main experiments was called 'one-agenda-fits-all'. A series of actions aimed to align the on-boarding experience of all three countries, optimise the organisational effort, and reinforce the international flavour whilst preserving local experiences. The team could implement ideas to ease active involvement of new joiners during the learning programme, improve the quality of the sessions, and better integrate the bootcamp in the entire new hire journey.

Results

As of today, approximately 85 percent of the initial roadmap is completed, with some experiments being replaced by new ones according to the evolving needs of the organisation. The greatest added value of applying the methodology was the on-boarding team's collective alignment around the on-boarding journey goals increasing the time to deliver new experiments.

Continuous improvement of the 'New Joiners Journey' is now collectively owned by the whole team, which uses the insights and principles from the initial research and strategy to inform and direct all phases of innovation, from further ideation to validation and testing. This has a ripple effect on other parts of Doctolib. For example, the 'Train The Trainer' (TTT) programme, developed as an enabling factor for programme speakers to improve the bootcamp efficacy, is now a flagship product in Doctolib's learning strategy.

Today, the bootcamp encapsulates Doctolib's commitment to be a learning organisation, where people learn 'three things a day' and dedicate at least one hour a week to learn on the job, from peers, from experts or in formal classes. This bond between the on-boarding programme and continuous learning approach is strengthened by a new ritual that occurs during the first days. This is a self-assessment that initiates the learning cycle with a moment of self-awareness. New joiners define learning goals for themselves, which later become development goals, with their managers acting as development coaches.

The Oblo design team role has evolved over the course of the project, from being an advocate for the needs of individual users, to being an architect of an inclusive on-boarding experience as well as facilitator of the implementation process. Working as an integrated service design and HR team allowed us not only to achieve an experience that was engaging for the employee (the service end-user), and sustainable for the company (the service provider), but also to open an on-going dialogue between disciplines and create shared tools and methods.

Ideation session with Doctolib's 'People On-boarding' team

1 https://careers.doctolib.com/life-at-doctolib
2 https://www.oblo.design
3 Gianluca Brugnoli in "Service Designer. Il progettista alle prese con sistemi complessi" (Tassi, 2019)

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Expanding Employee Journeys with a Focus on Relationships

Integrating human and social capital strategies



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In this article, we open the door to exploring the interplay of human and social capital strategies for improved employee experience and organisational performance. This approach combines the focus on the employee as an individual, and the focus on employees as an interacting group of individuals.

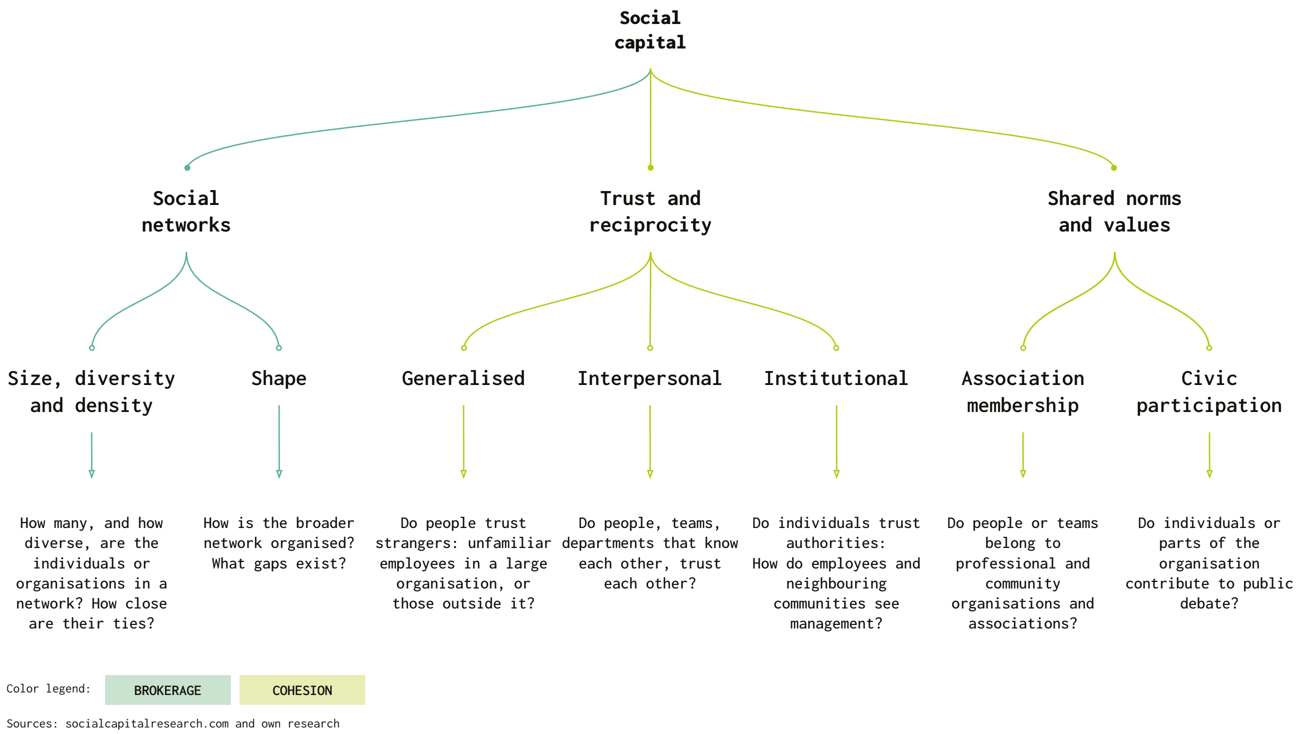
Over the past century, organisational theory has evolved from focusing on efficiency and hierarchy, towards emphasising culture, shared values and norms. In the last two decades, organisations have started to increasingly focus on so-called human-capital strategies, including on-boarding, retention, skills development, employee experience, etc.

Some research (Arena, Uhl-Bien, 2016, Arena, 2018) questions the effectiveness of these human-capital strategies in driving performance and innovation in complex organisations. We argue for expanding beyond the focus on the individual, known as human capital, to the interactions between individuals, known as social capital. This creates an opportunity for service designers to broaden their scope when researching and designing employee experiences, especially employee journeys.

Social vs. human capital strategies

In 'Complexity Leadership Theory' – a leadership paradigm that focuses on enabling the learning, creativity and adaptive capacity of knowledge workers – social capital is understood as a competitive advantage that comes from an individual's connections to others. Social capital is made of networks, relationships, shared norms and trust among individuals, teams and leaders.

Important dimensions of social capital include social networks (size, diversity and density), trust and reciprocity (generalised, interpersonal and institutional), and shared norms and values (association membership and civic participation). Two important elements of social capital are group cohesion (how well-connected an individual is to



Important dimensions of social capital

others in their group), and brokerage (when an individual acts as a bridge between different groups).

Human capital, in turn, is made of the skills, knowledge and experience of an individual or group, viewed in terms of their value or cost to an organisation.

Broadly speaking, human capital strategies place a higher focus on individual growth by developing employee skills and knowledge through education and development programmes, to increase productivity and quality. In turn, strategies oriented towards social capital focus more on building strong relationships between employees, prioritising networking and relationship-building opportunities to increase collaboration, and designing cultures of cooperation to enable knowledge-sharing and trust.

Human capital strategies tend to focus on attracting and retaining talent by creating a positive employer brand and culture. A social capital focus fosters a sense of community to increase engagement and loyalty among employees, in an effort to create a positive culture.

But if according to the above-referenced research, focusing on the individual employee alone guarantees neither a good employee experience, nor a performing organisation, how might employee journeys (EJ) be improved used to balance human and social capital?

Social capital in employee journeys

Current state

When we consider the usual components of EJs, relational elements are rarely top-of-mind. The typical elements of EJs include personas, touchpoints, emotion graphs, quotes and individual insights. These elements are practically identical to those contained in most customer journeys.

The New Employee Experience e-book published by HR software provider Benify even proposes its readers to “treat employees as customers”. In our view, this is a mistake. While customers do not need to function inside an organisation’s social fabric, employees certainly do. Therefore, an additional consideration is needed: social capital strategies.

It would be unfair to say social capital is not addressed in EJs. Although not a dedicated EJ solution, journey mapping software Smaply is a positive example. Their flexible 'stakeholder map' feature is one of their tool's three main pillars, and allows for the custom definition of 'relationships' between personas.

The more we dig into new software products in the employee engagement space, the more attention is directed to human interactions and social capital elements. But even in these cases, their inclusion is primarily at the service of human capital outcomes. For instance, employee engagement platform Culture Amp's focus on 'high-performing teams' and 'cultural fit' primarily aims to deliver on retention and skills development. The same is true for digital workflow software ServiceNow. Their Making Employee Journeys Unforgettable e-book mentions "cross-departmental work" simply to highlight employees' ease of access to shared company services such as IT or HR.

A proof that social capital strategies are on the rise is Microsoft WorkLab's recent effort. Their researchers used machine learning to find out how collaboration really happens. They looked beyond the organisational chart into the actual social interaction data amongst employees. For instance, who attended meetings with whom, how frequently, for how long, on which topics, in what interaction format and via which rituals (e.g. stand-up, working session, workshop, emails, calendar events).

So, how might we evolve employee journeys from treating social capital simply as an individual touchpoint (e.g. on-boarding or welcome days) and a means purely to deliver on human capital goals?

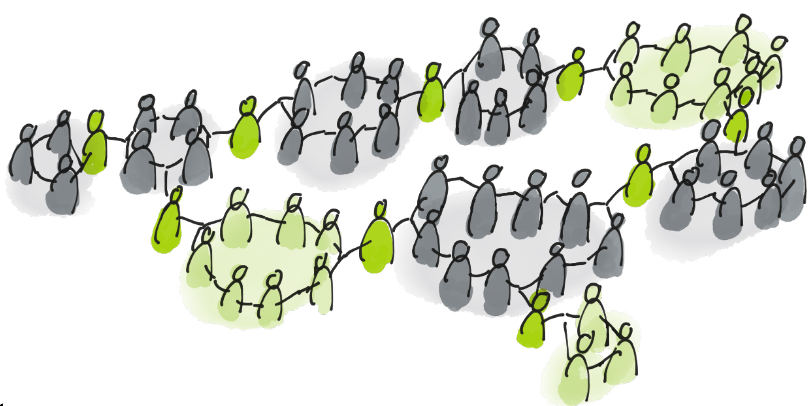
Future state

Adding new research and design considerations to increase the focus on social capital strategies will distinguish EJs from customer journey maps, making them more fit-for-purpose. This will increase service designers' added value to the organisation, and create a competitive advantage for the organisation, as they will make more holistic decisions for their employee experience.

But how, specifically, can social capital be integrated into EJs? And, importantly, can a social capital focus make EJs more effective in delivering good employee experiences and organisational outcomes?

While facilitating a networking event for middle managers, one of us spotted a pattern: participants focused on a year-long theme but underutilised social capital. Recognising this, the facilitator recommended designing a comprehensive journey to sustain connections and maximise social capital outside the event itself. For example, don't just have an initial discussion at the event, but also intentionally create follow-ups and therefore establish a sustainable relation that is later used to improve collaboration across the whole company.

In another instance, assisting subject matter experts in tapping into peer knowledge, his team was involved in creating design reviews to foster social capital. Alignment and change were achieved by leveraging internal networks, instead of through a focus on dissemination of content. Deliberately designing interventions to increase social capital (e.g. after-work drinks, lunch-and-learns) to foster exchange beyond the main activity of communicating results, helps align and build commitment across different teams.



The following questions can be considered by service designers to increase their focus on social capital within EJs:

- What if the process of research, design and delivery of employee journeys could help identify and amplify robust social capital principles and measures for individuals, teams and companies?
- How might we strategically leverage employees' external and internal social relationships for improved organisational and business outcomes?
- Can we better understand employee passions and interests to enhance purposeful work experiences through social networks?
- How can knowledge and expertise be distributed across silos based on internal social networks and relationships?
- What if intentional nudges were designed to foster social capital development (e.g. cross-boarding, buddy systems)?
- Should HR departments openly communicate social capital attributes as prerequisites to promotion?
- What if a score on social cohesion became a core part of employee journeys, similar to the energy efficiency labels of household appliances?
- Should employees' achievement of high levels of brokerage (i.e. bridging connections from one cluster of individuals to another) be considered as important as skills development?
- Can we illustrate the continuous development of social relationships throughout an employee's journey, in the same was as e.g. emotional journeys?
- How do networks change along the phases of an employee journey?

Tools to weave social capital into employee journeys

Service designers working on employee journeys can assess social capital by examining different elements, such as brokerage or cohesion, as well as looking into employees' social networks, trust and reciprocity, and norms and values.

Perhaps a combination of network analysis tools alongside more ethnographic methods, could help. For instance, relational proximity mapping, a specific approach within network analysis, focuses on mapping and analysing the relational closeness of individuals within a network. Open-source network analysis and visualisation tools such as Gephy or Cytoscape, or commercial ones like Polinode, could help uncover relations (provided there's access to the right data). Suites like Microsoft 365 also start to add information about relations between employees via sub-products like VIVA Insights. And Sociomapping shows a topographical map of the interconnectedness of a team and helps in deriving recommendations to improve the team's performance, for example by fostering a discussion on how to improve collaboration.

In particular, we can use such approaches to understand who is disconnected from others, who is overloaded by too many connections, and who are the most important bridges between different groups. Hence, visualising the connections between employees surfaces gaps or misalignment between groups of people that hinder flows of information, problem resolution, or improved collaboration.

As mentioned, data relevant to social capital may emerge when the above tools are coupled with ethnographic approaches, such cultural probes (e.g. diary studies used to gain insights into people's behaviours, values and social connections), symbolic analysis (to understand organisational rituals, ceremonies and shared narratives) or life stories (to gain a deeper understanding of employee experiences, networks and relationships within the organisation).

The combination of network analysis tools, ethnographic approaches and employee journey approaches is in its infancy and will need adaptation from all sides.

Next steps

This article introduces social capital strategies as distinct from human capital strategies, and shows their current and potential future place in employee journey mapping. There is a lot more to explore and we want you to join us!

We created a collaborative Miro board at https://bit.ly/SDN-socialcapital. You can contribute your ideas and probing questions at your own pace for a shared exploration of this topic. Let's start this journey together.

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Not Just a Training: Transforming Service Excellence in Healthcare



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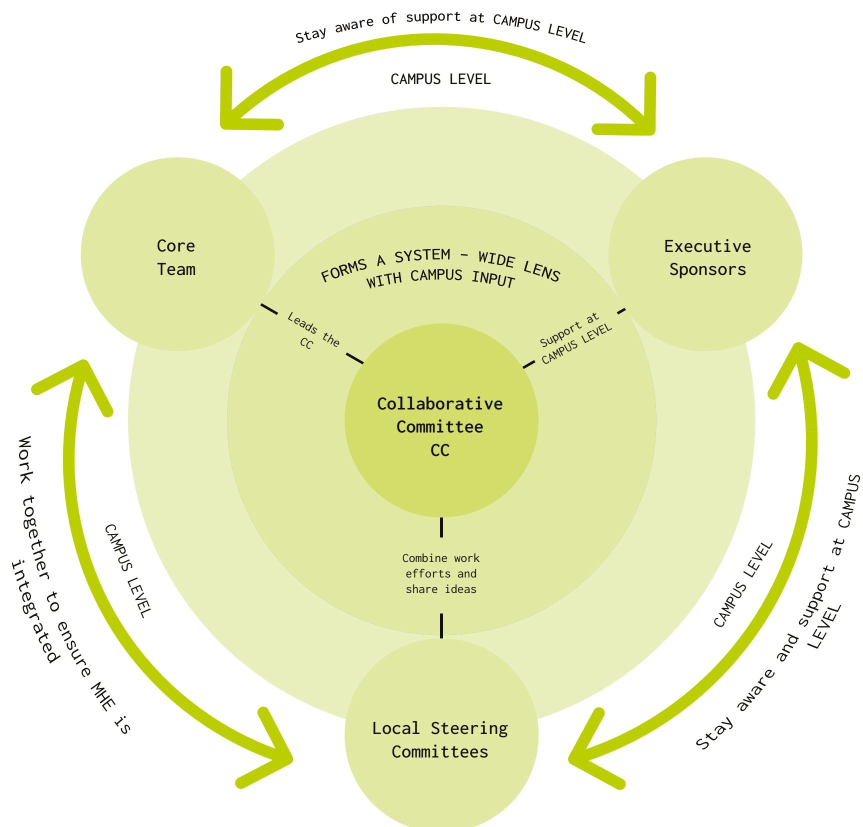
Healthcare workers worldwide have been stretched thin and pushed beyond their limits in the years since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. In one comparison of 27 industries, healthcare ranked last for employee satisfaction, and hospitals were ranked among the lowest in satisfaction by consumers. But employee burnout, dissatisfaction and turnover were simmering issues long before Covid-19 brought them to a boiling point. If healthcare workers don't feel cared for or valued themselves, how can they be expected to provide empathetic, personalised care for their patients?

Patient safety - and satisfaction - are predicated upon safe, healthy and fulfilled employees. In 2019, Memorial Hermann Health System in Houston, Texas, began the years-long journey of transforming its culture into one of not only clinical excellence, but also service excellence. To do this, we partnered with the Disney Institute to design a service-centric culture that unites our people, our places, and our processes - intentionally centred around the employee experience.

The resulting service framework, called the 'Memorial Hermann Experience' (referred to as MHE), provides the foundation for achieving two main goals: consistently creating personalised and compassionate service experiences, and empowering our employees, physicians and contractors to make aligned, in-the-moment service decisions.

Memorial Hermann employs over 30,000 people who support the delivery of world-class healthcare in the United States' most diverse metropolitan area. As a large health system comprised of 17 hospitals and hundreds of care delivery sites, one of our biggest struggles has been that each hospital campus feels like its own individual hospital, as opposed to being part of a unified system. This results in some inconsistency for employees, patients and their loved ones.

As a healthcare organisation, we are rightfully focused first and foremost on safety and quality, yet we didn't have any initiatives focused explicitly on service. From the



The intentional, non-linear governance structure and ongoing feedback loop between different parties in the governance committee has been crucial to sustainment efforts

start of this undertaking, we were clear that this wasn't about bringing in customer service experts and adding yet another training to healthcare workers' already overflowing plates. Rather, it was and continues to be about catalysing a culture shift - alongside structural changes - that enables and empowers employees to more deeply care for one another, as well as our patients.

We also believed that codifying our organisation's service commitment, and embedding it across the entire employee journey, would serve as a differentiator in the increasingly competitive employer market. We knew that leveraging service design in our approach would help to alchemise long-lasting culture change.

This initiative was grounded in emotional connection and creating experience principles in the form of a service commitment, standards, and behaviours by which every Memorial Hermann employee would be guided each day.

At the beginning of 2020, the Disney Institute (DI) sent team members on-site in Houston to complete focus groups and one-on-one interviews with employees. They spoke with hundreds of individuals at every level of the organisation to learn about pain points and where in their journey they felt the most and least supported.

One resounding insight was a lack of empowerment up and down the leadership ranks. The hierarchical culture within our system fostered an environment in which employees felt they needed to go to their leaders to get approval or guidance on even the most minute decisions. This revealed an opportunity to help our employees feel both cared for and empowered to make their own decisions in their work.

We then held a three-day workshop to create our four service standards and their corresponding behaviours, followed by a day-long session with our executive leadership team to tweak and finalise them. The resulting prioritised service standards – 'Safe, Caring, Personalised and Efficient'

– were intended to be concrete decision-making guides to fulfil our new service commitment: 'We care for every member of our community by creating compassionate and personalised experiences'.

For each service standard, we provided four observable behaviours as 'I' statements to guide employees and leaders into alignment with that standard. Staff are encouraged to be off-task if they are on-commitment, meaning that they should stop what they are doing to help others in need of assistance to make the other person feel seen, heard and cared for.

For example, an employee's task may be, 'I keep the hospital clean'. With MHE, they think beyond the task and are guided by their commitment of, 'I care for every member of our community by providing comfort and a safe place to heal'.

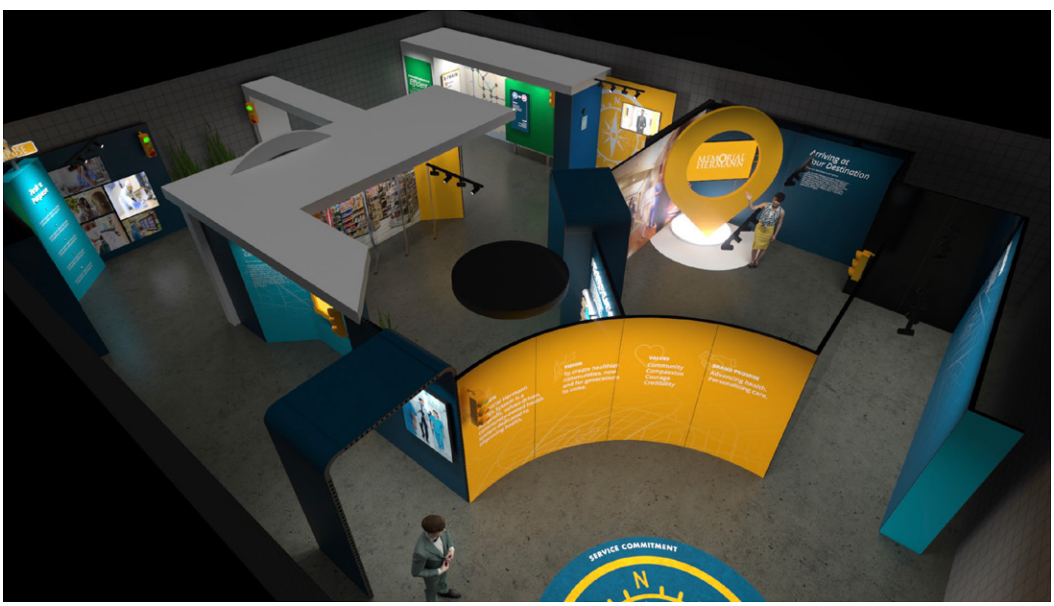
In an organisational structure marked by siloes, it was helpful for us to create a stakeholder map to understand our spheres of influence, relationship dynamics, and who to involve at which stage of the rollout across the system. This initiative was a close collaboration between Consumer Experience and the Organizational Development & Leadership arm of Human Resources, with key executive leadership buy-in at every stage of the process.

To ensure the permanence of our culture shift, we developed a governance structure comprised of executive sponsors, a core team, a collaborative committee, and local steering committees.

MHE was designed to be part of everything we were already doing, infusing our service commitment into the roots of the organisation and across the continuum of the employee journey. We needed a flexible approach that resonated universally, whether we were introducing our service standards to brand new hires at their orientation, or to employees who have been with us for more than 20 years.

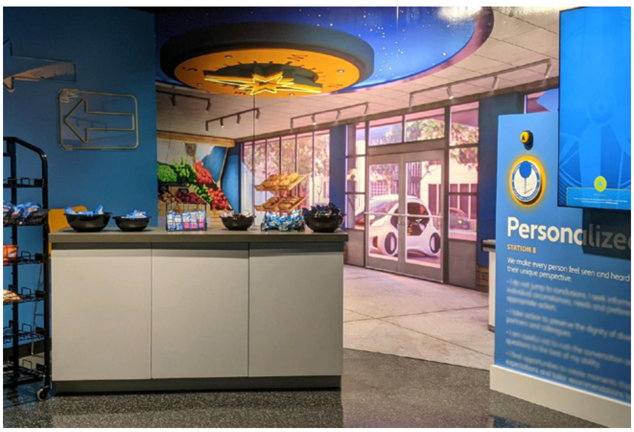
We identified five areas that would help us accomplish this: how we hire and onboard; how we lead and what we teach; how and what we communicate to reinforce; how we reward and recognise; and what we measure and hold accountable.

We developed two trainings: 'Navigating the Memorial Hermann Experience' and 'Leading the Memorial Hermann Experience'. These were to be fully interactive



Credit: Staging Solutions for Memorial Hermann

A digital rendering showing the stations through which participants immerse themselves in the service standards and behaviours



Two stations from the permanent training exhibit that all new hires go through as part of the interactive 'Navigating the Memorial Hermann Experience' training

and unlike every other 'check the box' training people had experienced before.

The resulting trade exhibition-style learning experience of 'Navigating' was remarkable for many reasons. We were asking over 30,000 employees, physicians and contractors to take their turn leaving the bedside, registration or job duties for a full 90 minutes to complete this training. This was a massive financial commitment from our system leadership, who understood it was key to our success.

We knew we would need to bring the trainings to employees at each campus, so we designed a traveling experience with convenience for busy healthcare workers in mind. The training itself looks and feels unexpected; it's unlike a classroom setting, and above all else, our mandate was fun. In the training, participants travel through 11 stations comprised of activities where, along with ten other leaders, peers and physicians, they demonstrate the ways in which they will incorporate these observable behaviours into their daily work activities.

The rollout of 'Navigating' was marked by constant pivots due to both the evolving pandemic and emerging learnings. There were many challenges to kicking off a new cultural initiative during a global pandemic that hit the healthcare sector hard with staffing shortages and burnout.

We launched trainings at only two campuses before having to shut down the rollout for months due to a Covid-19 surge. When we resumed, we quickly found that each campus was unique, requiring us to slightly modify the set-up and execution by location.

Utilising our own local leaders and staff to conduct the facilitation ensured they had relatable examples and built trust because these were people they worked with every day. As we completed trainings at the first two campuses, we recognised accessibility and inclusivity gaps, leading us to make adjustments for Spanish-speaking and visually impaired staff.

With the rise of remote work, we also developed a virtual version for fully remote staff so they, too, could be part of our culture shift. We recently unveiled our permanent 'Navigating' exhibit, which uses technology to make running the training less human resource-heavy while still providing a fun, interactive experience.

Before launching, we determined the success metrics we would use to help measure the impact of this systematic design of the employee journey. For one, we tracked training completion rate. Between February and July 2022, we put over 29,000 employees at ten campuses through 'Navigating' and achieved a 94 percent completion rate amongst system employees. To gauge perceived impact from employees, we also deployed quarterly 'pulse' surveys using the Qualtrics platform.

We found that employees felt that, with MHE, they could make their own decisions and feel supported, rather than fear repercussions. These surveys ask employees to respond to statements such as, 'My senior leaders are engaged and committed to the MH Experience and the Service Framework' and 'I have/A member of my team has been recognised for demonstrating a service standard – 'Safe, Caring, Personalized, Efficient'.'

We set system targets for each statement to track our progress at each campus and identify any areas that might benefit from additional attention. We have also been observing changes in Net Promoter Score (NPS) alongside employee satisfaction, under the premise that improved employee experience fosters better patient experiences.

Although culture change does not happen overnight, it has been encouraging to see that the first campus at which we first implemented MHE has seen an increase in NPS scores.

Because employee recognition is key to sustaining the service commitment, we have also tracked recognition metrics. Since the service standards were added to our employee recognition program 'You Got Caught Caring', there has been a 114 percent increase in submissions.

As this work continues to unfold, we've reflected on a few key takeaways for other health systems looking to spur cultural shifts with the aid of service design.

First, in a landscape that is both increasingly consumer-centric and rife with clinician and employee burnout, healthcare organisations must make the employee experience a top priority. Cultivating a better sense of self for employees fosters better service, a more enjoyable work environment, and improved patient experience.

Second, it is imperative to create service principles that are both observable and universally applicable, whether they are clinical, non-clinical, leaders, or frontline staff, and ensuring that everyone is held equally accountable for these behaviours. This includes executive leadership, whose buy-in is key to success at every stage.

Initially, we had their surface-level buy-in, but as it became clear that this was less of a training initiative and more of a culture evolution, that commitment deepened. Having executives incorporate MHE into their monthly huddles and lead 'Navigating' sessions for new hires helped them truly embrace it for themselves.

Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, transitioning to a culture of service excellence is not just about transactional moments, trainings or communications. It's about who we actually are, and how we live out our service commitment to create exceptional experiences, for our patients and one other.

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Therapeutic Benefits of Using Service Blueprinting

Kickstarting meaningful conversations to design thoughtful employee experiences

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Solving complex problems requires collaboration across multiple disciplines. Learning-oriented organisations actively work towards breaking down silos to enable a culture of collaboration and create exceptional experiences for their customers and employees. However, achieving meaningful collaboration is hard work. The journey towards it is akin to therapy for the organisation. It requires deep reflection, courage to accept challenges, commitment to work on them, and – most of all – embracing vulnerability.

This article intends to show how service blueprinting can be used as a therapeutic tool to initiate reflective conversations and design thoughtful employee experiences.

As the sole service designer in a large, complex organisation, I was thrilled when an executive leader expressed a slight interest in service design. She was curious to know how it could help transform the recruitment experience for hiring managers. The talent and acquisition team was in the initial stages of procuring a new recruitment tool. They wanted to better understand how hiring managers approach hiring, as well as the challenges they experience.

I conducted interviews and workshops with hiring managers across the organisation who seek to fill various vacancies. What felt like a basic service blueprinting exercise at that time, turned out to be much more powerful in facilitating challenging yet meaningful dialogue.

Seven therapeutic benefits of using the service blueprinting process

The service blueprint became a central artefact during a two-day, multi-stakeholder meeting. Participants included human resources business partners (HRBP), recruiters and hiring managers. HRBPs provided subject matter expertise on HR processes, policies and collective agreements with unions. Recruiters provided insights on industry practices and candidate experiences. Hiring managers shared their needs and feedback on current processes and tools. During the meeting, these leaders – who rarely got a chance to be in the same room – huddled together as they reviewed the wall-sized service blueprints which depicted the complex hiring experience.

They surfaced pain points such as unclear roles and responsibilities between recruiters and hiring managers, recruiters seen as service providers by hiring managers rather than strategy partners, lack of awareness of HR policies creating variations in hiring processes, multiple levels of approvals delaying job posting, the requirement to use multiple tools which are unintuitive and not integrated, lack of performance measurement, and manual and mundane tasks which create inefficiencies. Identifying these challenges and making a commitment to work through them came after reflective, transparent, empathetic and vulnerable conversations.

Based on my experiences as a facilitator as well as the reflections of the participants, here are seven therapeutic benefits of using service blueprinting I identified:

1. Provides an avenue to be seen and heard

Creating a service blueprint uncovers the relationships between people, systems, processes and artefacts that enable a service experience to take place. Regardless of when and how an employee may be involved in the service delivery process, the service blueprint puts them 'on the map' and provides them with an opportunity to share their perspectives and voice their challenges. This is especially important for employees lower in the organisational hierarchy who rarely have the opportunity to speak up. When employees feel their opinions and contributions are valued, they are more engaged in their work, feel a sense of belonging, have increased self-worth, and are more likely to commit to improving things that are not working.

2. Allows individuals and teams to see the bigger picture

The demand of daily workload prevents individuals and teams from zooming out and observing the intricacies of how a service experience is delivered. Created after rigorous research, the service blueprint visualises the architecture of the service experience. When employees see the bigger picture, they understand how different elements of a system or organisation fit together, and can identify new opportunities or solutions that would not be apparent if they only focused on one part of the picture. This can help them to put their own experiences into a broader context and to see that their difficulties are part of a larger whole. By understanding how their actions fit into a larger system or organisation, they may feel more connected to a sense of something greater than themselves.

3. Enables people to separate themselves from their problems

The potential for growth and development can be limited when people internalise their problems. They miss out on opportunities to learn new skills and pursue new interests when they are unable to look beyond the challenge they face. Seeing the bigger picture can enable employees to detach themselves and their identities from the problems they experience. Viewing the problems from a more objective perspective can reduce their emotional intensity and enable employees to think more clearly and rationally. This can help them develop more effective problem-solving strategies. When they can separate themselves from their problems, they may be less likely to blame themselves for the difficulties they are experiencing. This can help to reduce feelings of shame, guilt and self-criticism, which can contribute to stress, anxiety and low morale.

4. Encourages people to talk to each other

The process of creating a service blueprint requires collaboration and communication between different teams involved in service delivery. This helps to build a shared understanding of the service and the various interactions involved. It also helps teams identify dependencies between different parts of the service and understand how their actions impact other teams. This encourages teams to talk to each other to coordinate their actions, communicate expectations, and ensure that the service runs smoothly. By understanding the roles and responsibilities of each team, they avoid misunderstandings and work towards resolving pain-points.

5. Builds empathy and removes the feeling of 'otherness'

When teams are not aware of each other's work and priorities, they become overly focused on their own goals and objectives, leading to siloed thinking and a lack of collaboration. This creates a fragmented work environment where teams work in isolation, leading to inefficiencies and duplication of effort. When teams work in isolation, there is a risk of reduced innovation. Teams may miss opportunities to leverage each other's expertise and collaborate on new ideas, leading to a lack of innovation and growth. Feeling 'otherness' can also lead to social isolation and loneliness. When someone feels that they are different from those around them, they may struggle to form connections and build relationships with others.

A service blueprint can be used to build empathy. When team members feel that they are understood and valued, they are more likely to trust each other and work together towards shared goals. By understanding each other's needs and concerns, teams work together to identify solutions that meet everyone's needs.

6. Surfaces deeper, root-cause issues

As an artefact, a service blueprint can play an important role in facilitating collective reflection on shared experiences, pain-points and outcomes. It provides a forum for employees to discuss and analyse different options and perspectives. This leads to more informed and thoughtful decisions, and better understanding of the core issues. Reflecting on their experiences and outcomes, individuals and teams can identify areas where they need to take more responsibility and hold themselves and each other accountable. By identifying the root causes of a problem, they can develop effective solutions that address the underlying issues, rather than just the symptoms. This can lead to more sustainable and long-lasting solutions.

7. Encourages commitment to change

Even if individuals do not buy into the service blueprinting process at first, by showing up and participating, over time they can begin to see its potential to guide meaningful change. They are likely to free up space in their calendars, actively participate, take responsibility and hold each other accountable on the journey toward long-term change. Through this process, they develop improved coping skills by creating strategies for managing stressful situations, strengthening relationships, reflecting on problems from different perspectives, and communicating effectively with other teams. When an individual or a team is committed to improvement, they are more willing to roll up their sleeves and work through deeply rooted issues for the greater good.

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Empowering People to Accomplish Amazing Things Together

Nine HR services to dramatically boost team performance

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Operating in a post-pandemic world, progressive HR functions play a strategic role in driving collaboration, adaptability, and innovation across organisations. The shift to more fluid operating models will inescapably lead to adaptive work structures and self-organising teams. How might HR empower project teams to collaborate and perform dramatically better than today?

It takes hard work to work well together. High-performing teams are equipped and enabled to lead with clarity, embody a growth mindset, forge healthy relationships, embrace cultural differences, and achieve outstanding results. This does not magically happen overnight; project teams typically grow and develop in stages through continuous feedback, learning and adaptation. Also, they risk regressing if they do not proactively address project impediments and pay proper attention to team dynamics.

Working together remotely makes collaboration even harder. Nowadays, most project teams work synchronously and asynchronously in the office, at home, or in a third space, often in surprising or unpredictable ways. Hybrid work requires not only the right mindset but also an intentional redesign of workflows, spaces, tools, services and systems in order to succeed. Furthermore, HR and executive leadership must play their part by creating the right conditions for cross-capability collaboration and hybrid work to flourish.

Based on my experience of directing and leading 'North star' employee experience (EX) projects for large organisations since 2018, this article is about helping people accomplish amazing things together in project-based knowledge work.

First, I will capture where, when and how people collaborate on projects. Second, I will explain how people can work better together on projects. Third, I will highlight the strategic role HR can play to help organisations become more collaborative, adaptive and innovative. Finally, I will present nine services that HR could

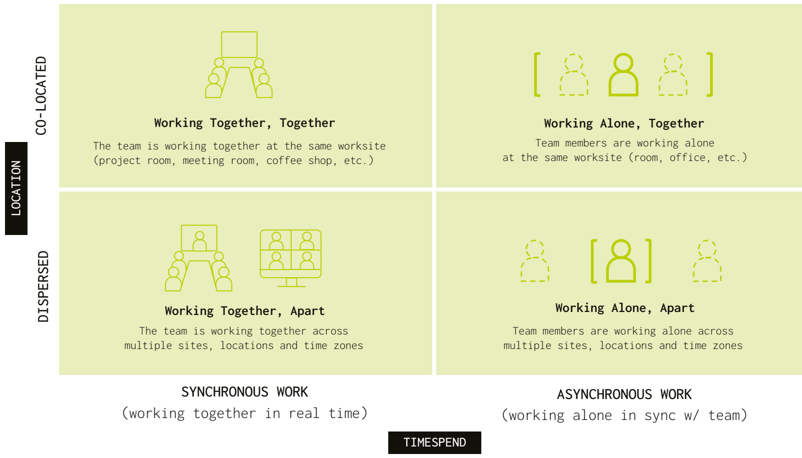

Fig. 1: The ‘where’ of team collaboration: Four collaboration modes in hybrid work[1]

deliver to improve collaboration and boost performance in project teams.

HR functions and project teams do not operate in a vacuum – context matters. That said, the team-centric themes and recommendations outlined here are relevant regardless of organisational structure and culture. In the spirit of simplicity, let's assume that it is rather unimportant if HR functions and project teams operate in a hierarchical, command-and-control structure, or in a fluid, network-based holacracy (and most organisations fall on a spectrum between the two extremes anyway).

Where, when and how people collaborate on projects

Where – In a hybrid work environment, team members work at multiple sites, often situated in multiple locations and time zones. Official and unofficial worksites include offices, co-working spaces, homes, coffee shops, libraries, airports and public spaces, as well as various modes of transport. Organisations should think about hybrid work in terms of location (whether teams are co-located or distributed) and timespend (whether teams are working synchronously or asynchronously). These parameters yield four collaboration modes for hybrid teams: ‘Working together, together’, ‘Working together, apart’, ‘Working alone, together’, and ‘Working alone, apart’.[1] See Figure 1 for more details.

Looking at collaboration in this way puts a spotlight on the issues that impede team performance in each collaboration mode, as well as in the transitions between the four modes.

When – Like in a customer journey, the end-to-end experience for project teams can be divided into three acts or phases (‘Starting project’, ‘Executing project’, ‘Closing project’). Each phase contains certain scenes or moments that matter, such as team recruitment and onboarding, data collection and sensemaking, ideation and concepting, prototyping and experimentation, participatory decision-making, and continuous feedback and improvement. These moments can be framed as opportunities to improve collaboration and boost team performance (see Figure 2).

Each moment will vary in terms of purpose, content, duration and frequency – ranging from daily 15-minute team huddles to a series of interconnected sessions or workshops to accomplish something (like making sense of vast amounts of research data). Looking at collaboration in this way serves as a powerful reminder of the myriad reasons why team members need to work together in the context of a project lifecycle.

How –While working on projects, teams jump back and forth between three thinking modes: divergent thinking, emergent thinking, and convergent thinking. Teams use divergent thinking to expand the playing field by seeking multiple perspectives and generating multiple alternatives. Teams use emergent thinking to explore the playing field through sensemaking, synthesis, concept development and prototyping. Teams use convergent thinking to narrow down the playing field through filtering, evaluation, adaptation and selection.[2,3] See Figure 3 for further explanation.

Looking at collaboration in this way helps us understand how people work together on projects without getting lost in the intricacies of specific innovation and delivery methodologies, such as outcome-driven innovation (jobs theory), Design Thinking, lean startup, or agile.

How people can work better together on projects
Based on multiple literature reviews over the years (or, in other words, standing on the shoulders of giants), I have identified four types of team intelligence that are imperative to team collaboration and performance: 'Team IQ', 'Team SQ', 'Team EQ', and 'Team CQ'. Looking at collaboration through the lens of collective intelligence helps us uncover multiple opportunities to systematically improve collaboration and boost performance over time.

Team IQ is about the collective ability to find, absorb and apply relevant knowledge, skills and experience residing inside and outside the team (in the context of project requirements). This includes the team's ability to: identify gaps in knowledge and understanding; identify and locate relevant knowledge sources; evaluate the validity, credibility and reliability of sources; connect new knowledge to the project; and continuously reflect, learn and adapt throughout the project.

Team SQ (structural intelligence) is about the collective ability to build clarity of purpose, plan and responsibility.[4] This includes the team's ability to: co-frame the strategic problem and co-create shared project goals; share a sense of purpose and find a deeper meaning (either in the work itself or the outcome); understand the impact the project will have on the organisation and the world; understand individual roles and responsibilities in the project lifecycle; understand and believe in the project charter, work breakdown structure and project plan; and agree on the appropriate innovation/delivery methodology and collaboration strategy for the project at hand.

Team EQ (emotional intelligence) is about the collective ability to manage emotions and relationships. This includes the team's ability to: build genuine empathy for one another and with project stakeholders; create a safe space for members to be vulnerable, take risks and trust each other; instil shared beliefs, attitudes, habits and rituals; build team spirit, comradery and cohesion; forge healthy, mutually-beneficial

Fig. 2: The 'when' of team collaboration: Moments that matter in the project lifecycle (not exhaustive)

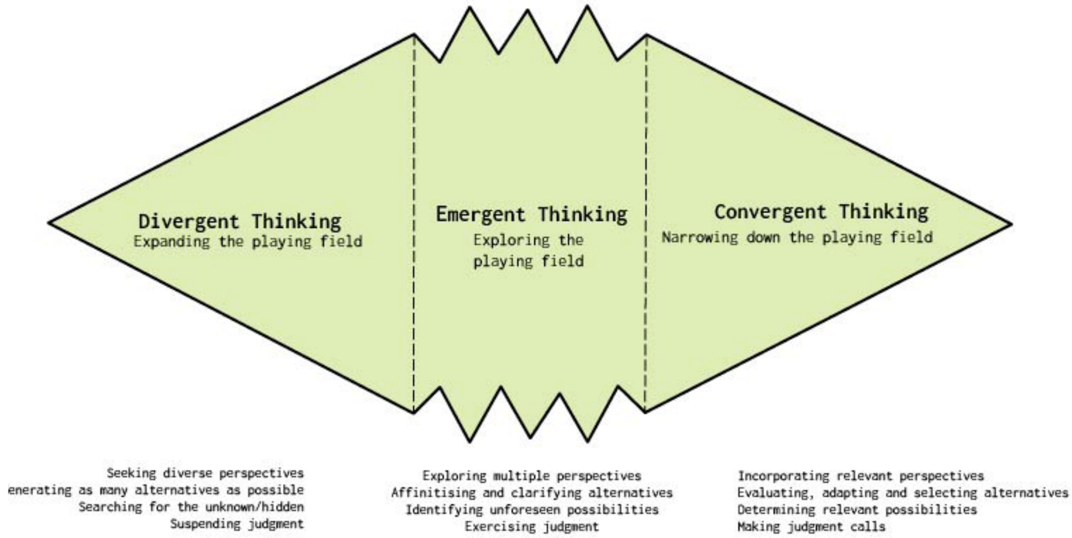

Fig. 3: The 'how' of team collaboration: Three thinking modes[2,3]

relationships inside and outside the team; embrace change, stay adaptable and build resilience; prevent and manage conflicts in a proactive, constructive manner; and take joint responsibility to improve their physical, emotional and mental health.

Team CQ (cultural intelligence) is about the collective ability to recognise, embrace and work across multiple cultures (defined here as diversity in terms of age, ability, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, faith, region/country, profession, socio-economic status, etc.[5]). This includes the team's ability to: encourage a diverse and inclusive team makeup; make all voices feel welcome, heard and respected; welcome and embrace contrasting workstyles and personalities; and explore multiple perspectives and address blind spots in project processes, outputs and outcomes.

HR goes agile

Operating in dynamic and instable environments, leaders need to encourage and drive organisational agility. While organisations may not be ready, willing and able to become a holacracy over night, they can adopt agile practices to become more transparent, collaborative, adaptive and innovative.

Fluid organisations with flattened hierarchies, smashed silos, decentralised decision-making and empowered teams can dynamically remove impediments, optimise the flow of value, and seize opportunities in the marketplace.

If HR wants to play a strategic role in driving agility across the organisation (and ecosystem), HR leaders and professionals need to champion change and embrace agility themselves. Moving to a more fluid operating model with facilitative leadership, adaptive work structures and self-organising teams will arguably require a rethink of HR policies, processes and procedures for recruiting and onboarding, performance management, learning and development, compensation and benefits, and workforce and succession planning (to name but a few areas).[6]

Bringing back the discussion to team performance, HR can undoubtedly help create the right conditions for collaboration, adaptability and innovation to flourish across the organisation. Examples include: socialising a purpose-led, customer-centric 'North star'; building a strong sense of belonging and community; promoting agile and customer-centric ways of working; driving continuous learning and improvement; encouraging and enabling talent mobility and skill-building; bolstering diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) efforts; and recognising and rewarding the right behaviours.

But is this enough? Imagine if HR could shift/expand their mindset from organisation-wide, employee-centric policies, processes and procedures to team-centric services, spaces and tools.

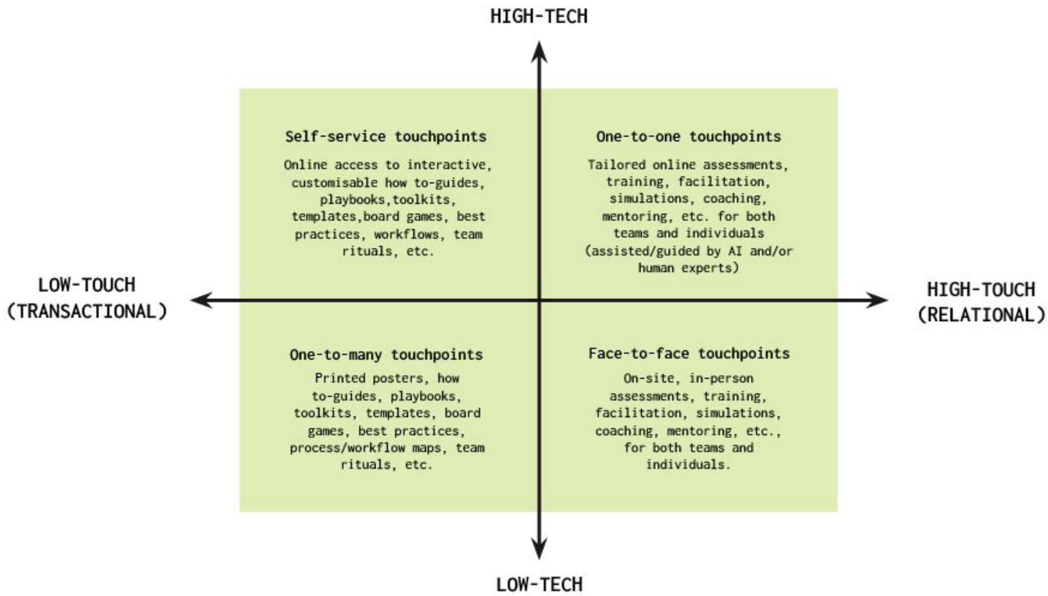

Fig. 4: The HR engagement matrix: Four types of touchpoints in team-centric coaching services

HR becomes a service provider

Looking to the future, as an internal service provider, HR could deliver nine types of coaching services that empower project teams to build collective intelligence, improve collaboration and boost performance. These enabling, team-level services can be divided into three overlapping categories: (A) Building and maintaining healthy, well-balanced teams, (B) Embracing continuous feedback, learning and adaptation, and (C) Supercharging people and teams for success.

All nine services would be delivered primarily through on-site or remote in-person coaching. Supplementary touchpoints range from customisable how-to guides and playbooks to AI-assisted chatbots and team simulations. See the HR engagement matrix (Figure 4).

Category A: Building and maintaining healthy, well-balanced teams

A1. Coaching for Team Recruitment. A HR service that helps leaders form well-balanced and dynamic teams in terms of aptitude, personality, diversity, size and governance (in the context of project requirements). This service is not only offered in the project initiation phase, but also in the project execution phase (as teams grow or shrink due to changing project requirements).

A2. Coaching for Team Onboarding and Offboarding. A HR service that empowers newly-formed (or reconfigured) teams to lead with clarity, foster sense of belonging, build mutual trust and respect, and forge healthy relationships. Important themes include Team SQ, EQ and CQ. This service is offered in all three phases in the project lifecycle (as teams grow or shrink due to changing project requirements).

A3. Coaching for Team Health and Wellbeing. A HR service that empowers project teams to take joint responsibility for their physical, social and mental health and wellbeing. Important themes include: healthy work/life balance; workplace health and safety; team motivation and engagement; team adaptability and resilience; team diversity, equity and inclusion; and proactive conflict management.

Category B: Embracing continuous feedback, learning and adaptation

B1. Coaching for Team Leadership and Appraisal. A HR service that (a) equips and empowers leaders to foster team growth and empowerment through servant leadership, and (b) equips and empowers autonomous teams to become truly self-managing, self-designing and self-governing. This includes new ways of recognising and rewarding performance – shifting the focus from infrequent, top-down assessments of individuals to continuous, multi-directional assessments of teams.

B2. Coaching for Team Learning & Development. A HR service that empowers teams to embark on learning journeys, foster a learning/growth mindset, and boost their learning power. Important themes include: T-shaped team members; in-project upskilling and cross-skilling; ongoing, situational and multi-directional feedback; continuous reflection, learning and adaptation; post-project debriefing; and knowledge management.

B3. Lean Coaching for Teams. A HR service that empowers teams to make continuous improvements in projects based on uncovering, analysing and resolving process inefficiencies, quality gaps, project impediments, performance blockers, conflict triggers and causes, blind spots, sustainability issues, etc.

Category C: Supercharging people and teams for success

C1. Hybrid Work Coaching for Teams. A joint HR+IT service that helps project teams stage hyper-personalised, hyper-immersive collaborative experiences regardless of where, when and how team members choose to work. This includes leveraging enabling technologies such as intelligent/smart spaces, intelligent automation, adaptive AI, cloud-based 'superapps,' VR/XR, spatial audio and decentralised infrastructure. Holistic B2B solutions (hardware, software, services) for inclusive meeting experiences for people and teams exist already in the marketplace (see, for example, Microsoft Teams Rooms with Logitech products such as Rally Bar, Sight and Scribe).

C2. Performance Coaching for Teams. A HR service that proactively guides teams in moments that matter in the project lifecycle to unleash human potential, foster creativity and boost performance based on thinking modes, collective intelligence, best practices, ideal workflows and continuous feedback. This service is important for moments in the project lifecycle that have an oversized impact on team performance and value co-creation, such as data collection and sensemaking, ideation and concepting, and participatory decision-making.

C3. Coaching for Team Augmentation. A joint HR+IT service that empowers teams to work seamlessly with the emerging capabilities of machine learning, adaptive AI, intelligent automation and cobots (collaborative robots). This includes crafting ethical guidelines, redesigning workflows, introducing tools and building capabilities that help teams evolve into 'superteams,' in which human and non-human team members work effortlessly and effectively side-by-side.[7] This service is important for moments in the project lifecycle that would benefit from increased firepower and alternative points of view, such as data collection and sense-making, ideation and concepting, continuous feedback and improvement, and participatory decision-making.

In conclusion

The future of work is ultimately about unleashing human potential. As service designers, let's explore how we can stage collaborative experiences for project teams that feel truly effortless, equitable and engaging. Let's explore how we can reimagine workflows, spaces, tools, services and systems to help people achieve amazing things together, especially in hybrid work environments. Let's explore how HR functions and team-centric services can drive collaboration, adaptability and innovation across organisations and ecosystems. Exciting times ahead!

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Tools and Methods

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A Co-creation Framework for Interdisciplinary Collaboration





Dr Pushpi Bagchi, Dr Chris Elsden, Dr Steven Earl, Kam Chan and Professor Chris Speed are an interdisciplinary team which forms the Data + Design Lab. They use a design-led, participatory approach to develop innovative projects and partnerships at the Edinburgh Futures Institute by creating constellations across researchers, practitioners, students, industry partners and the wider community. Their objective is to offer innovative perspectives on data-driven challenges.

Working across disciplines is not a walk in the park. Every discipline carries its own set of jargon, approaches and customs, often posing barriers to effective collaboration. To overcome these hurdles, the Data + Design Lab at the University of Edinburgh has developed a Co-Creation Framework. This tool is designed to help identify the needs of partners and give direction to the goals of co-creative activities.

Facilitating interdisciplinary collaboration

Data + Design Lab (D+DL) is a new service design team within the newly formed Edinburgh Futures Institute (EFI), at the University of Edinburgh. We're tasked with the mission of facilitating co-creation. We do this within a unique academic environment that seeks to bring together interdisciplinary perspectives to challenge, create and change the futures of data-driven technologies. EFI strives to support authentic partnerships and comprehensive innovation with industry partners and local communities. To bring these partnerships to life, co-creation – a form of open collaboration where diverse stakeholders work together in response to complex challenges – is key.

Every discipline and profession comes with its own vocabulary, methodologies and cultures. These can often become obstacles when trying to communicate and collaborate. Many individuals and teams we work with are newcomers when it comes to using design methods and co-creation. Beyond service, participatory, strategic, systemic or any other specific framework of design practice, our role is primarily about design facilitation. This practice often involves developing contextually-designed tools which help designers plan and facilitate experiences or activities which allow for participatory and systemic processes of change.[1]

However, before developing such tools and activities, we recognised a need to help our partners have conversations about what they need to identify the job to be done through co-creation and collaboration. We produced a 'Co-Creation Framework' which supports these conversations by providing a common language and structure for planning and facilitating interdisciplinary partnerships at any stage of a design-led project.

Co-creation and collaboration

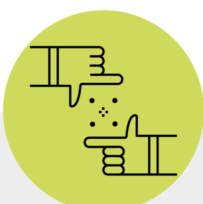
Our Co-Creation Framework was developed and iterated upon to serve as a visual tool that communicates our non-linear approach to design and engagement with partners. It outlines six collaborative 'needs' that co-creative methods can address. Instead of merely initiating yet another design workshop[2], each 'need' is about facilitating specific co-creative events and activities.

By focusing on needs, we get to the heart of the motivations and values driving any co-creative activity. The following case study demonstrates how we use the framework to understand, frame, negotiate and direct a project with partners, creating a shared, interdisciplinary perspective of why and how to engage in co-creation.

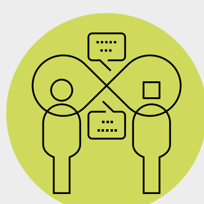
Case study: Drawing out new perspectives on AI futures

In January 2023, the Centre for Technomoral Futures (CTMF) invited us to help them deliver workshops with participants from regions, countries, sectors and stakeholder groups that are often left out of high-level discussions around artificial intelligence (AI).

CTMF, a research centre based within EFI, aims to unify technical and moral knowledge in new models of research, education, design and engagement that directly serve the goals of sustainable, just and ethical innovation.[3] These workshops aimed to involve a diverse range of voices in contributing to a vision of what is desirable and achievable for the next generation of AI.

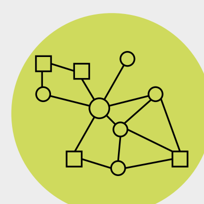


Express
By express, we mean the need to unpack a challenge, topic, or idea, reframe it or open it up to discover its potential. Examples of activities to help collaborators express themselves might include discovery sessions, mapping, or futures thinking workshops to result in an articulation of opportunities around a topic or challenge.



Refine
To refine is to deepen the understanding of a challenge through research, experimentation, or the input of subject experts and affected stakeholders. Activities such as problem framing, prototyping, or expert reviews can lead to a refined view of a topic or challenge.

Translate
To translate is to contextualise a topic or challenge to make it relatable to diverse audiences. This is also an important step in making sure that everyone involved in the project understands what is being developed and the intended benefits. Translation might involve designing an artefact for feedback or a focus group to gauge perceptions of different audiences.



Network
By network, we mean bringing together communities of practice to unite around a theme, challenge or topic. Our networking activities are explicitly designed to facilitate knowledge exchange and connection.

Data + Design Lab's Co-Creation Framework

The project, ‘New Perspectives on AI Futures’, was funded by the Alan Turing Institute and aimed to bring together underrepresented voices, foster collective visions for AI futures, and distil emergent ideas into a compelling set of provocations. These provocations would then be presented to influential AI thought leaders and policymakers to drive meaningful change in the field.

Upon considering the initial brief, we introduced examples of ‘futuring’ exercises to our partners, meant to be utilised in workshops involving diverse participants from academia, industry and the third sectors. Our partners, taking on the role of workshop facilitators, came from a rich variety of backgrounds encompassing ethics, philosophy, mathematics, sociology and law. By referencing the framework, they manged to reach a consensus that the workshops’ objective should be to enable participants to express themselves, articulate provocations and share new perspectives on AI futures related to three themes: ‘sustainability’, ‘health and wellbeing’, and ‘work and democracy’.

The framework also served as a valuable tool for our team to engage in a critical evaluation of the discussions with our partners. This analysis enabled us to identify a more pressing need: To refine the challenge space to ensure the facilitators could deliver a workshop that was coherent and on-point.

Challenge framing helps refine a project, clarifying the problem statement, pinpointing the scope, and defining the desired outcomes. This information acts as a compass, steering a project team towards more effective decision-making. Taking this into account, we organised challenge-framing sessions with the CTMF facilitators, with the intention of co-designing exercises that would navigate participants through the three themes and elicit thoughtful responses that could provide stimuli for inclusive future visions for AI.

As a group, we developed three exercises for the ‘New Perspectives on AI Futures’ workshops with the following objectives:

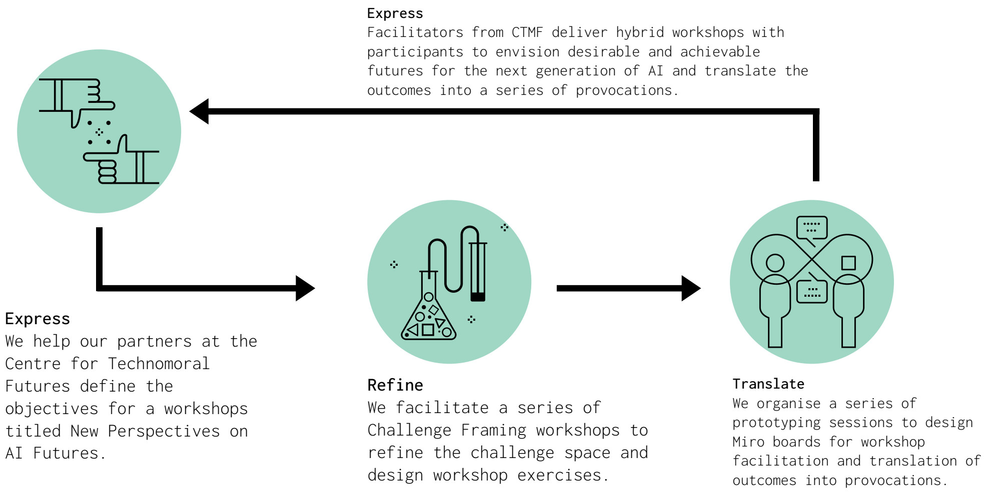
1. Identify current trends and dynamics shaping the future of AI with respect to the aforementioned themes;
2. Identify stakeholders who are underrepresented but contribute to the future of AI in relation to those themes;
3. Identify probable future scenarios by building on the AI trends and perspectives identified in the initial exercise, explore the potential impacts these trends could have on selected stakeholders, and co-create alternative scenarios of preferable futures.

Using the framework, we collectively identified a need for an artefact to document and then translate the workshop outcomes into a series of provocations. These provocations were then to be presented for further consideration at the Edinburgh Futures Conversations[4] and the Scottish AI Summit[5].

We created a series of Miro boards to help the facilitators and participants record the workshop outputs. The boards offered a translation artefact that the facilitators could use asynchronously after the workshops to analyse the discussions and develop cohesive provocations.

Progress
To progress is to identify barriers and design a strategic path forward. This user need is particularly important when working on complex challenges that require careful planning and execution and may include clinics or prioritisation workshops to make informed choices to achieve a project's objectives.

Learn
Finally, we see a need to design opportunities for individuals and groups to learn new skills and acquire new knowledge on using data and design for innovation. Examples of our bespoke educational programmes and activities include guided studios, seminars, executive education programmes.



Navigating user needs using the Co-creation Framework

Overall, the co-designed workshops were successful in offering participants an engaging hybrid format for interaction and creating a welcoming space where diverse points of view were encouraged and freely shared. One participant complimented the facilitators for delivering clear "structure and time management to a very full agenda, without any of the interactions being too overbearing".

This case study is one instance showcasing how the framework helped us identify the co-creation needs of a project with our partners at various stages of the process. By building consensus around the multiple needs, we were able to quickly progress from the initial invitation to collaborate to the actual workshop delivery within an impressive timeframe of just three weeks.

Our Co-Creation Framework has also been instrumental in planning activities in the space of research development where the need to network is critical. We also use the framework in conceptualising events aimed at skills development to help participants learn about and gain proficiency in using design methods in conjunction with futures and foresight.

Leveraging co-creation and offering a tool for effective collaboration

This framework has become an integral part of the lexicon and methodology of our design team. Although it was conceived within a specific interdisciplinary, academic context, its strength lies in providing a versatile tool for reflecting on how co-creation actually works, and focusing on the most fundamental needs and outcomes of a project.

At D+DL, we find the framework is invaluable in planning and directing co-creation activities and as a mechanism to reflect on and evaluate past projects, pivot during a project, or assist a new partner in understanding and embracing a co-creative approach.

As designers, we are trained in iterative ways of working to identify, develop and navigate multiple paths in response to a challenge and the needs of stakeholders. Our Co-Creation Framework is a living artefact that serves as a planning and engagement tool for teams keen on leveraging co-creative methods to collaborate effectively with partners from diverse disciplines, backgrounds and professions.

By using and refining this framework, we provide a structured approach for service designers and other design facilitators to pinpoint effective and inclusive paths for planning co-creation activities with partners. These activities aim to synthesise different forms of data, knowledge and lived experiences to deliver holistic and innovative perspectives on complex challenges.

1 Aguirre, M., Agudelo, N. and Romm, J. (2017) 'Design facilitation as emerging practice: Analyzing how designers support multi-stakeholder co-creation', She Ji: The Journal of Design, Economics, and Innovation, 3(3), pp. 198–209. doi:10.1016/j.sheji.2017.11.003.

2 Elsden, C., Tallyn, E. and Nissen, B. (2020) 'When do design workshops work (or not)?', Companion Publication of the 2020 ACM Designing Interactive Systems Conference [Preprint]. doi:10.1145/3393914.3395856.

3 https://www.technomoralfutures.uk/our-story

4 https://efi.ed.ac.uk/events/edinburgh-futures-conversations-the-future-of-artificial-intelligence-shaping-our-ai-futures/

5 https://www.scottishaisummit.com/ai-for-the-next-generation-realizing-an-inclusive-vision-for-scottish-ai

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Service Design Heuristics for Employee Experiences

Creating a compelling workplace

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Creating an engaging and compelling employee experience is a difficult challenge, but not an insurmountable one. By integrating eight proven heuristics, businesses can increase their chances of success, delivering an experience that benefits both the organisation and its workforce.

Challenges facing the employee experience

The typical enterprise fields a bumpy and uneven employee experience. As organisations evolve organically, different teams and departments develop different needs at different times. Because they have their own budgets, departments often implement capabilities tailored specifically to their own needs. These tailored solutions are often so specialised that they do not work well for other units within the organisation.

Executives and centralised IT departments sometimes drive top-down initiatives and design solutions without fully understanding the needs and goals of their intended users. Because these solutions are targeted toward the broader organisation, they are less well-tailored than the solutions developed by individual departments. The gap between what is delivered and what is needed leads to uneven adoption and use.

Because employee experiences tend to evolve in a piecemeal fashion, the result tends to be bumpy and uneven. Three types of gaps emerge:

1. Capability gap where an employee group lacks a certain capability.
2. Implementation gap where an existing capability has not been rolled-out to specific employees.
3. Value gap in which the full value of an implemented capability is not realised due to low adoption.

These three gaps pose two key questions for service designers working within the employee experience:

1. How can we evaluate a current employee experience to identify gaps in the ecosystem?
2. How can we architect a comprehensive service ecosystem for employees?

Addressing these questions effectively can greatly enhance the quality and coherence of the overall employee experience and make it more rewarding for employees and more beneficial for the organisation as a whole. The eight heuristics below help answer these questions.

Background to the heuristics

Based on our work with dozens of medium to large organisations over the last decade, we've identified eight separate heuristics that define and describe the employee experience.

The eight heuristics are grouped into four inter-related couplets, each focusing on different employee behaviours.

1. Experts and expertise: How do employees find information
   a. The system should enable users to discover people knowledgeable in a specific topic.
   b. The system should enable users to discover knowledge captured by an expert pertaining to a topic.
2. Communities and collaboration: How employees work with each other
   a. The system should enable users to participate in communities of interest, practice or excellence.
   b. The system should enable users to collaborate and cooperate on work with others.
3. Apps and tasks: How employees get work done
   a. The system should enable users to access applications and functionality necessary to get work done.
   b. The system should enable users to know what tasks need attention.
4. Comms and culture: How employees feel part of the organisation
   a. The system should enable users to understand organisational information.
   b. The system should enable users to feel a sense of belonging within the organisational culture.

This proposed methodology is universal and applies to a broad spectrum of employees, including knowledge workers, frontline workers and field workers. It also applies to full-time employees as well as contractors and vendors. These heuristics help ensure workplace solutions align to enterprise goals and enable the design of employee-centred systems that support employee well-being, productivity and innovation.

The eight heuristics feed three key questions about service design for the employee experience:

1. What strategic pre-conditions are necessary to design successful employee journeys?
2. How can employee journeys be designed that encompass the entire employee experience?
3. How does one measure the impact of the systematic design of employee journeys?

In the following section, we examine each heuristic and identify positive examples of each.

Experts and expertise: How employees find information

Our clients consistently highlight finding information as a primary issue within their employee experiences. Often, they frame these problems as search or content issues before they've been explored in detail.

When working day-to-day, employees need information to complete tasks. Employees have two ways to find this information. They can look for the information, or they can ask someone. Employees either look for experts who know the answer or for expertise captured in documents and systems.

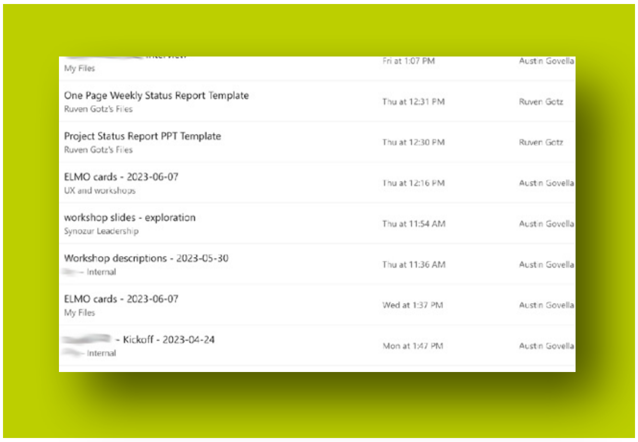
Experts: The system should enable users to discover people related to a topic

Based on employee needs and organisational culture, employees may search for people in different ways.

Most organisations support the ability to search for someone by name. We see this inside work email systems such as Google's Gmail which use the 'To:' field to search the directory of all employees within an organisation.

Some organisations also support searching for employees by topic or skill. Searches bring up all employees who match

Screenshot by Microsoft



Microsoft OneDrive displays related users when you view a document

a topic or skill, based on how they are categorised. Employees may also search for people by project or department.

Lastly, it can be useful to know which employees are associated with a piece of content or functionality, so that they can contacted. For example, Microsoft OneDrive shows who performed the last activity associated with a file.

While we often focus on the digital realm, these heuristics apply to the physical world as well. Employees in a physical building may need to locate a specific person or role, and looking them up on a board or in a notebook could be more effective than having to find a computer or navigate a people directory on their phone.

Examples include:

— People directory listing people and their profiles
— Topic areas showing related people
— Documents showing author or most recent editor

Expertise: The system should enable users to discover knowledge captured by an expert related to a topic

Just as with people, employees search for information in documents and content in different ways. Employees may search for content by name in much the same way they search for people by name. Search systems also enable search by subject or topic via keyword search.

Within physical buildings, the question "How efficiently can employees find the information they need?" often arises. The daily menu, instructions for in-room A/V equipment, and building signage all play critical roles in how employees experience and interact with the physical environment.

Lastly, it can be useful to know what documents are associated with a specific piece of content or context, to allow related information to be found. This includes lists of related documents, recent documents and favourites.

Additional examples include:

— Site and document search (Such as Google or Microsoft enterprise search tools)
— Topic areas that also show related documents

Communities and collaboration: How do employees work with each other?

Every organisation is fundamentally a group of people, and working alongside others forms a crucial part of how employees get work done. While collaboration remains a prominent and common goal for many large enterprises, most employee interactions occur in various communities.

Formal, informal and ad hoc community interactions enable employees to figure out how to do things, share tips and strategies, and learn new strategies that help drive innovation.

Communities: The system should enable users to participate in communities of interest, practice, or excellence

Communities of interest represent groups (typically self-managed) that employees join when they share an interest. Sometimes these are work-related interests. For instance, many IT organisations had communities of interest around Agile several years ago. These groups also typically form around social topics such as company softball teams or recipe-sharing clubs.

Communities of interest differ from communities of practice that form to share and learn about specific work-related activities. Communities of excellence resemble communities of practice, though they're typically composed of a more exclusive membership and operate in a more centralised fashion.

Importantly, some of these communities are informal and do not appear in the online world. The same group of people you see every day at lunch can constitute a form of ad hoc community, as do the group of people you walk by to and from the break room or stand alongside in an elevator. Though these communities do not have online counterparts, they are just as important to how employees work with each other.

Examples include:

- Ad hoc community channels created in Slack or Microsoft Teams
- Surfacing community posts in a centralised feed such as in Meta Workplace or Microsoft Connections
- Dedicated communities like those seen in Microsoft Engage (formerly Yammer)

Collaboration: The system should enable users to collaborate and cooperate on work with others

Many organisations put a heavy emphasis on platforms to enhance collaboration with enterprise tools offering a range of synchronous and asynchronous methods for employees to communicate and work together. Where communities fuel the weak social ties that seed innovation, collaboration fosters the conditions where innovation emerges.

Meeting rooms and work areas create collaboration spaces in physical environments. A key area of difficulty for many organisations is how to enable hybrid collaboration across digital and physical space.

Examples include:

- Shared workspaces such as documents, task boards and dev ops tools
- Synchronous conversations to coordinate via text (chat) or voice (teleconference)
- Asynchronous conversations via email, chat or comments in documents

Credit: Alvaro Reyes on Unsplash

Physical collaboration is just as important as digital collaboration.

Apps and tasks: How do employees get work done?

In IT-centred organisations, applications and task systems are the main focus. Bullet lists of features are easy to choose from and check off by implementing the appropriate platform or suite of applications. In addition to enabling work with applications, employees also need a way to know what work needs doing, a way to communicate and track tasks.

Apps: The system should enable users to access applications and functionality necessary to get work done

Because they are so concrete, many workplace experiences focus on the applications and functionality that employees can access. Apps can range from specialist, fit-for-purpose or best-of-breed applications to general applications that enable a broader range of functionality like spreadsheet and word processor software that is routinely used to accomplish all manner of workplace tasks.

Examples include:

- Application suites such as Microsoft 365 or Google Workplace
- Low-code applications built in tools like Appian or Power Apps
- Pro-code applications customised to specific business processes

Tasks: The system should enable users to know what tasks need attention

Beyond having the tools necessary to complete work, employees need a way of knowing what work to do. Many work experiences employ task aggregators such as task boards and ticket systems. Task-specific notifications fall into this camp, communicating to employees about urgent or pressing tasks that need completion.

Task boards have physical counterparts, as well. Kanban boards began their lives on office walls, and hospitals now make frequent use of status boards mounted on walls.

Examples include:

- Notifications on intranet homepages or via email that are pushed to employees
- Issues assigned in task boards like Jira or Azure DevOps that users navigate to see

Comms and culture: How do employees feel part of the organisation?

A cultural framework connects employees and their work into something more than the sum of their parts. This whole is the organisation. While top-down communications and bottom-up cultural happenings seem natural, not all organisations generate the comms or culture necessary to create engaging workplace experiences.

Communications: The system should enable users to understand organisational information

Beyond information needed to complete work, employees also need information about the organisation. This organisational literacy enables employees to feel a sense of belonging to the organisation through information, events and news.

Examples include:
— CEO blog
— Corporate communications
— Information screens in elevators

Culture: The system should enable users to belong to an organisational culture

Where communications shares what happens as part of organisational culture, it's critical to actively include employees in the events and news that make up that culture and provide opportunities to participate in company events such as 'town halls', communities of interest, or extracurricular activities.

Examples include:
— Communities of interest
— Team and location-related events
— 'Town hall' events

Leveraging employee experience heuristics in service design

These eight heuristics describe the holistic employee experience and can support service design of workplace experiences in several ways.

Evaluate an employee experience to identify gaps

Use these heuristics to identify whether and what kind of gap exists in the employee experience. This analysis can be done at the organisational level or at the level of specific groups. For example, you could evaluate whether frontline workers have an experience gap with collaboration capabilities. Knowing whether a gap is a capability gap, an implementation gap, or a value gap helps map the state of the organisation's uneven employee experience.

Architect more comprehensive service ecosystems

These heuristics document the pieces of a holistic employee experience and can be used by service designers as a kind of checklist when architecting a comprehensive employee experience.

	Experts & Expertise	Communities & Collaboration	Apps & Tasks	Comms & Culture
Innovation	X	X		
Productivity	X		X	
Efficiency	X		X	
Retention		X		X

Target specific heuristics to support specific organisational goals

Service designers can take advantage of the piecemeal evolution of employee experiences and focus their efforts in specific areas where they can have the most impact. For example, if working to improve innovation, designers might focus on improving the experience via experts and expertise. The following table maps employee experience heuristics to common goals.

Conclusion

Although the employee experience is destined to emerge unevenly across an enterprise, these eight heuristics provide a method to assess, understand and improve what that terrain looks like. These eight heuristics offer a pathway to successful employee experiences for both the business as well as the employee.

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Using Service Design to Shape Employee Journeys

Principles and methods to meet employees’ needs

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Employees are key to an organisation's success. While traditional models prioritise customers and shareholders, we now recognise the importance of valuing employees as well. This article describes how service design principles and methods can be applied to shape the employee experience, discusses the role of leadership in the employee journey, and lists three cases in which companies focussed on the experience of the staff, not only of customers. We aim to identify methods for holistic employee experiences, enhancing engagement, productivity and satisfaction, whilst still supporting the organisation's long-term sustainability and competitiveness.

Service design meets organisational development

To design employee journeys that cater to diverse stakeholders, it is essential to integrate service design principles with organisational development strategies. Service design focuses on shaping seamless, valuable experiences for service beneficiaries by understanding their needs and expectations, while organisational development emphasises the processes and structures that enable organisations to achieve their goals. By combining these two approaches, organisations can create employee journeys that:

- **Recognise not all employees are equal**. Recognising the diverse needs, preferences and expectations of employees, in order to design experiences that cater to these differences.
- **Are goal-oriented.** Aligning employee journeys with organisational objectives, ensuring that employees are engaged and committed to achieving those goals.
- **Are adaptive.** Ensuring that employee journeys can evolve and adapt to changing organisational needs and external factors, such as market conditions, technological advancements, or new regulations.

Aspect	Service Design for Customers	Service Design for Employees
Focus	Primarily aimed at improving the customer experience by understanding their needs, preferences and pain points, and designing services accordingly.	Primarily aimed at enhancing the employee experience by understanding their needs, preferences and pain points, and designing work processes and environments accordingly.
Objective	Increase customer satisfaction, loyalty and engagement, ultimately leading to increased revenue and market share.	Improve employee satisfaction, engagement and productivity, ultimately leading to better performance, lower turnover and increased innovation.
User-Centric Approach	Involves extensive research, empathy mapping and user journey mapping to understand customer needs and expectations throughout the service delivery process.	Involves understanding employee needs, motivations and expectations throughout their work journey, from onboarding to growth and development opportunities.
Touchpoints	Customer touchpoints include websites, mobile apps, physical stores, customer service interactions, advertisements and social media.	Employee touchpoints include internal communication platforms, workspaces, HR systems, performance management processes and training programs.
Tools and Techniques	Common service design tools for customers include personas, customer journey maps, service blueprints and prototyping.	Common service design tools for employees include employee journey maps, service blueprints, workplace design and employee feedback loops.
Stake-holders	Stakeholders primarily include customers, customer-facing staff, management and shareholders.	Stakeholders primarily include employees, managers, HR personnel and top management.
Metrics and Evaluation	Metrics for evaluating customer service design include customer satisfaction scores, Net Promoter Score (NPS), customer retention and acquisition rates.	Metrics for evaluating employee service design include employee satisfaction scores, engagement levels, turnover rates and productivity measures.

Table 1. Differences designing for customers and for employees

Best practices for designing holistic employee journeys

Our research has identified several best practices for designing employee journeys that enhance engagement, productivity and satisfaction (see Table 1):

- **Conduct research.** Understand the needs, expectations and preferences of employees and other stakeholders through interviews, surveys and observations. Ensure that the design of employee experience isn't based on assumptions and speculation.
- **Map the lifecycle.** Create a comprehensive map of the employee journey, highlighting touchpoints and opportunities for improvement (see Table 2).
- Map the ecosystem. The ecosystem map including employees and other actors enables service designers to determine the leverage points that can deliver higher impact within the system.
- **Co-create with employees.** Involve employees in the design process, and encourage their input, feedback and suggestions for improvement.
- **Implement a continuous improvement approach.** Regularly evaluate and refine employee journeys based on feedback, performance metrics and evolving needs.
- **Communicate effectively.** Ensure that employees are aware of their journey, understand the organisation's goals and objectives, and feel supported in their growth and development.
- **Foster a culture of collaboration and innovation.** Encourage cross-functional collaboration and the sharing of ideas, resources and best practices to enhance the employee experience.

The role of leadership in employee journeys

Leadership plays a crucial role in the design and implementation of holistic employee journeys. Effective leaders must possess the vision, skills and commitment to drive the necessary changes within their organisations. They should be:

- **Champions of employee experience.** Leaders must recognise the importance of employee journeys and be strong advocates for their design and implementation. They should communicate the value of investing in employee experiences to other stakeholders and work to secure the necessary resources and support.
- **Strategic thinkers.** Leaders should take a holistic view of the organisation, understanding how various functions and processes intersect and influence one another. They should also be able to anticipate future challenges and opportunities and adapt employee journeys accordingly.
- **Empathetic and inclusive.** To design employee journeys that cater to diverse stakeholders, leaders must be empathetic, understanding the diverse needs and expectations of employees. They should also promote a culture of inclusion, ensuring that all employees feel valued and respected.
- **Agile and adaptive.** Leaders should embrace change and be willing to adjust their strategies and tactics to address evolving needs, expectations and market conditions. They should also encourage their teams to be agile and responsive.

Case studies: Successful implementation of holistic employee journeys

Several organisations have successfully implemented holistic employee journeys, resulting in improved engagement, productivity and satisfaction. Some notable examples include:

- **Google** – The tech giant is renowned for its employee-centric approach, offering perks such as free meals, on-site gyms and generous parental leave policies. Google also invests heavily in employee development, offering a wide range of training programs and resources to support career growth.
- **Patagonia** – This company is committed to creating a positive work environment that fosters employee well-being and sustainability. Patagonia offers benefits such as on-site childcare, flexible work schedules and opportunities for employees to participate in environmental activism.
- **Salesforce** – Salesforce uses a robust feedback system to regularly assess and improve employee experiences, leading to high levels of employee satisfaction and retention.

Stage 1: Recruiting and Hiring

- The candidate sees the job opening and applies online
- HR screens the candidate's application and resumes
- The candidate is invited to a phone or video interview
- The candidate is invited to an in-person interview with the hiring manager
- The candidate is offered a job and negotiates terms
- The candidate accepts the job offer

Stage 2: Onboarding and Orientation

- The new employee completes paperwork and reviews company policies
- The employee receives an orientation about the company culture and values
- The employee meets their manager and colleagues and learns about their roles and responsibilities
- The employee receives training and support to become familiar with the company's systems and processes
- The employee sets goals and expectations with their manager

Stage 3: Daily Work

- The employee receives regular feedback and coaching from their manager
- The employee collaborates with colleagues on projects and tasks
- The employee receives training and development opportunities to enhance their skills and knowledge
- The employee has access to resources and tools to perform their job effectively
- The employee contributes to the company's goals and objectives

Stage 4: Growth and Development

- The employee has regular performance evaluations with their manager
- The employee receives feedback and recognition for their achievements
- The employee is given opportunities for career growth and advancement
- The employee is encouraged to participate in company-wide initiatives and projects
- The employee feels valued and supported in their career development

Stage 5: Departure

- The employee decides to leave the company
- The employee provides notice to their manager and HR
- The employee participates in an exit interview to provide feedback on their experience
- The company provides support and assistance to the employee in their transition
- The company analyses feedback and identifies areas for improvement in their employee journey.

Table 2. Touchpoints in a typical employee journey

Conclusion

By adopting a systems thinking approach and integrating service design principles with organisational development strategies, organisations can shape holistic experiences that cater also to employees. By implementing best practices, fostering a culture of collaboration and innovation, and embracing effective leadership, organisations can drive long-term sustainability and competitiveness while delivering value to employees, customers and shareholders alike.

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Turning Workplaces into Employee Service Experiences

How to change the system without being its owner

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Illustrations by Jennifer Greczylo, Analyst Consultant User Research / UX Design, Infosys Consulting.

The future of work is a highly debated topic, and rightly so. Finding the best talent, dealing with their changing expectations towards employers, and the increasing (hopefully not yet exclusive) importance of technology for work mean that we need to focus on creating and actively shaping an optimal working environment. This is a challenge.

Well-educated talents no longer describe their expectations of their work environment in terms of just a different work-life balance. 'Career growth', 'learning and development' and 'challenging and impactful work' are the most important factors for job seekers aged between 18 and 34 when considering new positions.[1]

In parallel, hybrid working has become the new normal. It's not about an 'either or', it's about the best interplay of in-office and remote work with their respective pros and cons.

In this context, collaboration between people, teams and regions has also become one of the most important factors for happy employees.[2] Technology is the enabler of all of this. Miro became one of the 20 most valuable global private companies with a network of 35 million users and 130,000 customers. It already counts more than 100 app integrations, with platforms such as Atlassian, Cisco Webex, Google Workplace, Microsoft Teams and Zoom.[3] Imagine what else will happen in the future when open AI becomes normal in the workplace, and arrives at the same or even faster pace.

Having said this, we need to look at the real situation of companies. Many, especially large enterprises, manage a very complex IT infrastructure and outdated security network, often with local installations instead of flexible, cloud-based solutions. Here, employees' high expectations clearly collide with well-intentioned IT routines. Dealing with IT solutions feels more like a waste of time and is often associated with dissatisfaction due to the lack of support. This not only frustrates new and existing employees, but also inhibits their commitment to collaboration and their contribution to business innovation.

We need to create a truly employee-centric experience when designing modern workplaces. There are two possible answers to this:

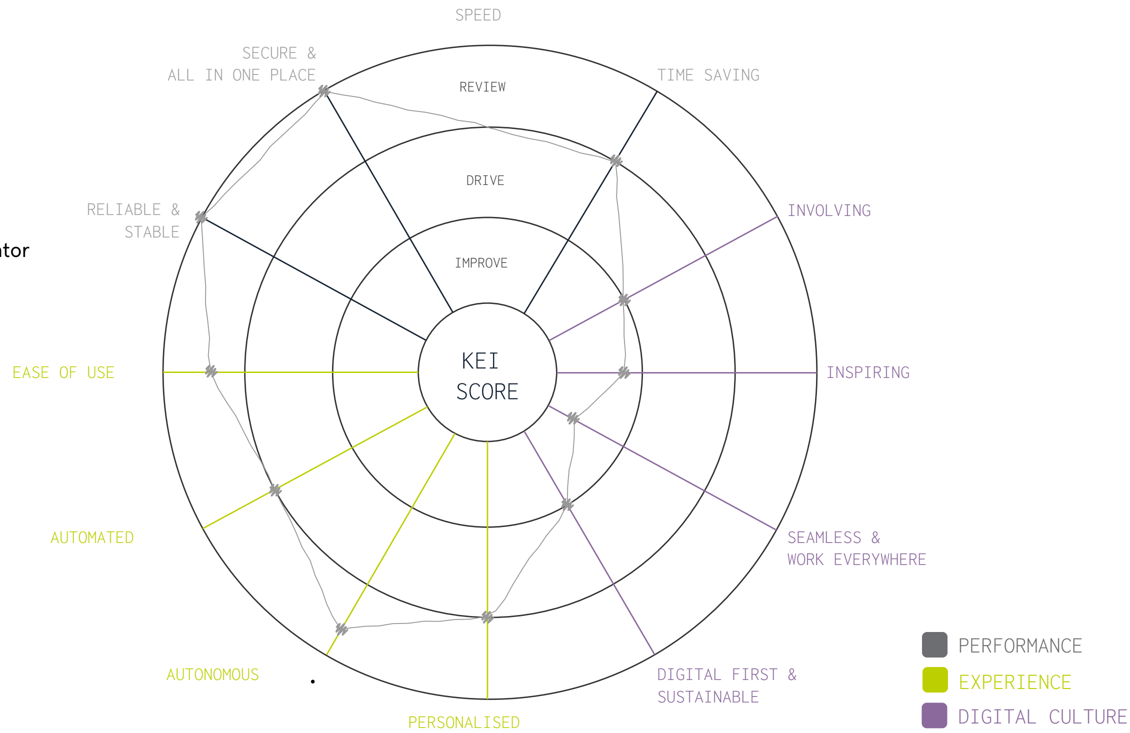

Fig. 1: The Key Experience Indicator framework for workplace transformation

— Using service design as a core competency in workplace transformation projects.
— Creating a framework of metrics to continuously analyse the true employee experience.

Designing a modern workplace means technology should be invisible to the user. The best experience is when the workplace simply works. But without having ownership over the different interfaces, how can such an experience be designed, measured, and further improved? It is quite difficult to orchestrate an ecosystem of different standard software solutions and internally developed applications. It is also not possible to develop a consistent, intuitive UX and UI based on just one interface. It is much more a matter of designing the interplay between these applications in which the interaction for the employees is reduced to the greatest extent possible. The goal must be to create free space for actual work, instead of interrupting it with confusing, incomprehensible employee journeys.

To be successful, service design and data analysis need to work together. Service design methods are about identifying, in dialogue with employees, the important processes and real issues in their daily work with the workplace equipment, as well as developing ideas on how to better manage them. Supporting data collection is about analysing improvements along internal processes and against corporate goals.

If we could save even one minute of employee time in a company with over 50,000 employees, removing struggles with processes, we would save about four months of working time in total. That time could be better used to build more knowledge, and save cost and effort of helpdesk support. This shows how important it is to look at the metrics behind the processes very closely and continuously.

Let's start with measurement to explain this from experience.

Measuring employee experience across different, isolated applications

Derived from the Google 'Heart' framework, we define the Key Experience Indicators (KEI) for a workplace transformation. What goal are we aiming for? What signals indicate success? Which metrics support the insight? As mentioned above, this is not just about measuring ease-of-use and happiness. It is also about collaboration and innovation. The KEI framework tackles three areas:

— **Performance** – Working with a cloud-based workplace device must be timesaving, faster than previous devices, and everything must run reliably and securely.

— **Experience** – The modern workplace should become much easier, and tiresome things should be automated as much as possible so that users can act even more autonomously with contents and features which are personalised to individuals' ambitions.
— **Digital culture** – This new experience enables employees to move to a truly digital way of working that allows them to work from anywhere and still be inspired by other colleagues and feel truly involved.

Behind all three KEI clusters, and the 12 specific KEIs, are concrete questions about what to consider and what to achieve. These questions are like guiding principles for all the different work streams in a project, shifting the understanding of 'good performance' within the project from an isolated view to a truly open, employee-centric one.

Therefore, the KEI framework ensures that all workstreams involved are aligned in the same direction, rather than just looking at service level agreements which are for internal quality assurance between all the stakeholders, but don't always affect real users.

The real challenge is to identify all the metrics behind the KEIs, as well as the sources behind the metrics. Real insights often come from comparisons between different metrics.

For example, in one transformation project, after improving the guidelines, more employees indicated in a survey that the instructions were helpful, while the number of requests to the help desk to understand the process decreased.

In another example, after streamlining the device ordering process in terms of explaining the right device per employee and tightening the ordering process itself, the 'time to order' was cut in half. Lastly, after a certain number of device introductions in another example, the Net Promoter Score (NPS) indicated that the service line could no longer optimally handle all requests, so delivery had to be more balanced. Insights cannot be derived from measurements alone. Context and qualitative feedback must be considered; findings should be reviewed, and biases identified and interpreted together. The key figures must support decision-making in this process.

The KEI dashboard, visualised via Microsoft's 'Power BI', is a live companion in this process, offering a finger on

PERFORMANCE

Time saving
· Does the system not interfere with my tasks and work?
· Does it feel seamless in terms of my usage?
· Does using the workplace make me faster in any way than before?

Speed
· Does the system start up quickly?
· Does the system always respond immediately?
· Does the interaction between applications work quickly?

Secure & all in one place
· Is there no data loss?
· Do I always have easy access to my data/files?
· Do I always have an overview of where to find what?

Reliable & stable
· Have I never experienced a device crash?
· Are there no app crashes?
· Does no app prevent me from continuing my work?

EXPERIENCE

Ease of Use
· Is the new workplace fun and easy to use?
· Are all information consistent and comprehensible across all channels?
· Is the look and feel always consistent across all channels?

Automated
· Are there automations that reduce my workload?
· Are the automations always traceable?
· Is automation offered consistently across all apps?

Autonomous
· Do I always know how to start new processes?
· Do I always know where to find guidance and help?
· Can I always intervene, stop or reconfigure any automation?

Personalised
· Do I get personalised instructions?
· Is the workplace adapted to my personal skills?
· Can I customise the workplace to my personal preferences?

DIGITAL CULTURE

Involving
· Do I have the chance to give feedback and communicate wishes at any time?
· Are my specific competences in demand?
· Do I feel the benefit of collaboration with colleagues?

Inspiring
· Do I receive new and helpful information?
· Does the new workplace enable me to do things better?
· Do I really experience completely new applications, functions and work habits?

Seamless & work everywhere
· Can I easily connect my device and network anywhere?
· Can I get started immediately without interruption?
· Is the performance always the same?

Digital first & sustainable
· Are all offline processes replaced by digital processes?
· Am I always informed about all of company' sustainability achievements?
· Do I get support to improve my own sustainability behaviour?

Fig. 2: Trigger questions to identify the metrics behind the Key Experience Indicators

the pulse of all employees, enabling the team to think more deeply about where there is need and potential for improvement.

Actively shaping employee experience, favouring collaboration and innovation

Based on real live data and instant qualitative feedback from employees, all project workstreams are encouraged to work collaboratively and purposefully on improvements and innovations. This is facilitated by looking at the different employee journeys, each of which is brought into focus. All sub-processes together represent a holistic user lifecycle that we manage; in this case for the employees of a large organisation from onboarding to exit.

The most important journeys in this lifecycle are entering the company, onboarding, optimisation of the workplace, exchange of equipment, working off-site or abroad, leading as an expert, and leaving the company. These specific employee journeys guide us in dedicated workshops where we bring together all internal experiences, including feedback from pilot users as well as from live usage. Resolved pain points finally find their way to new ideas through 'How might we…?' questions.

Fig. 3: The Key Experience Indicator dashboard of a workplace transformation

Again, this is not just about designing better visual interfaces. Rather, it is about linking the existing processes and interfaces provided by, for example, Microsoft's operating system, internal systems such as the intranet, the newsletter and a hardware and software ordering system such as SNOW, as well as diagnostic software like Nexthink which measures the state of the machine in the background.

It should also be recognised that digital collaboration is still maturing. Collaboration tools such as Miro and video conferencing through Microsoft Teams may be established, but there are other cloud-based services like monday.com (which includes the ability to organise the onboarding of a new employee with different topics and colleagues in an engaging way). Special features such as 'Who's in the office today - should I maybe go over?' also reflect a whole new perception of remote and on-site work with hybrid collaboration.

Thanks to this interdisciplinary collaboration, we always find new solutions:

Proactive automation of file management. In this example, a wizard-like tool checks all locally stored files and suggests what to do with them if everything is to be in the cloud in the future. It makes a pre-selection of what

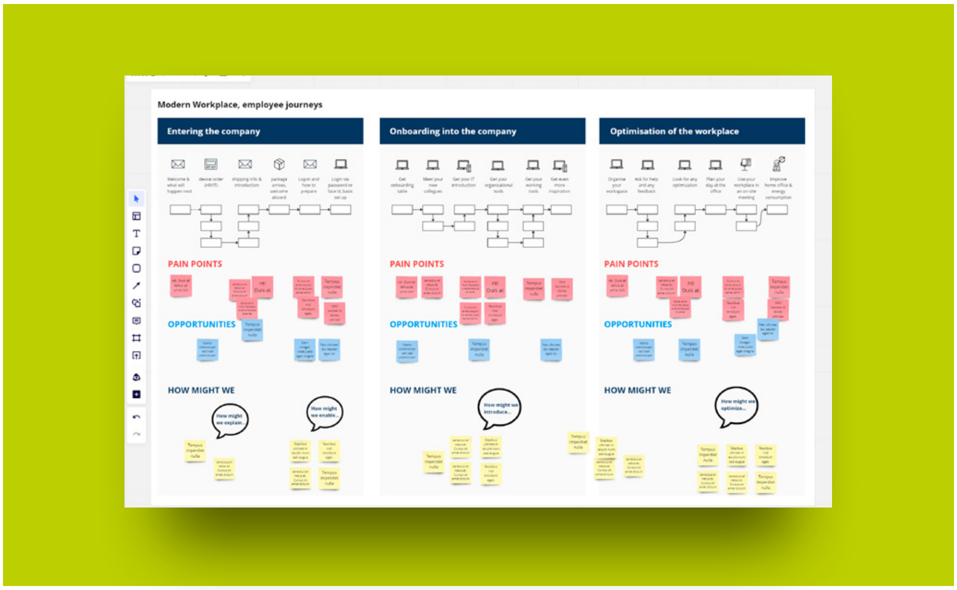

Fig. 4: An employee lifecycle service blueprint

should be removed, what should be minimised and what should be transferred directly to OneDrive. If the process was not started in time, the automation tool reacts and informs the user to initiate the process.

Routing users from operating system interfaces to in-house touchpoints. In another case, it was more about steering usage, in terms of internal policies. Users were prevented from starting an ordering process through a traditional route and instead were directed to an internal ordering tool which managed all licences.

Providing a mobile companion for sensitive steps of the journey. Here, signs demonstrated that users kept old devices for too long, due to fear of not having fallback solutions during device replacement. This negatively impacted the business, because delays in returning old devices are costly. In this case, we encouraged employees to go through the process quickly and complete all the steps on time.

The next stage of ideation was about sustainability and people resilience. New users were trained on how to minimise power consumption, how to best prepare documents for digital reading instead of printing them, and how to take control of work-break balance.

Key insights

Tracking clearly defined indicators is extremely important to maintain the impact of the process design on actual employees. They shine a spotlight on key topics from an employee perspective. Problem solving occurs through the lens of employee experience. Targeted data measurement inspires and supports the ideation process by uniting stakeholder expertise under the goal of best-in-class experience, breaking siloed thinking patterns. Reviewing the same dashboards together triggers discussions and fosters solutions for seamless interaction between touchpoints. And it is precisely this – the focus on the employee journey – that allows the right questions to be asked. Service design provides the central framework for making a real shift towards employee-centricity.

Service design as a core competency in workplace transformation projects

Service design is a key method to design employee experience and optimise it in the long run. Off-the-shelf software solutions often come with their own idea of optimal processes. However, this alone does not help when the entire interaction of applications needs to be orchestrated.

Give concrete examples which demonstrate what employee-centricity means. Demonstrate qualitative and quantitative feedback from users. The impact and the real feedback of the users is always enlightening if routine solutions are resorted to again.

Use the insights along the journey to work together on solutions. The expertise of everyone is extremely important. Each app can and must be part of an overall solution to improve the interaction between the applications in the entire processes.

Creating a KEI framework to continuously analyse the true employee experience

Start with a few metrics and expand them, one by one. Drawing insights from the data is not easy. Individual metrics and their context need to be well thought-out. And only with insight does the desire and ability to add more data increase. If we see, for example, that better feedback on tutorials correlates with fewer support tickets, then the next question automatically becomes: 'Are there differences in the topics?'. Somehow the numbers must always follow the flow of insights in the work teams.

Allow enough time to involve all workstream owners in the project – the different departments from HR to IT, as well as the data source owners. It usually takes much longer than expected for everyone to get involved outside their usual work environment.

Incorporate business philosophy and objectives into the development of metrics in all areas. The vision and mission of the company is crucial to describe the best employee experience in an identity-building way. In the end, employees want to understand what values the company is focusing on and why.

Thanks to well-defined key indicators of what employers want to change regarding their employees, and enabled by continuous measurement with clear visualisation, it will become easier to move away from departmental-only solution-finding processes. Having a shared view of the metrics will unlock collaborative solution-finding, aiming to deliver optimal employee experience and journeys. This mindset shift significantly benefits service designers.

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1 Statista (April 2023)
"Most important factors for job-seekers when considering a new position 2022, by age group."
https://www.statista.com/statistics/989611/workplace-learning-new-skill-learning-united-states-generation

2 Statista Q
"Collaboration Generation – The Rise of Millennials in the Workforce." https://q.statista.com/portfolio/collaboration-generation-the-rise-of-millennials-in-the-workforce

3 Foundation (Sept. 2022)
"How Miro Turned the Whiteboard into a $17.5 Billion Valuation."

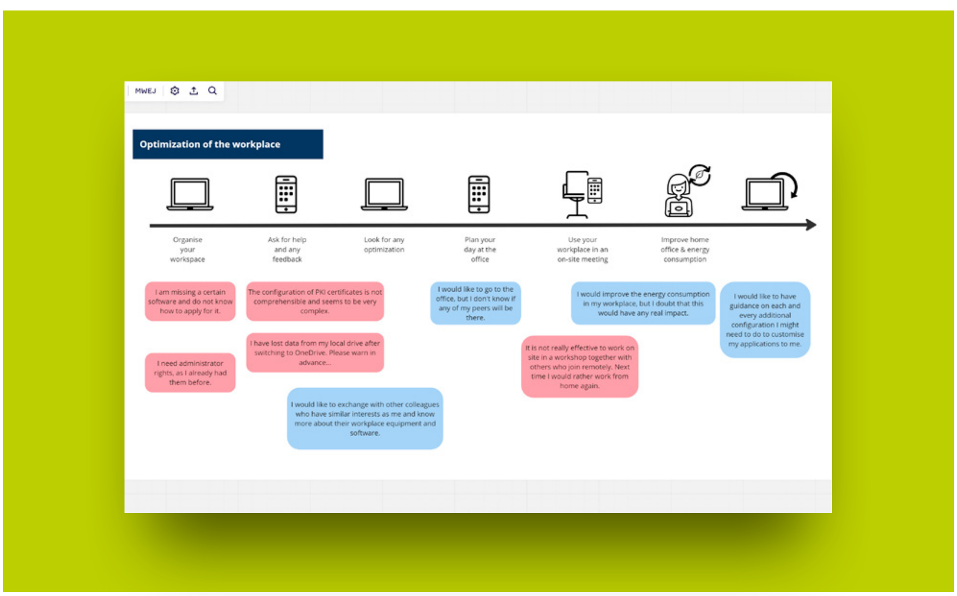

Fig. 5: Pain points and opportunities along 'optimisation of the workplace'

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Design Toolkits for Enhancing Team Engagement

‘Oden’ and ‘Donburi’: Food-inspired approaches to organisational transformation in Japan

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How can an organisation be designed so that individual motivation and ability links with team goals and organisational vision? Achieving this has a significant impact on the performance of the organisation. Can we create tools to help with this goal with a service design approach?

As a task force within the Service Design Network Japan Chapter, we have focused on examples of organisational behaviour in Japan. Our members are from different types of organisations, from large corporations to start-ups, and from enterprise companies to the public sector. Through discussions, we have discovered that since the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, we have all experienced challenges in working together remotely.

With more flexible ways of working becoming possible, the quality of members’ relationships in a team or organisation will directly impact the values the product or service itself provides. What is then a better way for people from different backgrounds to integrate into a team and quickly improve their performance? How can middle managers assist new members to join an existing organisation and contribute early on?

To help answer these questions, we put a service design approach into practice and developed engagement tools to enhance teamwork (see Figure 1). We have identified two situations for different types of organisational forms.

The first situation is where a new member is assigned to a team in an established organisation and encouraged to contribute toward the team’s mission.

The second is where people with different skill sets carry out a project to achieve a goal while developing mutual understanding in a relatively short-term project.

With these two types of teams, we developed online engagement tools, and through this practice, we validated their effectiveness in real-life business situations.

‘Oden’: A design tool that aligns individual goals and organisational purpose

Oden (Axis Talk) is a design tool that helps align the purpose of a company and team with that of an individual employee. In practice, it aims to enhance team members’ motivation towards assigned jobs through achieving appropriate job assignments and team dialogue. This approach resembles how the traditional Japanese dish Oden skewers different ingredients.

We recommended the tool to team managers facing challenges onboarding newly transferred team members and motivating them during remote working conditions. Equally, the tool assists individuals who struggle with a lack of motivation towards assigned work.

Design of a long-term purpose alignment tool

Why do challenges such as lack of motivation towards work occur? We have identified two reasons: The first is that employees are not positioned in their assigned work to achieve personal goals. For example, this occurs when an employee has not set a clear goal or is unaware of the connection between their goal and job.

The second is when an employee does not fully understand why their work is vital for the company or team. In this situation, the employee does not understand the direction the company or team should be heading, and cannot envision how they can contribute to the organisation through their work.

To tackle these problems in the long term, we developed a tool that intervenes in regularly assigning jobs at the start of a project. In doing so, we referred to Fujitsu's "PurposeCarving[1]" as an example method of aligning the company's and individuals' purpose, and to Recruit Co.'s "Will-Can-Must"[2] as an example of connecting individual motivation points and job assignments.

Design process for aligning purposes

The tool comprises three stages: 'Discover', 'Assign', and 'Reflection', each progressing in a workshop format (see Figure 2). The most motivating point for individuals when working is named 'motivation trigger' within the tool.

1. **Discover** – explore individual sources of motivation. Each member chooses three motivation trigger cards from the deck (from around 20 different types of motivational sources at work, such as 'demonstrate leadership and motivate others', 'take on challenges', or 'contribute to the society'), and then expresses the reason for their selection in their own words. The member then shares their experiences that fulfilled the motivational points, as well as what they would like to challenge to develop themselves further. Through sharing and questioning their motivational triggers, other team members gain a deeper understanding of what the person is striving for.
2. **Assign** – assigning tasks to enhance motivation triggers. The manager strategically assigns tasks tailored to enhance each team member's motivation triggers. These assignments are presented to the team with a comprehensive explanation of why each job was explicitly chosen. The manager also highlights the challenge points within the tasks. Furthermore, the manager explains each job's significance for the company and the team.

Fig. 1: The design concept of our toolkits

How might we link the motivations and abilities of individuals?

The original Japanese dish that inspired the tool kits	おでん ODEN  Popular Japanese dish with ingredients stewed in broth on a single skewer, offering unique combinations.	どんぶり DONBURI Popular Japanese dish with steamed rice topped with various ingredients, like Gyudon. They are quick, affordable and taseteful.
Concept of the toolkit	Aligning company and team goals with individual employees' job assignments, enhancing motivation by emphasising the importance of their work.	QUICK, EASY, and DEEP team engagement tool, promoting self-disclosure and understanding towards others, and removing unconscious biases in the team.
Situation of teams	A medium-sized, hierarchical organisation with team members, middle managers and peer members.	Small-scale project teams that seek synergy though collaboration among diverse members.

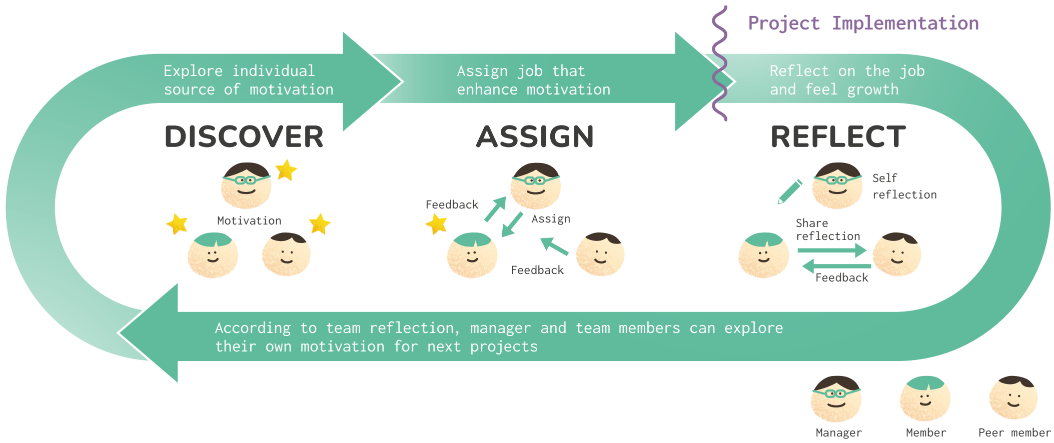


Fig. 2: The design process in the long-term engagement toolkit 'Oden'

The team members are encouraged to ask questions and seek a better understanding of assigned tasks, which allows them to personalise their approach and engagement toward the work.

3. **Reflection** – reflecting on the job and feeling growth. Each team member reflects on their job experience, and shares how their job has contributed to achieving their goals, as well as the learnings they have gained. The manager also reflects on their assignments, while other teammates share newly discovered questions and learnings.

Effectiveness of the tool beyond sourcing motivation

To test the real-life effects of the tool, we conducted a trial with a design team in a large-sized internet service company. The team members in this company were involved in various projects, serving as service designers or UI designers. When managers decide whom to assign to which projects, they are encouraged to consider members' skills, aptitude and availability, using the 'Discover', 'Assign', and 'Reflection' cycle in the assignment process (see Figure 3).

As a result of doing so, the team's engagement indicators in an internal survey improved. We particularly noticed positive ratings for support, relationship, recognition and organisational climate. We believe that the following behavioural changes within the team have led to increased engagement and performance:

— Managers now allocate members with an awareness of what triggers each person's motivation, when previously only resource allocation was a prominent point of consideration.
— Members gained an understanding of the significance of assigned tasks to themselves and to the team or organisation, rather than just doing the assigned work, leading to improved motivation and performance.
— Members started to share knowledge and points of growth between themselves, and demonstrated mutual support for each other, while previously each member did not know what kind of work others were doing.

Key learnings

This trial has demonstrated the effectiveness of 'Oden' as a tool for connecting the company or team purpose and individual paths, as well as strengthening the motivation of each worker. In addition to motivation, by aligning expectations and targets between managers and members, the possibility of using the tool as a medium- to long-term HR development tool, by aligning expectations and targets between managers and members, has also emerged.

On the other hand, we found the 'Discover', 'Assign', 'Reflection' process cycle can be time-consuming and laborious, so we will need to improve the following aspects of the tool to be improved for its continuous use within teams:

— Strengthen the motivation to use the tool itself through the visualisation of behavioural changes
— Devise ways to shorten the work time for each process

'Donburi': A quick, easy and deep team engagement tool

'Donburi' is an engagement tool that we developed to support the engagement of team members from diverse backgrounds. Regular use of the tool has been shown to help team members be more transparent and understanding of each other, and to remove unconscious bias within the team. The tool's name, 'Donburi', comes from the tasty Japanese rice bowl dish, which is served quickly and easily, and illustrates the ease and effectiveness of implementing this tool.

The cycle of self-reflection and understanding of others

We focused on small teams temporarily created on a project basis. In many cases, members from diverse organisations and skill sets assemble to meet the goals of such a project. Therefore, each team member must understand each other's personality in order to create synergy.

To support this, we devised a loop model that enables a cycle of self-reflection and understanding of others in team activities (see Figure 4). The two questions we asked ourselves in designing were as follows:

— For team members to promote self-reflection and understanding of others, how can we open a 'secret window' (what you know but others do not) and a 'blind window' (what you do not know but others know) in the Johari Window[3] model?
— How can we share the information that team members need to know correctly and effectively as the team's status develops, as in the Tuckman model[4]

1 PAST EXPERIENCE
Past experiences when the motivation trigger was activated

2 FUTURE EXPERIENCE
Future experiences needed to enhence the triggers

3 MY MOTIVATION TRIGGER
The most motivating point for the individual when working

4 CHALLENGES
Challenges that. will enhence the triggers

5 QUESTIONS
Questions and answers about motivation triggers posed from peer members

1 JOB CARD
Information on the project that manager assigns to the member, including what this project means to the company and team

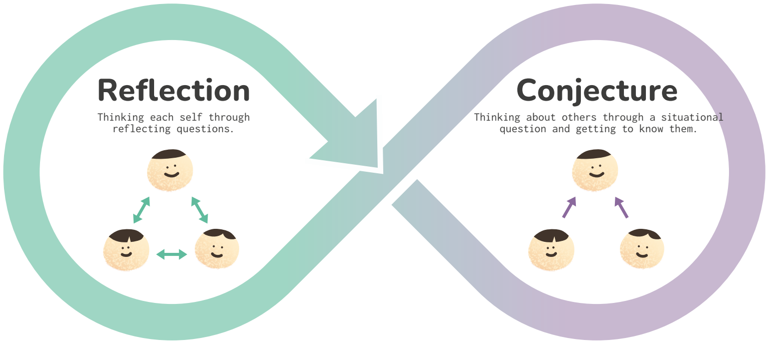
2 MANAGER'S NOTE
The manager's view of the connection between the job and the member's Motivation Trigger and the challenge points in the project

3 MEMBER'S NOTE
Feedback on the assignment and expectations for the project

4 PEER MEMBER'S NOTE
Feedback on this assignment from other members and their possible contribution to this project

Fig. 3: The long-term engagement toolkit 'Oden' in use

Fig. 4: Loop model of self-reflection and understanding of others



By repetitively going through stages of self-reflection (Reflection) and understanding others (Conjecture), mutual understanding is developed.

Three `Donburi' features: Team Directory, Reflection, Conjecture

'Donburi' has three main functions (see Figure 5):

— Team Directory Board - Each member shares what they want other team members to know. To promote direct communication, each person selects an animal icon to represent themselves and decides on a nickname that is unrelated to their job position.

— Reflection Stage - This is a function for understanding and disclosing oneself. All team members express their values by responding to three questions. For example, there are two pairs of items, such as "Should we think in terms of forecasting or backcasting?", regarding how the project should proceed, and team members each express their answer by moving the gauge between the items left or right.

— Conjecture Stage - For one selected member, the other members guess how this person would respond. For example, open questions like: "What would you do if your computer broke down the day before your presentation?" After sharing their guesses, the target member chooses the guess closest to their idea and gives a reason. The target member changes each time, and eventually, all team members become the subject of guesses.

We recommend that the 'Donburi' tool be used continuously by setting aside about ten minutes during regular project meetings during the duration of the project. The question sets for the 'Reflection' and 'Conjecture' stages are designed to match different team stages: 'Formative', 'Disruptive', 'Unifying' and 'Functioning'. The team facilitator can pick questions according to the team's current situation.

Benefits to team members

We tested 'Donburi' with several project teams to reflect its impact. First, we asked team members to complete a survey on the state of their teams before and after using the tool. We observed a positive change in the individual's awareness of 'collaborative problem solving'. In particular, there was a significant change in attitudes toward 'identifying and resolving obstacles among team members'. In addition, one commented in an in-depth interview with users, "Since using the tool, we have also started to communicate more casually online".

Our learnings

The case studies indicate that 'Donburi' facilitated self-understanding and understanding of others in teams. Furthermore, evidence showed that regular tool use positively affected team communication. We plan to conduct further research on how these behavioural changes can contribute to project outcomes.

Co-design for everyone to work in self-directed and autonomous manners

The two toolkits can improve employee and team performance by effectively meeting employee needs in the three components of Self-Determination Theory[5], which guides the strengthening of work motivation: 'Autonomy', 'Competence', 'Relatedness' and team performance. Those who apply the tools can effectively increase autonomy, self-efficacy and relationships within their organisations.

Furthermore, these tools help match values with work, leading to the personalised and autonomous execution of work. They also help establish a connection between action switches, skills and work, which leads to a sense of personal expectations and an increased image of success. Finally, the tools provide a tangible form of mutual support and room to help each other, leading to cooperative behaviour.

Our toolkits support a holistic approach to service design, focusing on the customer's viewpoint and backstage operations. They aim to improve employee motivation and engagement with the team and organisation, leading to higher employee satisfaction and improved quality of service.

Both toolkits are available for free as Miro templates[6]. We welcome you to try them and share your experience and feedback for further improvements.

Acknowledgement

We would like to thank the members of the SDN Japan Chapter's task force on Behaviour Change and Organisational Design for their help in writing this article and Professor Takeyama from Keio University and co-chair of the SDN Japan Chapter for his supervision.

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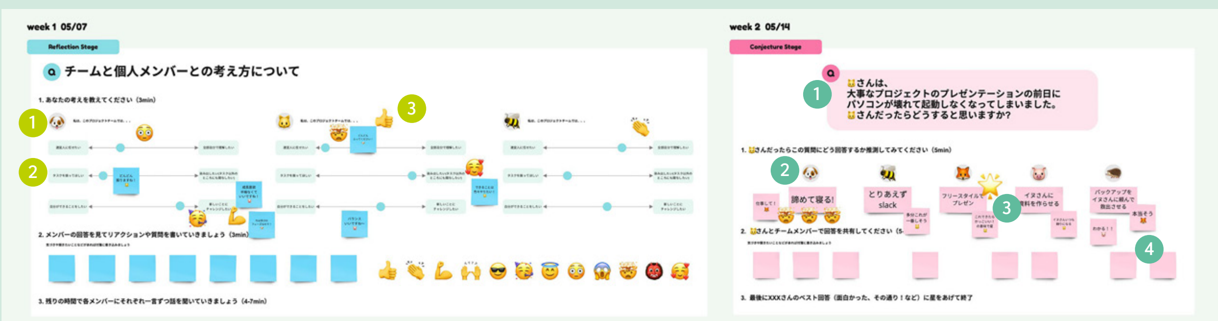
1 The key to making DX a reality is in defining 'individual purposes' (https://corporate-blog.global.fujitsu.com/fgb/2021-04-23/the-key-to-making-dx-a-reality-is-in-defining-individual-purposes)
2 Embracing and Celebrating Ideas: Talent Development Initiatives https://recruit-holdings.com/en/blog/post_133
3 The Johari Window (Luft & Ingham, 1961) is a framework for self-knowledge disclosure and feedback often used to assist in understanding and improving interpersonal communication and relationships.
4 The Tuckman model (Tuckman, 1965) is a stage model of group development over time. 'Donburi' established four stages of communication themes: 'Forming', 'Storming', 'Norming' and 'Performing'.
5 Center for Self-determination Theory (SDT) https://selfdeterminationtheory.org/theory
6 Toolkit templates in Miro https://miro.com/miroverse/profile/sdnj_behaviorchange



1 EMOJI
Place each member's emoji

2 QUESTION
Express personal opinion between two given answers by sliding the dot

3 REACTION
After each team member has provided their response, write down reactions or impressions on sticky notes based on their teammates' answers

1 QUESTION
Pose a question regarding how a teammate would handle a particular situation

2 EMOJI
Each team member posts their guesses

3 BEST ANSWER
The questioned person awards a star mark to the best guess

4 REACTION
Other team members write down their thoughts and response

Fig. 5: Usage of the 'Donburi' tool

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User Research with Generative Tools

Understanding users' latent needs and desires

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Generative research tools are qualitative research methods that are not focused on a specific service or product, but more on end users' lives, supporting the creation of well-rounded pictures of those users, including their aspirations, dreams and desires.

Different research phases

When looking at the 'double diamond' model, we can see the importance of involving users throughout the design process in order to create services and products that revolve around them. The model includes both the research/empathy phase and the validation phase, which each consist of user research. However, not all user research fulfils the same purpose.

For example, validation or 'evaluative' research can focus on a specific problem that is already identified, or can be used to gather feedback on a pre-existing solution. Depending on when evaluative research is conducted in the design process, the information gathered will help you modify and improve your service or product design.

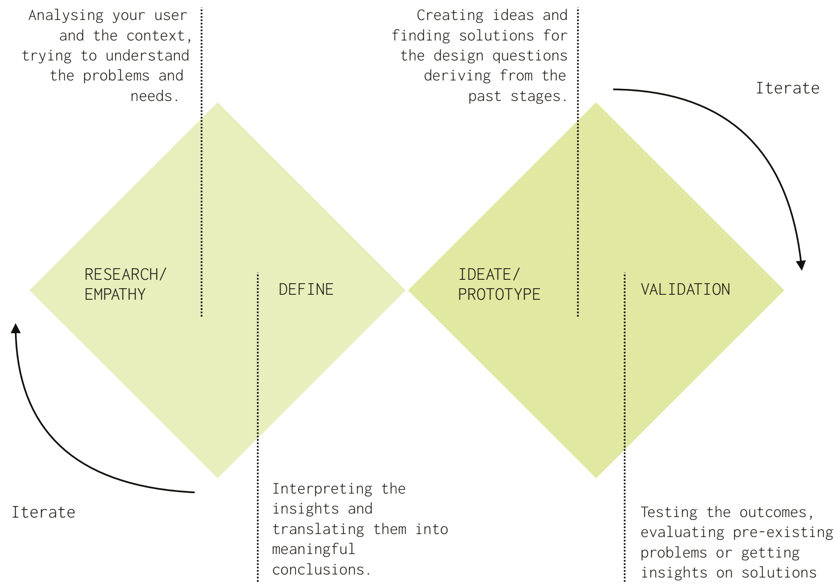
The 'empathy' phase on the other hand, is all about uncovering unknown problems and trying to understand and analyse users, their unique needs and which services could benefit them. To do that, research tools can be applied to elicit those needs, fulfilling the human-centred design approach that underpins the double diamond model.

Understanding people's dreams and feelings

Generative research tools such as context mapping or diary studies are a great way to uncover those needs and desires. These so-called participatory research methods elicit users' latent needs on a deeper level, allowing the researcher to learn from the users' behaviours instead of their words.

While evaluative and more conventional research methods are focused on what people do and say (giving insight into present behaviour), generative tools show what the future could look like and offer insight into those users' values. With these approaches, the user is seen as the 'expert of his or her own experiences'.

The tacit and latent knowledge which people find difficult to express are exposed with generative research tools. The basic principle behind them is that people first



The 'double diamond' model showing different research and design stages

make or create something, and then they talk about it. This creates a bridge between what people know, feel and dream. Through memories and storytelling, they become aware of their own behaviour and therefore their latent needs. When uncovered and acted upon properly, these insights can be used to create new, innovative designs.

Elizabeth B Sanders, who came up with the generative research approach wrote, "When all three perspectives (what people do, what they say, and what they make) are explored simultaneously, one can more readily understand and establish empathy with the people who use products and information systems."

When applying a human-centred design approach, generative research tools offer great value because they uncover users' knowledge, dreams and hopes, which can be seen as prerequisites to developing services that people want and need.

Context mapping to sensitise and co-create

Let's look more closely at context mapping, which is a contextual research approach in which users may keep a visual diary using tools such as a camera, or act upon a list of assignments.

These diaries provide insights into people's underlying motivations when going through certain processes or understanding the overall context of their everyday life. They help illustrate who the users really are as human beings, rather than just as customers.

Context mapping as a technique was developed at the Delft University of Technology by Froukje Sleeswijk Visser, and it can be used for various purposes. As shown in Figure 2, context mapping can be used in several situations and serves various purposes.

One of them is to help make users more aware of their own habits and motivations prior to an interview. This allows digging a little deeper during an interview, by referring to assignments carried out during the completion of the diary.

Another purpose of context mapping is to generate inspiration for the design phase. Diary participants can be given small design assignments that will elicit their needs and

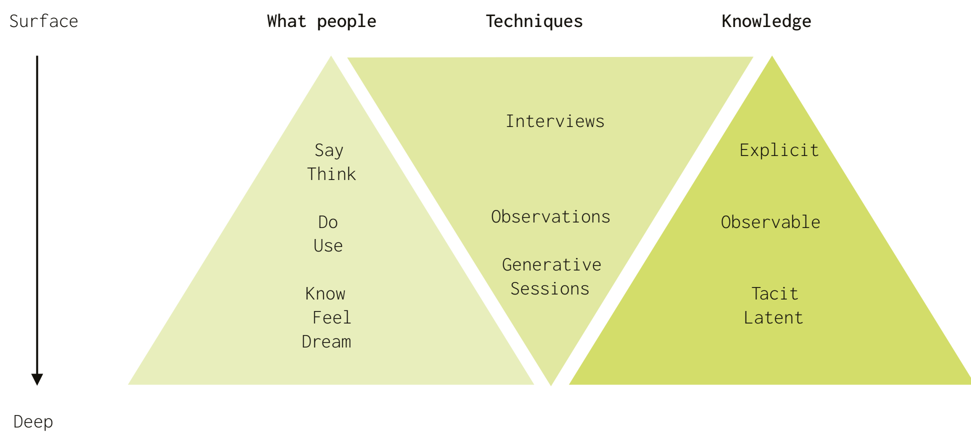


Fig. 1: The 'Generative Research Framework' by Elizabeth B Sanders, showing different techniques and corresponding knowledge

behaviour, which can in turn inform the way future services and products are designed. This is important to emphasise, because we typically focus too much on improving existing services, rather than on the people that have to use them.

Generative research in action

An example of generative research is a project carried out in 2020 and 2022 for the Municipality of The Hague by Radical Research. At first, the project focused on interviewing refugees in the Netherlands about their experiences with the overall integration process. This incorporated tools and the current journey as the starting points for the conversations.

Questions were asked about how the integration journey could be improved and what features could be added, meaning the research was service-centric and not truly human-centric. The researchers behaved as if the users revolve around the service and not the other way around. As a result, many pain points and needs were missed.

In 2022, new research focused on the same integration process was carried out and this time generative tools were used, such as digital diaries and several interviews across the entire integration process. It was discovered that refugees neither want nor use a roadmap of their integration process, but rather wish for someone that will guide them through all the steps and keep in touch with them in an accessible way, such as with WhatsApp.

Thanks to this new generative approach and the insights it delivered, the Municipality of The Hague got a much higher satisfaction rating by refugees and migrants arriving in the Netherlands. The improved service implemented ideas that were inspired by the stories people told about their lives, and these went far beyond specific features. Rich information was available about their goals, their motivations and the 'whys' behind their behaviour. And it was those 'whys' behind their actions that made it possible to positively impact their lives.

Generative research tools are still research tools

The pitfall of generative techniques is that so many explicit ideas are developed that it becomes very tempting to skip the rest of the design phases and elaborate on them without analysis or reflection.

Although the human-centred design approach implies that you should learn from users in order to move forward, it doesn't mean that you should do exactly what the user tells – or in this case shows – you to do.

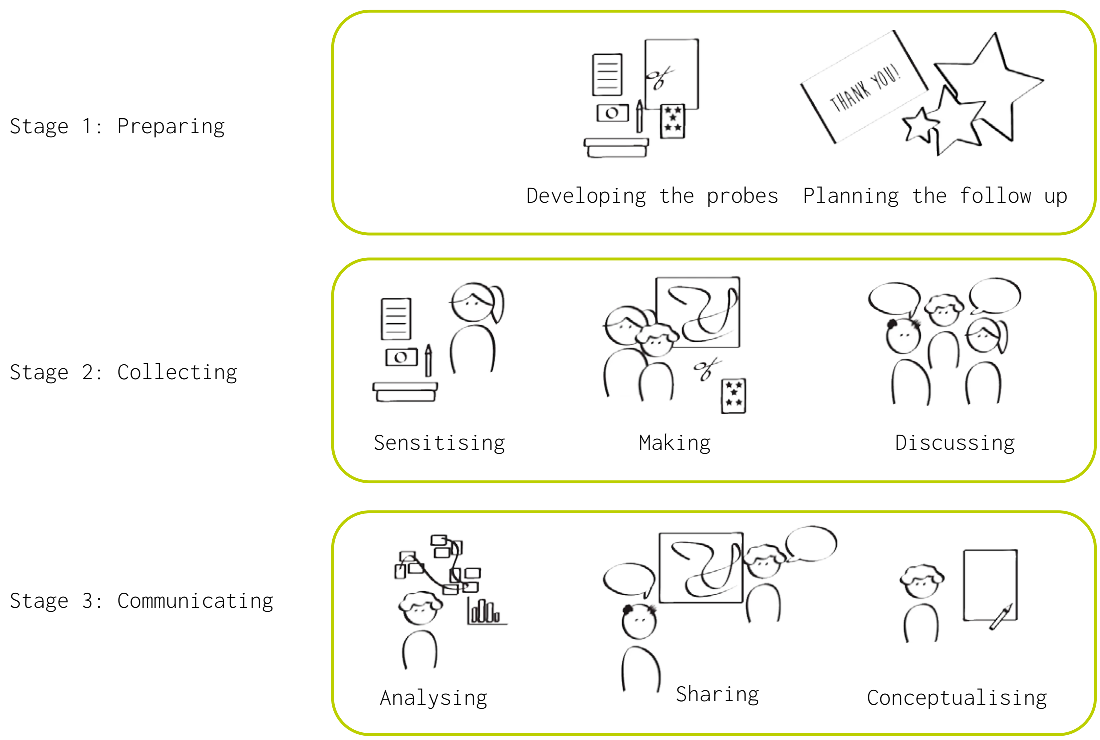
With generative co-creation tools, it may seem easier to skip the defining phase and head straight towards the ideation phase, using the ideas users have come up with, without analysing the underlying motives and latent needs. While users may be experts about their own experiences, they aren't designers. Therefore, we shouldn't treat them as such, and rather recognise generative tools as what they are – a research method that can uncover people's latent needs.

Combining generative techniques with other research techniques

When looking into the possibilities of generative research tools, a variety of options and techniques are available. All of them provide richer insights and ensure that end users are involved during the entire design process.

Because generative techniques often run for a longer period, participants are typically highly motivated and engaged throughout the research process, resulting in reliable outcomes and therefore more reliable designs.

Furthermore, these techniques allow one paint a very good picture of people's memories, present behaviours and future desires. All together, these insights form a key component of the entire design process, and again underline the importance of involving users in creating and improving services.



Credit: Sleeswijk Visser et al 2005

Fig. 2: Procedure of context mapping stages

Education and Research

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Furnishing Fun

Revamping a Retailer's Employee Experience through Service Design

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Service design maximises employee satisfaction and productivity by optimising every touchpoint within an organisation. It cultivates a workplace culture that prioritises employee well-being, happiness and success, making it a powerful approach for enhancing the employee experience.

A service design approach to business transformation

In the competitive business world, organisations often neglect internal operations while focusing on innovation and growth. This oversight can lead to productivity decline, low morale and failure. By fostering openness, investing in employee development, and regularly reviewing operations, organisations can proactively address internal problems for long-term success.

Introducing service design within Gillies

Gillies, a longstanding family-run business in Scotland, is known for its quality goods, exceptional customer service and strong community ties. With a focus on building rapport and fostering customer loyalty, Gillies aims to provide the best customer journey.

Recognising the need to adapt and thrive in the face of change, Gillies embraced service design at a strategic level to unlock team creativity and foster a collaborative culture centred on improving people's experiences.

The senior team at Gillies recognised that they needed to re-design elements of their business, and their vision was to improve performance by unlocking the creativity within Gillies' teams. To achieve this vision, representatives from various levels, roles and locations came together to take part in a service design training experience to focus on:

- Building an improved and streamlined customer journey across stores and online that is truly exceptional.
- Creating a cohesive, collaborative team which works together to find customer-focussed solutions.
- Embedding a culture in which service design is viewed by stakeholders and customers as indispensable, and everyone puts the customer first.
- Developing a capacity for service design that has time to mature and grow, while dedicating resources to key developments.

The very things that give Gillies the reputation they have in their stores contributed to their lack of agility and ability to adapt to new ways of working as the second UK Covid-19 lockdown struck. High customer expectations and a seamless in-store experience did not translate well online, leading to a disjointed customer journey. Internal and external communication channels compounded the issue, causing frustrations for both staff and customers.

The learning experience

A mixture of staff from different roles and stores joined for six interactive, topical sessions which introduced the value of service design in business through a hands-on approach.

Listening sessions

Inspired by Indi Young's approach to understanding people and their purpose, listening sessions provided space and time for Gillies participants to actively and empathically listen to each other.

As Young explains, "Empathic listening is about helping a person feel heard. Feeling heard is a rare thing, so it's powerful. It's used in work to both understand people that your organisation supports and to understand others that you work with. It's the foundation of building relationships and trust."[1]

It was at this time that the shifted from external to internal, and the realisation occurred that in order to provide an excellent customer experience, the right approaches, systems and processes need to be in place for staff.

Design walkabouts

Experiencing the service that they deliver in-store and online from a different perspective, achieved through methods such as 'design walkabouts', allowed for the teams at Gillies to develop an understanding of how customers experience the service, highlighting the pain points that might exist.

Understanding the customer journey allowed participants to quickly identify the barriers experienced by staff which have a direct impact on the customer experience. Participants discovered that staff were trying to navigate a complex landscape behind the scenes, to provide and maintain the service experience excellence that they constantly strive for.

The Philip Family who owns Gillies. Shelia Philip, pictured in the centre, is the granddaughter of James Gillies who founded the company in 1895.

Adoption of new technology for online training

The training experience itself was part of the mindset shift demonstrated by staff. The training was delivered during the pandemic, and as such, everything had to be delivered online. An immersive learning experience was created, and staff embraced online training and the use of technology to develop personal and professional skills. Furthermore, the use of collaborative tools such as Miro opened peoples' eyes to the possibility of using technology to enable better ways-of-working.

Collaboration

Gillies teams, dispersed across multiple locations and departments, lacked cohesive collaboration. Through training and involvement in tasks, a new culture of innovation and improvement emerged. Service design created a compelling vision, aligning stakeholders and enabling the pursuit of long-term opportunities. Staff gained an understanding of the design process, user research data and actionable solutions. Senior leadership support and pilot options prepared Gillies for implementation.

The outputs

Through the training, several outputs were linked to different phases of the employee experience. These included:

— **Link Week** – In the induction phase of a new employee's journey, the first full week is typically spent around the company (e.g. warehouse, deliveries, customer service and admin team/office staff), learning different aspects of the business. This idea came from the realisation that customer experience issues were occurring because staff didn't have a strong enough understanding of the other teams and roles within the business. This new approach would build knowledge, relationships, and the ability to solve customer problems more effectively.
— **Rewards** – Increasing motivation, workplace enjoyment and a positive team mentality was achieved by providing 'reward' activities. Each team would have the opportunity to be rewarded in their own chosen way. It would involve asking teams what activities they would like to take part in, then providing easy ways to sign up, take part and provide feedback on the chosen activities. The need for celebrating success was highlighted through the research that the groups had conducted. This potential solution also incorporated the opportunity for building relationships within the teams.

Employee and customer experience: Two sides of the same coin?

Throughout this experience, the group explored the design challenge 'How might we improve the customer journey and experience at Gillies?'

Despite the initial design challenge being externally focussed on customers, the assumptions made prior to the training would be disproved as the weeks went on. Through the service design process, participants uncovered the fact that the root cause of many of their issues were related to employee experience within the organisation.

Jonathan Creese, the new Customer Experience Manager at Gillies shared his thoughts on the learning experience: "Our initial focus was on the customer journey and customer experience, aiming to make improvements internally and externally. However, we quickly realised that there were challenges with our employee/people experience. Like many businesses, Covid-19 pushed operational structures and sales teams to the limit, with normal ways of working being tested and showing signs of inefficiency. Our focus then changed to address how our company could improve internal IT systems, communication, team working and customer service."

Following user research, Gillies defined their problems, converting them to opportunities, and moved away from a purely external focus. This highlighted the need to:

— Create concise and clear levels of communication throughout the company to ensure uniformity between all stakeholders, ultimately leading to a better customer experience.
— Educate on the benefits of teamwork, both individually and collectively, building a stronger team mentality where everyone sees and feels the benefits.
— Provide a higher level of customer service by more motivated staff.
— Utilise technology as an enabler to improve customer service by implementing a customer tracking system and online portal.

Some of Gillies staff receiving The Courier's Business Award for Family Business of the Year 2022

Following the service design training experience, Gillies created three new senior management roles: Customer Experience Manager, Furniture Area Manager and Carpet Area Manager. These individuals have been put in place to oversee and implement new strategies to improve the overall customer and employee experience. In addition, Gillies have implemented regular manager meetings via Zoom, the standardisation of working methods across the company, coaching workshops, customer experience calls with customers and the introduction of a staff survey. Furthermore, they are exploring different methods of rewarding employees.

The outcomes

Through the successful implementation of learning and taking a service design approach internally, Gillies has transformed their employee experience. This was recently recognised at The Courier's Local Business Awards, where Gillies left with Family Business of the Year 2022. The Family Business Award from The Courier is an annual award given to a family business that has demonstrated exceptional performance, innovation and community involvement. To win the award, a family business must show excellence in areas such as leadership, governance, financial performance and strategic planning.

When considering impact, Jonathan highlighted that one of the most impactful actions is their new employee survey. The feedback received informs the Board of Directors of the current state of employee perception and experience. From this survey, several additional activities have been implemented to address poor scores. This has demonstrated to employees that they are listened to, and that responsive and immediate action is taken to co-design improvements.

Reflections

Gillies' successful transformation of their employee experience through service design can be attributed to several key factors. The openness of both staff and management to embrace new approaches, coupled with a supportive structure, laid the foundation for innovation and collaboration.

Employees were empowered to challenge norms and contribute ideas, fostering a culture of continuous learning. Gillies exemplifies a remarkable commitment to celebrating success and putting employees at the heart of their branding and social media presence. Recognising that their biggest assets are their people, Gillies showcases the accomplishments and stories of their employees as a central part of their brand narrative. By highlighting the contributions and experiences of their staff, Gillies not only strengthened the bond between employees, but also projected an authentic and relatable image to the public.

The transformation journey at Gillies resulted in a group of employee advocates who champion the changes and inspire their colleagues. Gillies fostered ownership and involvement, providing space and time for implementation, at the same time as balancing long-term goals with short-term wins.

Conclusion

Gillies' journey exemplifies the power of embracing new ideas, fostering a supportive culture, and empowering employees to be agents of change. By prioritising relationships, nurturing local talent, and embracing innovative ways of working, Gillies has elevated their employee experience and established themselves as an industry leader. Their success serves as an inspiration for organisations seeking to create a positive and impactful employee experience through service design.

Service design has allowed Gillies to break down a problem, ideate new ideas and propose different solutions. The skills learned allow managers to approach a problem in a more effective manner, and be prepared to re-think and re-imagine ways-of-working.

In Gillies own words, "We are dedicated on improving our internal communication, use of new technology, and equipping employees to deliver an excellent customer experience."

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1 Indi Young, 2022. There Are Many Types of Empathy. Available at https://indiyoung.com/explanations-empathy

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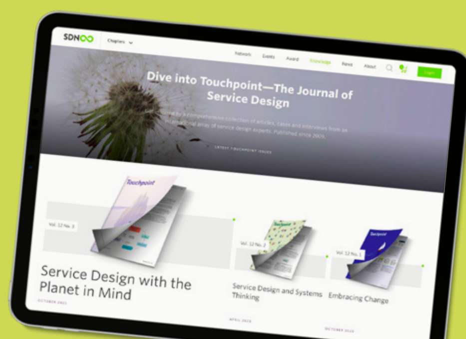

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