

Design Thinking

Practical & creative problem solving

Our world is changing at a rapid pace. People are connected in new ways, disruptions are emerging from new companies and services, and customers have new wants and needs. To succeed in this increasingly complex and interconnected market, businesses need a new approach to solving problems: **design thinking**. But what exactly is this approach and why is it so effective?



Human

At its core, design thinking is centred on understanding people's needs and solving them creatively. It's an approach that puts the human side of business first.



Innovative

The goal of design thinking is to leverage empathy and discussion to find new solutions that make people's lives better and easier.



A bridge between business & design

Idris Mootee describes design thinking as "a way to get business people to think like designers and designers to think like business people." It combines the creativity and flexibility of the design world with the practicality and feasibility of the business world.



Collaborative

To find the most exciting and effective ideas, design thinking reaches out to a broad range of people involved in or impacted by the issue at hand. By getting a wide variety of input and insights, the process can uncover solutions that could have otherwise been missed.

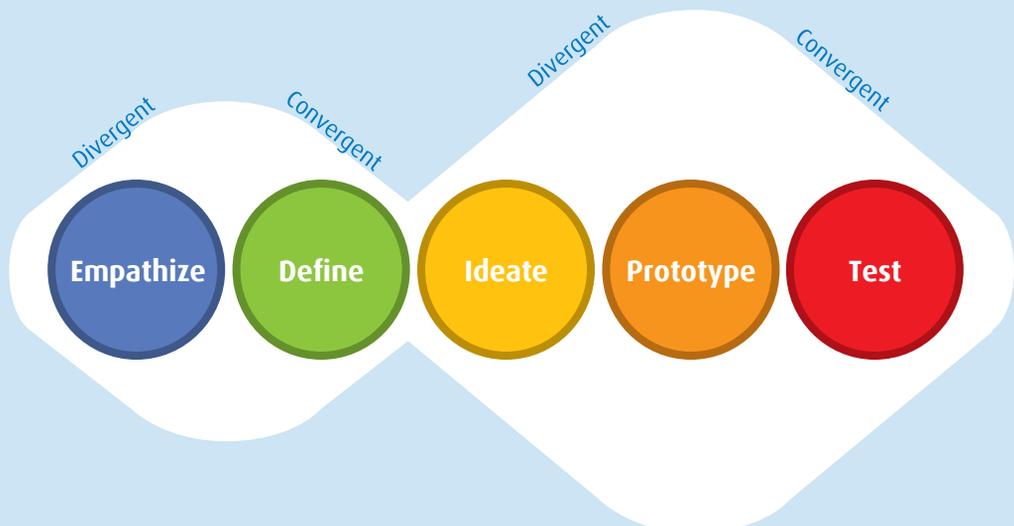


Iterative

Another perk of design thinking is that it doesn't force you to follow a linear path. The insights gained at every stage feed back into the process and help it evolve and shift.

The design thinking model

While there are a number of variations on the design thinking model, all leverage versions of these five stages.



Design Thinking

How does the process work?

Design thinking is all about people and being “human”!

Empathize

You need to start by putting yourself in the shoes of the people you’re designing for (your audience) – and involve them directly, when you can. This helps you better understand them and their situation, and gives you clues for how to begin your design.

It’s helpful to **observe** users and their behaviour, **engage** and interview them to find out about their thoughts and concerns, and **immerse** yourself in their world so you can experience what they experience.

Define

Collect your insights and observations, and use them to focus on clearly describing your audience’s needs. Then, narrow your focus even further by using those insights to frame the true problem (your point of view). This point of view outlines the scope of what you want to solve and the audience you’re designing for.

It’s quite common for the problem you started out with at the beginning of the design thinking process to change based on the work you do in the Empathize and Define stages.

Ideate

Once you’ve narrowed down your point of view, expand out again by coming up with ideas for ways to move towards a solution. Generate as many options as possible. Resist the urge to evaluate ideas as you go, and focus on building many diverse possibilities.

Challenge yourself to go beyond the most obvious solutions and build on the suggestions brought up by others. Also, be sure to go back to the work you’ve already done to understand your audience. It can really help to inspire new ideas!

Prototype

Move your ideas into the physical world by creating prototypes. Prototypes allow you to test out a possible solution by interacting with a mock-up or rough model. This allows you to quickly and cheaply try out a bunch of options to discover what works and what doesn’t.

A prototype doesn’t need to be complicated to be effective. You can leverage things as simple as a rough drawing, a flowchart describing an interaction, a role playing process, or Post-its outlining a plan. Just remember: design thinking needs to be iterative. Expect to create many different prototypes to get to a final solution that hits the mark.

Test

To make sure your solution actually works in the real world, test your options and adjust them based on what you experience. Try to find holes in your prototypes and look for ways to fill them.

In design thinking, it’s absolutely okay for your ideas to fail in the testing stage. In fact, it’s expected! Evaluate the failures, explore what happened, use that knowledge to go back to the Ideate and Prototype stages, and create stronger solutions based on what you learned. It may take a number of cycles to refine your ideas, but in the end this will lead you to exciting and effective solutions that are grounded in what your audience actually needs.