

Design Thinking

Most customers don't know what they want. But they immediately know what they don't want.

Annoying design failures may not only decline sales, but also even alienate the most loyal customers from the brand.

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Such things happen even at the best of companies. Have you ever tried using Apple's Magic Mouse and recharging it at the same time? Or bought yet another bad product you wanted to return the next day? Good design adds a lot of value to a product. Today's customers are becoming more and more demanding, self-confident and critical. We expect new products or services to enrich our lives and integrate seamlessly. How well an innovation meets our needs has become the yardstick for success. Only if we feel completely understood as a customer will we be able to develop enthusiasm for it. Design Thinking helps us navigate through the uncertainty of our very often hidden and sometimes even contradictory needs.

Design Thinking in a nutshell

The power of Design Thinking reveals itself by paying attention to a few core principles and applying them seriously:

1 Always focus on the users and their needs

Try to understand the behavior of people before brainstorming for solutions.

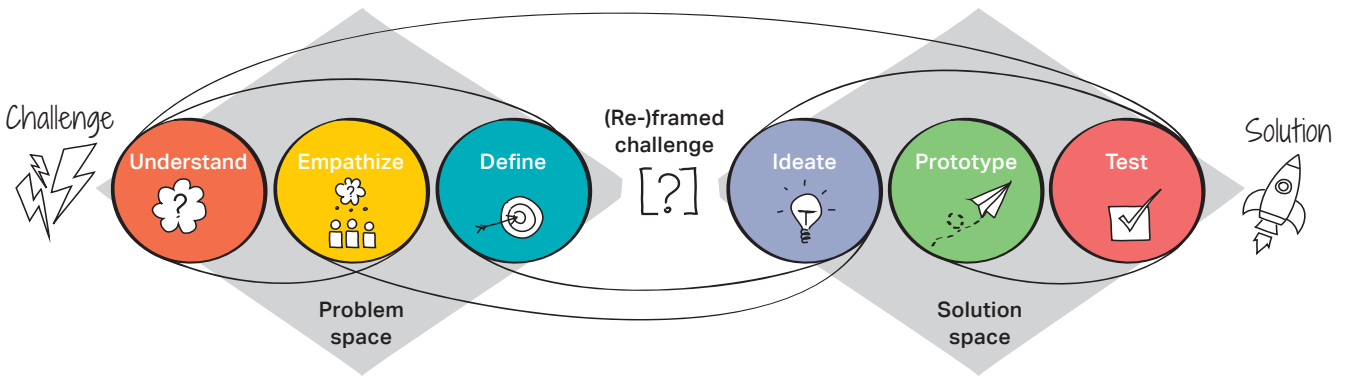
2 Talk less and do more

Try to get tangible as early as possible using prototyping methods to get a clearer picture of your ideas.

3 Understand iteration as progress

Every step you take brings a lesson and sometimes those which make you go back are the most important ones.

The Design Thinking process



The innovation methodology addresses product, service and even process innovation. It might be used for the design or redesign of any product, service or internal process as long as there is a direct interaction with a human being.

Understanding problems from the customer's point of view generates valuable insights and an even more valuable solution (see illustration).

Find the problem to identify the solution

While designing a new juicer, Philips used interviews, live tests and even home visits to figure out how to make their new model more attractive. By observing carefully, they found the cleaning process to be one of the biggest hurdles in its daily use. But contrary to popular belief, the main pain point was less the task of cleaning itself and more how prominent the thought of cleaning was throughout the process. This realization turned into an important starting point for the redesign. Philips came up with a solution to hide the thought of cleaning as long as possible. The rapidly prototyped model only showed pure juice but no pulp on the surface and test users loved the device.

Understanding humans

Consulting many companies and teams in recent years has provided us with valuable insights. We have learned that not every need detected at the beginning of the

process stays relevant until the end. And that people's behavior can never be predicted. Listening to users, their stories often seem so clear and logical. Ideas for solving the problem are painfully obvious. But when we start testing those ideas, customers suddenly seem to change their minds. Confronted with solutions for their articulated needs, a process of understanding and qualifying starts and we frequently go back to step one. Because of the fact that human behavior is so unpredictable, iteration is the key to success when applying Design Thinking.

Expanding the toolbox

Dozens of tools and working templates for each stage of the Design Thinking process have been developed and marketed. Using some of them while thinking outside the box promises quick success. Let's take the example of an Austrian electronics company. Instead of interviewing hundreds of people to understand the hidden needs of their target group, the company took the method of cultural probing and matched it with an online campaign to increase the range. The development team partnered up with marketing and launched a Facebook contest, »Show us your open and filled fridge and provide us with a quick description to win a new fridge.« Within a couple of days, the company got thousands of pictures and customer voices. They gained the most valuable insight into what are usually hidden needs, and with that a considerable lead over their competitors. ●