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Reading Time: 9 minutes

6 Phases of Design Thinking process

The 6 Step Innovation Process uses Design Thinking to allow you and your teams to develop new solutions to meaningful consumer challenges and opportunities.

Design Thinking is a customer-centric and iterative method for solving complex problems and developing new ideas. With the Design Thinking method, you will succeed in developing a superior solution from the customer's point of view, taking into consideration profitability, practicability, and desirability.

INNOVATION HAPPENS BY

DOING, OBSERVING + ITERATING.

Leading design and innovation firms and many companies follow structured innovation approaches to uncover options for growth and new guest experiences. The use of a process to unleash creativity is called Design Thinking. To unleash creativity these five steps are commonly used.

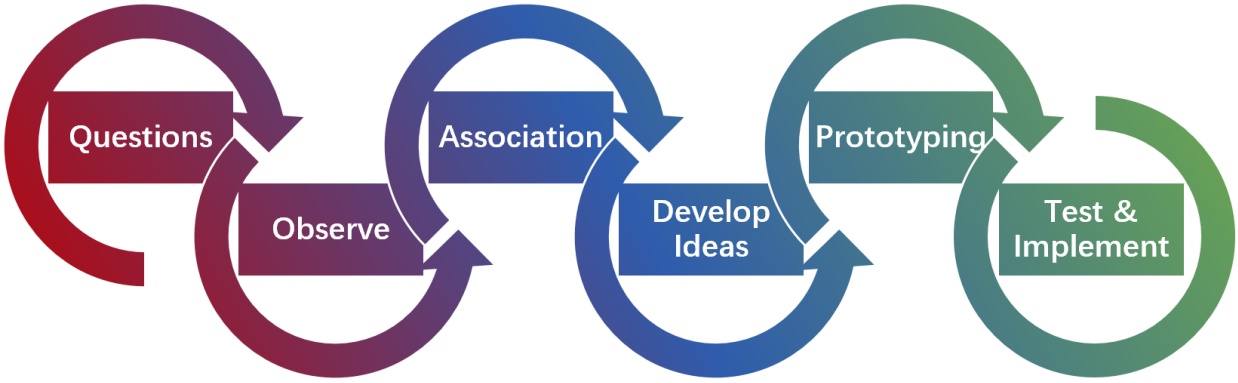
Great innovators share a number of behaviors that are critical to Design Thinking. They allow the team to uncover, develop, and monetize great

ideas. Fortunately, everyone has the ability to learn and apply these behaviors. The methods guide you through each step and allow you to travel through the Design Thinking process. Intuitive and easy-to-use tools support each step of the innovation process and accelerate and enrich the results.

Where does Design Thinking come from?

Design Thinking owes its name to the way designers work. In their work, they follow an intuitive process that is essentially based on observation and a high degree of consumer focus.

Design Thinking was founded as a method by Stanford Professor Larry Leifer, the computer scientist Terry Winograd (with who Google founder Larry Page was in training), and David Kelley, the founder of the design and innovation agency IDEO. The first official conference was held in 1991 under the name “Design Thinking Research Symposia”. Since 2007, the Hasso Plattner Institute has been promoting the research and implementation of design thinking at the School of Design Thinking.



Step 1: Questions

Great pioneers have the ability to ask questions that put the problem in a new light, question the status quo, or simply make room for a different

kind of problem solution. Questioning allows us to challenge common knowledge with the power of provocative questions.

ASK “WHY?” “WHY NOT?” AND “WHAT IF?”

This helps to expand the mental framework and opens up possibilities. By digging deeper and asking probing, open-ended questions, one can gain meaningful insights. Challenging assumptions and the way it has always been done leads to new perspectives and different results.

In the first step, you define your initial situation and make sure that all people involved in the process have a common understanding. Your initial situation is characterized by two essential elements:

There is a problem to be solved from the point of view of the customer and/or your colleague.

The framework conditions set by your employer or organization are transparent.

The aim of the first phase is to define the problem and also to outline the solution area. In this first phase, make sure not to confuse the interests of your organization and the interests of the customer. You conclude this phase with a list of assumptions about how the problem presents itself from the point of view of your customers. A common understanding of the problem is the foundation on which the Design Thinking process will thrive in the next stages.

Step 2: Observe – Understand Customer Needs

Great innovators act like anthropologists to observe consumer behavior, looking closely at how people act in different environments. New ideas can come from observing other people in their normal lives and asking yourselves, “Why are they doing this?” Innovators are always looking for small behavioral details in the activities of customers and other companies

in order to gain insights into new approaches. Take a close look at how customer behavior has changed with the recent events of COVID-19. Observe a situation from various points of view and record it.

In this phase of the Design Thinking process, you go into direct contact with the customer. Your goal is to analyze and understand the needs and priorities of your clients.

In personal conversations with the customer, you will above all be shown how the customer currently handles the situation.

Empathy refers to the emotions of other people and connecting deeply with them. We want to understand the needs of the customer and what drives their decisions so that we can develop innovation with a customer eye. Be ruthless when it comes to keeping the customer in focus: who they are, what they might want, how your concept could meet or exceed their needs. Understand the core values that drive their behavior. Empathy requires that we put our personal biases aside when observing. Are you not sure if you have got it right? Involve your customers in tests and feedback.

Observe and listen

You want to help someone? Shut up and listen.

In this phase you are mainly an observer and listener. This means that you try to understand which of your assumptions and thoughts from the first phase are confirmed, but above all which assumptions cannot be maintained. Since we humans tend to perceive only things that support our point of view, it helps to start this second phase with the task of identifying precisely those assumptions that you can remove. These insights will help you define your point of view in the next phase of the Design Thinking process.

Step 3: Association

Connect the dots between ideas, processes, systems and consumer needs. Innovation comes about when seemingly unrelated stories and insights are combined to create new concepts that add value for the customer. Associating expands your brain's ability to think differently. When you have a wealth of different experiences, it becomes easier to make connections.

In the third phase of the Design Thinking method, the combination of the first two steps takes place. Your goal is to develop a conceptual framework, based on the collected assumptions and observations, which defines the solution space and your ideal customer.

While in the first two steps you have worked with a very analytical point of view, made many assumptions and gained many impressions, in this phase of the Design Thinking process you have to "get to the point" with the impressions you have gained. At this point you can imagine Design Thinking as a puzzle. From the impressions and parts of the first and second step you now formulate a harmonious overall picture.

The most important thing is that you get an idea about the customer and develop a solution for an existing problem. That is, the circle of people who are particularly affected by the problem and who are therefore as open as possible to the solution you are developing. The idealized representation of this group of people is called "persona," which you describe in detail at the end of this phase. In the following steps the persona serves as a guide for the development of your solution.

Step 4: Work Together and Developing Ideas

A well-rounded solution requires the participation of many people. If you bring together different and unique perspectives, you are more likely to reflect the different perspectives of your customer. Collaboration and

knowledge sharing while generating ideas are crucial to arrive at a value-added solution. Expand collaboration to experts outside your organization.

In the fourth phase of the Design Thinking process, you and your team develop ideas on how you want to solve the problem for the defined target groups and persona. You do this in three steps:

Collect: First, you collect as many ideas as possible. There are no limits to your imagination. Every idea, no matter how crazy, has its place. Very important: ideas are not evaluated in this first step.

Evaluation: Once you have collected a sufficient number of ideas, you will arrange, discuss, and prioritize your ideas. The compatibility of economic efficiency, feasibility, and desirability has the highest priority.

Prioritization: Finally, prioritize your ideas. Please be critical. Instead of simply “merging” all ideas into one big idea, your most important task is to focus on a few aspects of your solution. It’s easier to prototype and test a solution with few aspects than a too complex solution.

Copying explicitly desired

In this phase of the Design Thinking process, stealing is allowed and explicitly desired. That means don’t be afraid to build on the ideas of other team members and develop their ideas further. Above all, look at other industries and problem domains. Looking beyond the horizon is worthwhile in many ways. For one thing, you break away from existing patterns and so-called “best practices” of our industry, which usually do not lead to a superior, but only to a “slightly improved” solution. On the other hand, by looking beyond your horizon, you can find out what experience other companies from neighboring industries have made with their solutions. With the joint vision of the first idea to be realized, you will now dive into the next phase of Design Thinking.

Step 5: Prototyping

In the fifth step of the Design Thinking method, creativity and craftsmanship are required above all. Your task is to translate your preferred ideas into a prototype. Up to this point, you already have an ideal customer in mind, you have convinced yourself of the customer's problem in a direct discussion with them and prioritized ideas on how to meet their needs.

Don't stop exploring ideas just because you don't have in-depth expertise in a particular area; chances are you know someone who does. Sometimes you need to build a network to turn your ideas into reality. Networks create opportunities to exchange knowledge, expertise and skills across borders (department, company, generation, etc.). By making connections across networks and disciplines, you get different perspectives and a greater chance to see and develop new ideas. Now it is time to model such a solution

It is important that you develop a prototype that gives the customer the chance to experience the solution in order to give you feedback. Only real feedback will help you to find the best solution.

Step 6: Experiment and Implementing

An experimenting culture is willing to take intelligent risks, learn quickly, and accept criticism. The best experiments are not designed to be perfect, but are carried out to prove that a concept has potential impact on the market. An experiment should prove that a concept meets a consumer need. The key is to "fail quickly" so that you can learn from it, make changes or optimizations, and test it again.

In the final phase of the Design Thinking process, things get serious.

While you used to deal with your customer more observantly, verbally or even intellectually, you now present your solution to them.

The most important goal in this phase is to get feedback, not to convince the client of the brilliance of your idea.

In this phase, you observe how the customer interacts with your solution at close range. Questions from the customer are a good indicator that the customer is already "thinking" about your solution and actively dealing with it. Always try to understand the background of their questions. If you have talked to five customers, you will already have received a large part of the suggestions for improvement and feedback.

Back to Phase 1 or Implement

Experimenting and testing closes the circle of the Design Thinking method. From here it can continue in any direction. Maybe you have to go back to "Phase 1" again. It can be that you have only gained important insights in this last phase. Maybe you should adjust your idea to get new feedback. Only when you are confident that your solution will be accepted by a sufficient number of customers will you start to implement your solution.

Working with Design Thinking

You can apply the Design Thinking method in different contexts. One way is to work on Design Thinking in workshops with your team. Another way is to work on concrete issues in competition and let your employees work on problem solutions. A more advanced format is e.g. a Design Sprint. In a Design Sprint, all phases of Design Thinking are run through in the course of a week. Then, the results are tested directly with clients. Remember that innovation is not created in a half-day workshop. It is a long process and should become part of your business culture.

Your workshops or direct practical application can be accompanied by a Design Thinking coach. A coach helps you to practice the Design Thinking processes. He can help the teams to keep the customer in the foreground and to differentiate between problem and solution. Especially the last point requires a lot of reflection, customer focus, and discipline. After all, we are used to “presenting solutions instead of rolling over probl

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