



Service design for great customer experiences

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What is service design?

Stripped of the jargon - service design is fundamentally about making sure **what** you design meets the needs of, and delivers value to, **who** you are designing for.

Service design principles include being human-centric, inclusive and accessible. It means putting the person (customer/stakeholder/community) at the heart of what you do, listening to the people you're designing for and iterating to improve and move forward.

Service design techniques provide guides for how we can create products, services, environments and experiences that satisfy and delight the people we are designing for. The ultimate goal is to provide a great experience from start to finish.

Design is a holistic process from ideation to implementation.

Why does it matter?

Design is everywhere and it influences so many of our decisions everyday. Every product, service and advertisement we see or use has been designed. Every environment and organisation we navigate has been designed.

Some of these are designed really well. Others very poorly. And others are downright malicious (either intentionally or via unintended consequences that are not addressed).

We're all designers

Think you're not a designer? Think again! Dr. Christine Marie Ortiz Guzman, founder of the Equity Meets Design think-(and do)-tank, challenges every single person to think of themselves as a designer. In a Harvard Business School interview, she states:

We are constantly designing things, creating things, making things, tangible things, right? Whether that's a product or a website or the more traditional ways we think about design. But, also, lots of intangible things — processes or systems or organizations or cultures or experiences or relationships, right? All of those things we see as being designed.

And so, we believe that if everyone can see themselves as a designer, and then explicitly use an equity-centered design process to design whatever those things are that folks are designing in their day-to-day, then that is how we're going to actually do equity.

Service design is the ability to combine **empathy, creativity and rationality** to meet your customer's needs and drive business success.
-Arne Van Oosterom

Why does bad design persist



Poor design leads to poorer outcomes. Bad design negatively impacts those who use it. The impact scale can range from mild annoyance, frustration and confusion, to exclusion, marginalisation, discrimination all the way to dangerous and deadly consequences.

“If you think good design is expensive, you should look at the cost of bad design.”

–DR. RALF SPETH, CEO of Jaguar

Bad design can happen for a number of reasons and in a number of different ways. Sometimes it's ignorance, incompetency or legitimate limitations. Other times it's more malicious than that.

Here are a few drivers or inputs that lead to poor design:

- tyranny of metrics
- not understanding the problem
- not responding to the context

Tyranny of Metrics

One of the biggest drivers of bad design comes back to the tyranny of metrics. Service design principles center around doing what's best for the customer (while being practical about business implications).

The example at the end on social media highlights this quite well. You can also view our [Tyranny of Metrics](#) webinar for more detail on this subject.

Not understanding the problem

It can be clear from the design that the person who designed it will not be the person using it. Dr. Guzman highlights this challenge:

“There are capital “D” designers, trained in design. And they are “given the power and the permission to design for problems that largely they don’t experience themselves, for communities that largely they do not live in themselves.”

Examples of this are: those who design government support and benefit systems and processes often have not been on government support themselves, the people who have created our prisons are often not the people or the communities who are most effected by the horrible design of our prison systems.

And how do you know what you don't know? This is why it's so important to centre everything on the customer's lived experiences.

Not responding to the context

Sometimes a design made sense at one time – and then the context changes. What made sense fifty years ago might not make any sense now. It's important that your solutions work for the real environments people are using them in.

For example, in-person solutions might have made sense in 2019, but post-Covid we're moving to more online and remote solutions.

Design thinking looks to undo this.

At its heart, design thinking is:

- grounded in the person's experiences
- guided by information not preconceptions
- customised and creates more effective solutions.

Service design principles

When in doubt, refer back these principles about how services, products, processes and environments should be designed (written in no specific order):



with a genuine understanding of who your customer is



with focus on customer's needs first and foremost.



to deliver as much value as possible for customers



to be as easy and accessible as possible



based on evidence and data



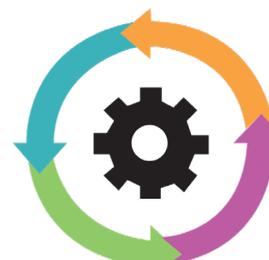
with a specific definition of success in mind



with the input from the customers, always!



holistically unified, connected system



in an iterative fashion, starting with an MVP and testing it

Have a genuine understanding of who your customer is

We're using the word customer here as the person consuming your product/service. As much as you possible can – talk to them. Get to know them. Or get the data and analytics from the people who have. The next page has some common questions, and understandings you should have about the people who use your products and services – whether they are external or your colleagues internally.



Focus on customers' needs first and foremost

Always, always ask what value are you adding by doing what you're doing. The value should first and foremost be from your customers' lens (not your own/organisation).

An HBR article by Eric Almquist, John Senior, and Nicolas Bloch splits value to customers into these four groups:

- **Functional:** Informs, reduces effort, avoids hassle, saves time, simplifies, quality, makes money, reduces risk, organises, connects, sensory appeal, reduces cost, variety
- **Emotional:** reduces anxiety, rewards, design/aesthetics, badge value, provides access, attractiveness, fun, therapeutic, wellness
- **Life changing:** provides hope, motivation, affiliation/belonging
- **Social impact:** self-transcendence



But you cannot do this without knowing and empathising with the people you're building for.

The next page has some starting points for developing your customer personas. These are things you should know about the people you're designing things for.

Get input from the customers

Talk to the people you're designing for throughout every stage of the journey. This is how you'll understand and get to know their needs. But it's also what your continuous improvement initiatives will centre on. The people who will be using, or interacting with the thing you're designing, should have the loudest voice when it comes to your design, creation and iteration phases.



Deliver value to the people you're designing for

Because you've done your homework and you know your customer segments intimately, you'll understand what will deliver value to them, or improve their experience. Delivering value for customers is a central tenet of service design. One form this comes in is the ability to quickly iterate and respond to what people need.



Be clear about what your success metrics are

This comes back to the tyranny of metrics. How we measure success will dictate what we design.

If we have the wrong drivers, we often get the wrong output. What truly defines success and what good looks like **for the customer?** Be clear on this upfront. You'll have business based metrics but re-prioritise value based on what's best for the customer.



Be as easy and accessible as possible

Keep it simple, stupid! Humans are lazy. We don't want to have to work harder than we have to. Our brains like when designs and processes are easy and seamless. But we also want to keep accessibility and equality as central design principles.

Universal design is fundamentally creating something that can be accessed and used (to the greatest extent possible) by all people. Often the test case is if it meets the needs of the youngest, the oldest and those with disabilities - it will often work for everyone else. This should be the aim for all of our products.

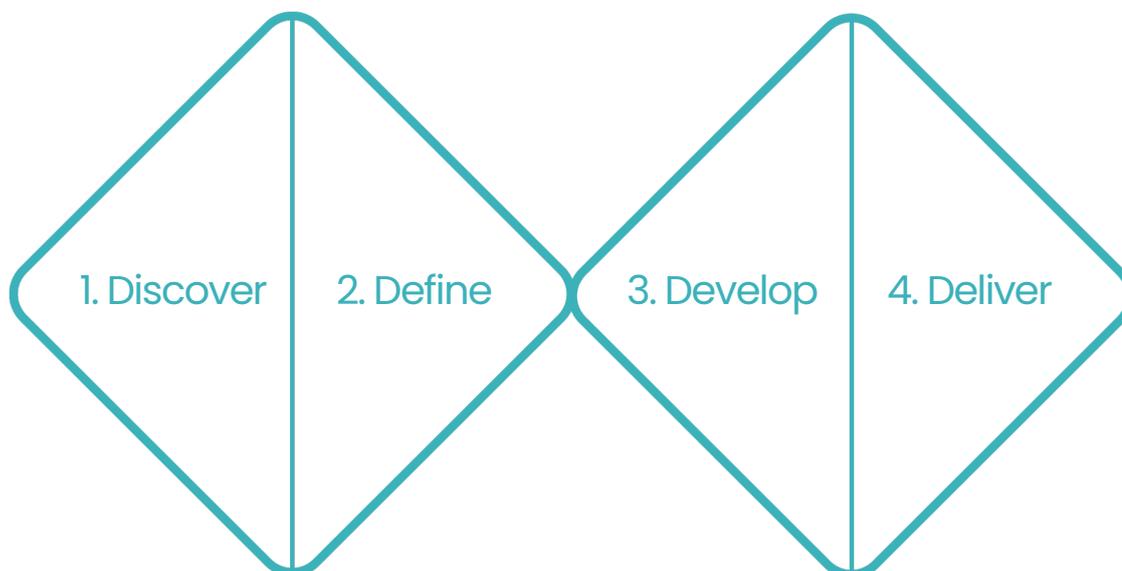


Iteration is key!

A key principle of service design (and agility wider) is to iterate. *Best is the enemy of better* is a good reminder that small improvements and tweaks are better than nothing. But it also reminds us that after we have developed and delivered something, we need to go back and talk to those using it and identify any pain points or opportunities.

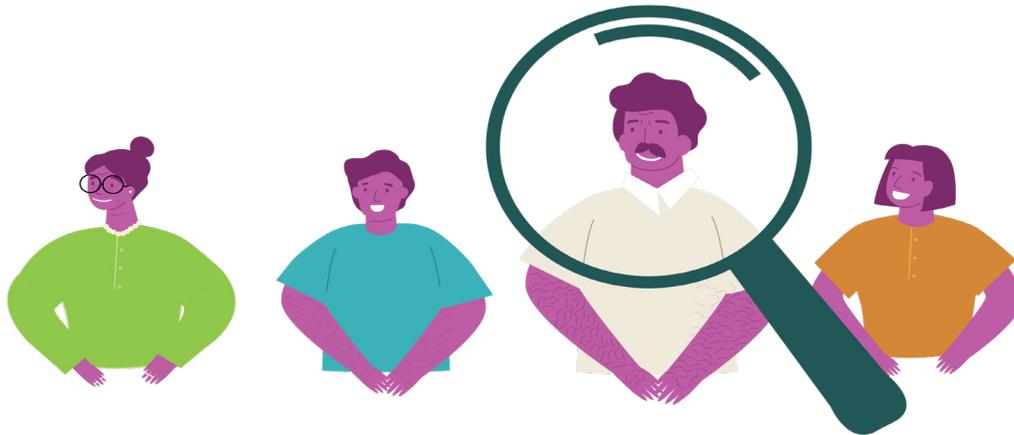


This is the Double Diamond approach in action:



- 1. Discover:** Data gathering - find out everything you can about the problem, the customers, the market. This is your learning and gathering phase.
- 2. Define:** Filter and define scope - review the information and identify insights, bottlenecks, opportunities, and requirements. Define your scope and what you want to focus on.
- 3. Develop:** Multiple solutions and prototypes - this is the time to go wide again and ideate all possible solutions. What could you do to respond to your discovery and definition phases? This should involve a lot of multi-disciplinary work, prototyping, failing fast, testing and iterations.
- 4. Deliver:** Sign off and launch - this is the doing phase. Your prototypes and iterations will give you a path forward for delivery. But it doesn't end here. Once you've delivered the product you designed, then you repeat the process and go back to discovery (How's it working? Is it meeting people's needs? What are the pain points and opportunities? Any unintended consequences?)

Customer personas



Putting the customer at the heart of everything you do requires empathy. And to empathise with someone you need to understand who they are, what they need and how they would interact with your product or service.

Customer-centric design means you think about the different groups (or segments) of people who will be interacting with what you design (whether that's tangible or intangible). You can get to know your customers better through:

- **Interviews:** sitting down individually or in small groups with your customers. This should be done at the earliest definition stages and throughout development
- **Dear Diary:** Ask your customer segments to record notes that you can use to better understand their experiences and expectations
- **Data and research:** Once you've defined who will be using your products then you can find out what other data, information and analytics have been pulled together for those demographics. Don't reinvent the wheel, find what's already out there.
- **DILO, Day in the life of:** Either shadow or ask someone to record their experiences throughout the day. This is a great empathy building exercise.

From your customer's point of view think...

WHO AM I?

Demographics (age, gender, location, income)
hobbies, habits, hates/loves, deterrents,
challenges, principles

WHAT DO I WANT / NEED?

What is the problem I need solved or goal I'm
trying to meet?
How does your product help me?

HOW WILL YOU REACH ME?

Communication channels (phone, social media,
email, newspapers, visual advertisement).

WHAT IS THE PROCESS?

Map the journey (or workflow) which highlights
what the persona segment goes through in
order to accomplish their goals.
Where are expectations not met? Pain points?
Moments of truth? Channels used? Time spent?

Customer journey

Whether you're designing tangible or intangible things, you should be considering the full journey people go on to achieve their goals.



Within your internal work teams, this would be defined as your workflow. Think about all the steps and stages a person has to go through in order to achieve what they are trying to do. Then identify:

- **Channels:** How do people engage, communicate and learn about the product/service/environment? What are all the different communication channels people can interact with?
- **Entry points:** Where and how does the relationship and connection to what you're designing begin?
- **Expectations:** Where are the points in the journey where the person's expectations are not being met? Is this an opportunity for you?
- **Unnecessary touchpoints or interactions:** Are there any opportunities to reduce double handling, or streamline processes?
- **Pain points:** What's frustrating the customers at the moment? How will your product/service solve and help at these stages?
- **Time:** Where are people spending their time? Are these times appropriate?
- **Moments of truth:** These are points that are so important, the rest of the experience hangs off them. Are there make or break moments in your customers' journeys?

Case study: Social Media

If you're not paying for the product, then **you** are the product.

The Social Dilemma is a Netflix documentary/drama hybrid focusing on the dangerous human impact of social networking. Tech experts and ex-tech executives involved in designing and building the world's biggest social media platforms have called out the widespread harm of social media.

How do we know they're serious? They won't let their kids use the platforms they created and led. That's usually a good indication that something is wrong.

What's the problem?

They designed an amazing product - using the wrong metrics. The metrics they used focused on money and profit. In a social media context that means getting people to spend as much time on the app as possible. So they can consume more advertisements. So more advertisements will pay you.

They were a group of young, childless engineers whose focus was to make a product that people wanted to use as much as they possibly could. And guess what that's caused? An addiction to social media.

It wasn't accidental. The designers found what works to meet their goals (like good designers do). They based the products on slot machines and gambling. Oh, the tyranny of metrics in action.

I wonder what products they would have designed if they built around people's health and wellbeing, instead of their wallets?

The design of these products impacts us on a daily basis - the question is - is it helping or hindering us?



"If something is a tool, it genuinely is just sitting there, waiting patiently. If something is not a tool it's demanding things from you. It's seducing you, it's manipulating you, it wants things from you.

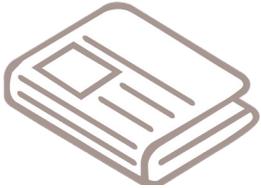
We've moved away from a tools based technology environment, to an addiction and manipulation based technology environment. Social media isn't a tool waiting to be used. It has its own goals, and it has its own means of pursuing them by using your psychology against you."

Tristan Harris, co-founder of Centre for Humane Technologies

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