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Whitepaper

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Rethinking Design Thinking.

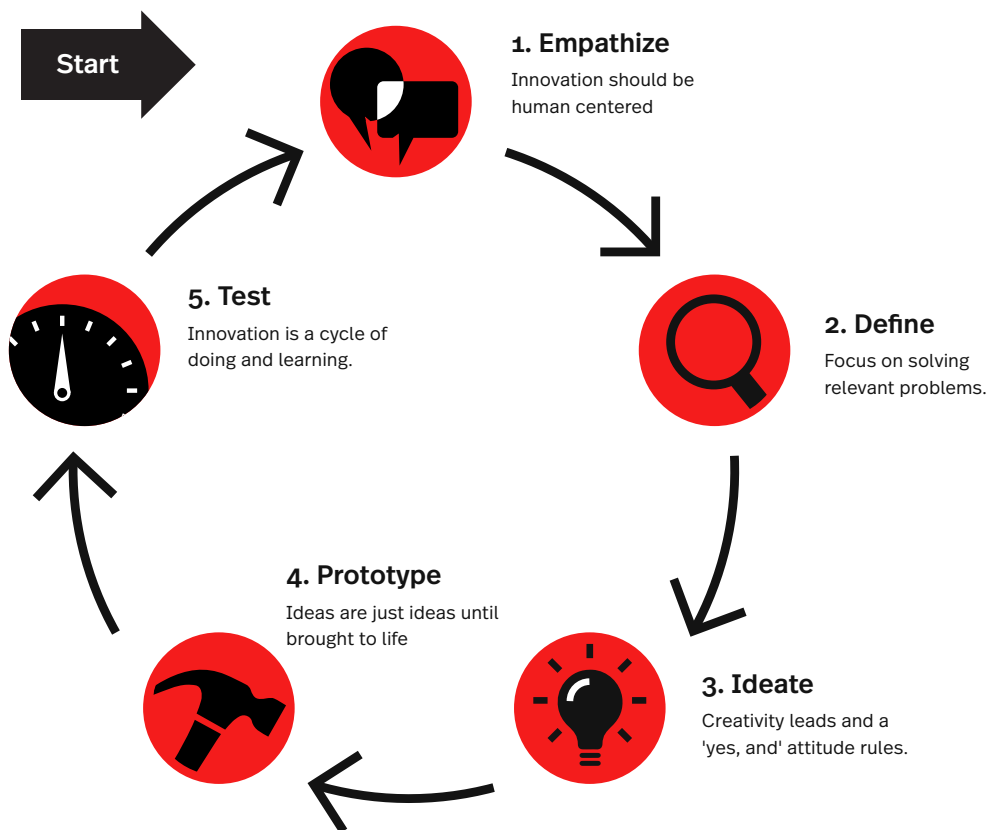**Because the key to creating impact is Design Doing.**

Key takeaways

→ In the last decade, Design Thinking has penetrated almost every aspect of the corporate world. But many companies are not aware that Design Doing is the essential next step to process the thinking into actual solutions.

→ In many companies embracing Design Thinking, the emphasis is placed on the thinking part, which is tied to observation, analysis and research, and too little on the doing part, which is about applying the insights gained to produce actual creative solutions.

→ Effective creative processes need both thinkers and tinkerers, working together with a spirit of boldness and fearlessness, which needs to develop through a "can-do" leadership and culture.

→ Without a balance between thinkers and tinkerers, a spirit of boldness and fearlessness, and a "can-do" leadership and culture, Design Thinking would deliver exactly that – more thinking, more theory, more diagrams and more wasted time. But not more tangible and successful innovation..

In this paper we share experience how to boost and leverage Design Thinking's full potential in real life.

What is Design Thinking?

Just in case you're not familiar with Design Thinking yet, here's a brief intro.

Design Thinking is a non-linear, iterative process which seeks to understand users, challenge assumptions, redefine problems and create innovative solutions to prototype and test. The process consists of 5 phases – Empathize, Define, Ideate, Prototype and Test and is most useful when for tackling problems that are badly-defined or unknown.

Start

1. Empathize
Innovation should be human centered

2. Define
Focus on solving relevant problems.

3. Ideate
Creativity leads and a 'yes, and' attitude rules.

4. Prototype
Ideas are just ideas until brought to life

5. Test
Innovation is a cycle of doing and learning.

Creating choices and making choices

The core strength of Design Thinking is that it systematically activates the key mechanisms of creative problem solving; the generation, selection and retention of ideas. By going through both diverging and converging phases, Design Thinking stimulates 'out of the box thinking', but also relies on feedback from the ground for actual development and testing.

Making things visible

Most real-world challenges are not solved by writing reports, despite how corporate life makes it think otherwise. Designers, being used to delivering tangible artefacts and testing these with real people, take companies back to the essence of creative problem solving, which is conscious trial and error. By following the same processes to design solutions rather than just describe them, Design Thinking overcomes politics and overheads, and shifts the focus to what really matters.

What's in the designer's briefcase?

The Design Thinking methodology includes a bunch of well-known tools and aids that have gotten as much attention as the methodology itself. They include Persona Analysis, Empathy and Customer Journey Mapping, Collaborative UX Design and Needs Statements. And, of course, Post-its.

Contents

Introduction

Design Thinking has been gaining a lot of traction

Why would a work process that has traditionally been used by designers be relevant in the corporate world?

It's simple and logical: designers systematically extract, teach, learn and apply human-centric techniques to solve problems in a creative and innovative way.

So Design Thinking is inherently optimistic, constructive and experimental. In theory, it is a great vehicle to be more innovative, to better differentiate your brand, and to shorten the time-to-market of any product or service.

It is an approach therefore that resonates well in today's boardrooms. And rightly so. Correctly applied, Design Thinking is a powerful and proven method in meeting rooms: "killer" ideas are generated fast, bad ideas killed even faster.

But...

Design Thinking on its own is not the bringer of change that will prevent you from getting "uber'd" by the next new "industry-disrupting" start-up.

While the method has proven its value, merely introducing it does not turn a big corporation into a lean start-up overnight. Having the "right idea" is just the first step in the iterative process of making, trying, learning and rebuilding. And there's the main misconception we need to change.

The Truth is in Here:

1. The thinking – Coming up with the idea. This is the starting point.
2. The doing – Searching for and iterating on a value proposition and business model, researching, prototyping, testing and validating the ideas. This is the essential next step to success.
3. The long haul – execution and scaling. This is where winners are decided.

5 ideas to boost successful Design Doing.
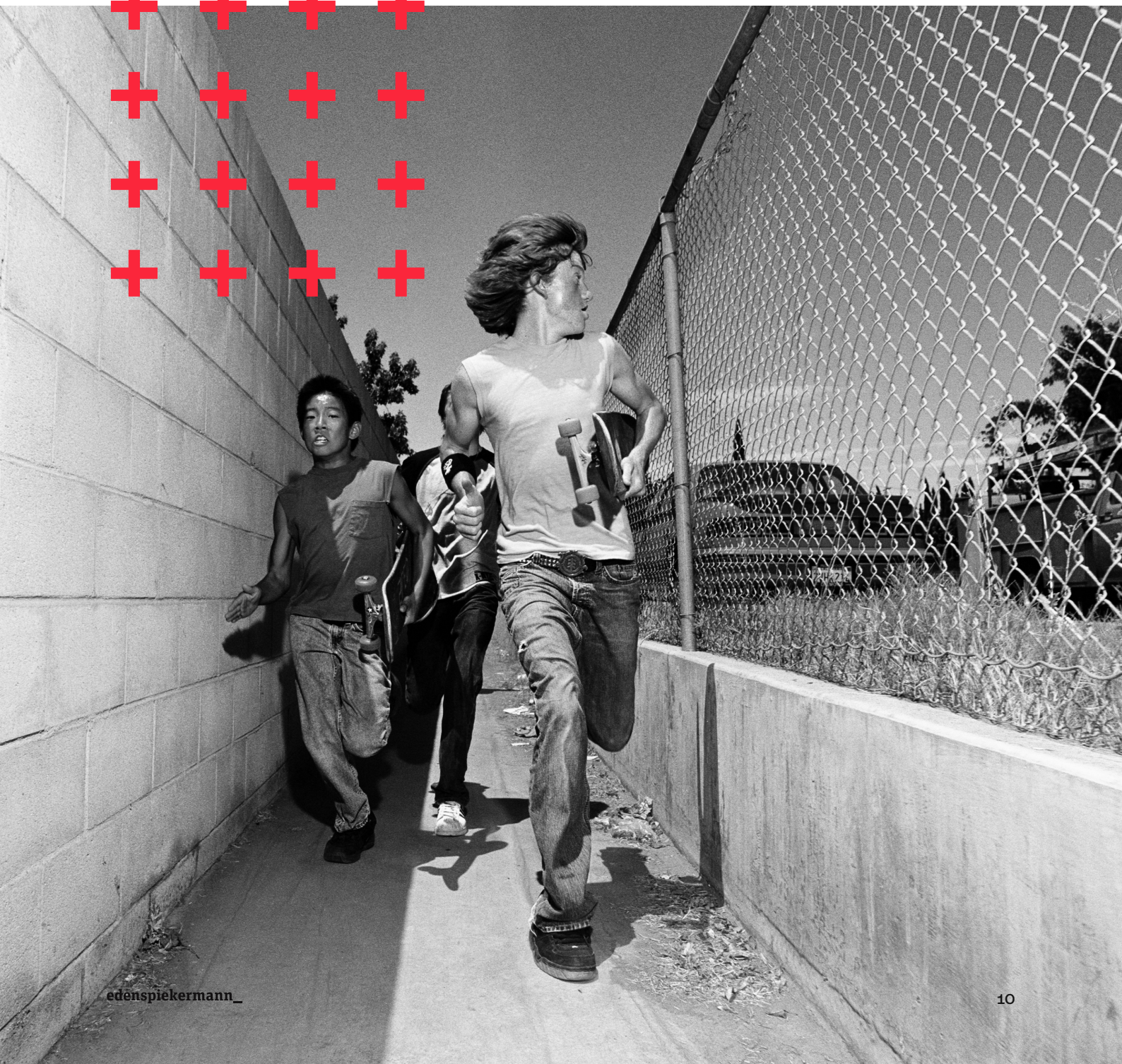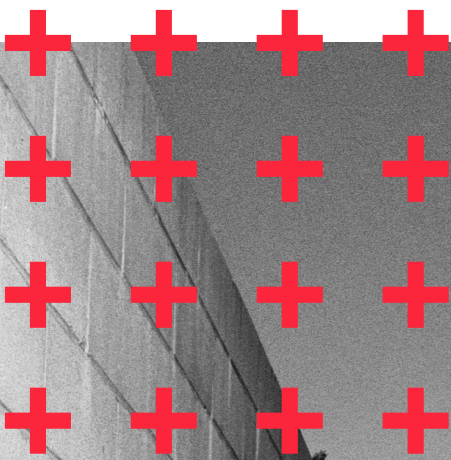
#1
Cross the line

Create an environment where risk is rewarded

In a famous article on Design Thinking for Social Innovation in 2010, Brown and Wyatt wrote:

> "...one of the biggest impediments to adopting Design Thinking is simply fear of failure."

Design Doing means experimentation and the inevitable failure. In fact, these are crucial for successful innovations. A vibrant Design Doing culture encourages prototyping – sometimes quick, cheap, and dirty – as an intrinsic part of the creative process. This isn't about validating finished ideas. It's about learning by actually doing. And it's ideally performed in full transparency, with clients and partners being a part of the process. Sounds scary? Well, good. It's a start in the right direction.

No success without taking risk

Picture this: you've been working on an innovative product. On launch day, that product is missing some of the more innovative features. They were there in all the initial stages, but mysteriously got dropped along the way. How often does a scenario like this happen? Pretty often, we'd say.

During a recent encounter with a rather disappointed designer whose app didn't reach the app store unharmed, we asked for the reasons. Did the cool features perish on a backlog? Did they die in the trenches of SCRUM? "Partially, yes," was her answer, "but it was mostly fear."

> **"...one of the biggest impediments to adopting Design Thinking is simply fear of failure."**

"For sure, you have to be lost to find a place that can't be found. Elseways everyone would know where it was!"

Captain Barbossa: Pirates of the Caribbean.

Apparently, the app did see the light of day "as designed", but only briefly. Initial customer reviews made the client revoke some of the new and differentiating features. Afraid of negative feedback, and not being used to open communication with customers, the client chose to simply kill those features instead of valuing the feedback and iterating based on the insights.

So, the first Design Doing booster is about assessing your risk profile. Are you stimulating your team to take risks and accept failures? Are you allocating the proper budgets and time for learning of failures? Are you open about things that go well and things that may not? Do you have the perseverance and willingness both in leadership and as a company?

At Edenspiekermann, we believe that risk and reward are, as in economics, related. But for rewards to be motivating, they need to be tangible and seem within reach. This means that, for leadership to seriously commit to making bold steps, a clear, aspirational and concrete vision of where to go to is required. In our designer's world, this translates to having a sharp brand identity and brand promise. Because if you know what you stand for, and who you are to your customers and society, it is much easier to spot areas where it's lacking, and thus where serious efforts are needed. When we help companies struggling with innovation, we define their brands first. Once everyone knows where we're headed and what is needed to get there, the brave steps will naturally follow.

#2
Get shit done

Hearing "can't do" more than "can do"?
Time to add more doing.

The Design Thinking cycle essentially consists of two sub-cycles, connected by a test phase; the empathize-define cycle, which is about defining relevant (customer) challenges, and the ideate- prototype-implementation cycle, which is about creating the actual solution.

To be successful, both need to weigh equally and be conducted skillfully. Often however, we see teams favor the first cycle over the second. But this means you're spending too much time on iterating on theoretical solutions and leaving important challenges unresolved. Not good. So, by assessing the team's balance, and adding more doing as needed, things can move forward.

Add more doing when ...

- You hear "can't do" more often than "can do".
- It seems that your innovations are actually just optimizations.
- The expected competitive advantages get on par and not exceeded. You don't see many exciting concepts, visuals and prototypes flying around.

If you find yourself in this situation, it's probably a good idea to get in some additional hands-on creative talent.

Whether you specifically need more conceptualizers, designers, developers or other roles depends on the task and situation. You want to start making things visual and actually working, and not taking no for an answer. That is the goal.

At Edenspiekermann, we have roles and experienced resources available to support in any phase of the Design Thinking process, from research to prototyping using advanced AI or AR software solutions. We can collaborate from single designs prints to large full-scale transformational projects.

For an overview of our collaboration programs see page 18.

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#3 Create unexpected crossovers

Bring in external power to break new ground internally.

Companies are organizations driven by repetition, effectiveness and efficiency. There are clear KPIs and OKRs, strict processes to ensure timely and on par delivery of everything created, highly specialized people, and precise guidelines on what can and cannot be created. All this within established closed frameworks of planning, organization, budget allocation, and governance.

Any research and data driven innovations are aimed at making things more efficient and standardized. Which is generally good. But the flip side is that the "innovative" solutions become exactly that. Standard. Carbon-copy. Humdrum.

Employees are often so specialized in specific parts of delivery chains that it can be hard to "zoom out" and solve problems from different, unexpected, creative angles. This is what Design Doing aims to tackle.

All this within established closed frameworks of planning, organization, budget allocation, and governance.

"... opening up to external thinking power may be absolutely necessary to break new ground"

While the current trend of building in-house digital/creative teams may be sensible, we think opening up to external thinking and tinkering power may be absolutely necessary to break new ground. Either by looking at existing client issues or potential opportunities from a new perspective, or by conceptualizing refreshing and ambitious solutions using latest technologies. Fueled by openness and inspiration, any team's creative engine will run faster and better.

At Edenspiekermann, we've been developing a critical, yet forward-looking and solution-oriented, innovation mindset since the late 60s. Our independent, customer centric, technology savvy – but platform and vendor agnostic – approach makes us great partners for working together on innovative Design Thinking projects and challenges. Whether it's research, concepting, prototyping or consultation, our talented designers and specialists help you reach your innovation goals while building and leveraging your team's Design Thinking skills. Working with the latest technologies and leading client and partner companies all over the world, we deliver deep knowledge and fresh perspectives on nearly any challenge your company may have.

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#4
Have a laugh

**Have fun while being disciplined;
feel like dancing, not marching.**

Even a well-equipped, multi-disciplinary and focused team can get stuck in the creative process or have trouble delivering the desired significant change. Which brings us to the most difficult (because elusive) element of boosting Design Thinking performance – a positive mentality.

Creating the first ideas and concepts is often an energetic phase working on unobstructed horizons. But Design Doing processes mean serious business, testing, prototyping and implementing comes along with inevitable set backs.

Tests will fail, prototypes seem unfeasible and conflicting interests will appear. The pressure to succeed can be very high. Nevertheless, it is important that the process keeps intrinsically rewarding and positive.

Without a bit (okay, a lot) of laughter and cheek, no team will really take off. So, getting some cheer in may be one of the best things to do. Break out the beers, have a pizza night, go hunt for Easter eggs – there is no sure-win recipe, but you know what we mean.

Within Edenspiekermann we have named a positive mentality as one of our most precious and most carefully cultivated assets. Read more about this on our website:

www.edenspiekermann.com/ manifesto/

"Even as they are being methodical and disciplined, the team should feel like they're dancing, not marching"

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#5
Challenge
the theory

If Design Thinking doesn't work for you, fix it.

This last one is not really a booster, but more of a meta-approach. Sometimes, the Design Thinking method does not deliver what you expect. If that happens, it makes sense to look into the methodology and tools themselves, adjust them or create a toolset that fits your project.

The Design Thinking models are well-documented and described in numerous papers and presentations which can be found online, as are most of the tools. But the root of Design Thinking is a concept, not a recipe. As such, we believe that the above-mentioned ideas to boost are more important for durable innovation than the "standard" phases and tools themselves. These can change; the principle behind Design Thinking cannot.

If you need support with introducing and embedding Design Doing, don't hesitate to reach out. We are here to help.

For those who want to learn fast, are very goal oriented and need more structure, running a Design Sprint can be a very good alternative to Design Thinking. Similar in principle to Design Thinking, a Design Sprint is time-bound (5 days only), follows a strict format and delivers quick results. For prototypes that need to be delivered fast, or for teams that want to learn, this is a very good instrument.

"Sometimes, the Design Thinking methods do not deliver what you expect. If that happens, it makes sense to look into the methodology and tools themselves"

Successful Design Doing

A brief summary.

Have the courage to fail

One of the biggest impediments of Design Thinking is the fear of failure. It takes the right culture of boldness and fearlessness to innovate, and create differentiating customer experiences.

Make it new not better

A meaningful experience with your organization or brand will lead to loyal customers and employees. Design Doing is not about polishing what you have. It's about creating better solutions that meet new requirements, unarticulated customer -, or existing market needs.

Call in the lunatics

Find the right balance between thinkers and tinkerers. Hire experts that can challenge and inspire you and your teams. You're only as good as the sum of your parts: create the right setup for innovative success.

Take real actions

Many great things were created before Design Thinking was invented. So, if you want to learn how to solve problems creatively, solve problems creatively! Keep in mind a report is not a solution.

Let ideas flow freely

Nothing will propel a company further than a culture of innovation. Building such culture means creating a methodology for encouraging the free exchange of ideas, which ultimately turns good thoughts into actions and measurable results. Design Thinking is an excellent "weapon of choice" to get there.

Start Design Doing today.

Here are the full-programs that we offer.

At Edenspiekermann, we help our clients innovate by combining user centric design with state-of-art tech. We're of the practical kind. We love thinking, but truly add value by doing: visualizing ideas, making them tangible, taking them to users for a test drive and collecting valuable feedback. And we're of the ambitious type too, believing that technology nowadays is so advanced and accessible, that there is little excuse for user needs to remain unmet.

Flexible modes of collaboration

Working on business-sensitive and impactful challenges, we are used to collaborating with many types of stakeholders and in-house teams. We offer experts or complete multidisciplinary teams for fast-paced, high pressure challenges or for longer periods of strategic product and services development.

Design sprints

For quick conceptual problem solving, we offer the Design Sprint approach, which delivers innovation via viable concepts and prototypes in under a week. The Design Sprint embraces all Design Thinking phases, with an additional focus on idea generation, and using time-pressure trains teams to working effectively and systematically.

Partnerships

For project engagements and for longer term collaborations, we offer the following standard programs, which can all be customized according to situations and needs.

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Breakthrough innovation delivered.

An exemplary Design Thinking client case.

Where will the train stop?

Where can I find an empty seat?

Where can I board with my bike?

Dynamic Travel Information on Train Platforms

1. Overview

Rush hour at the train station: Where will the train stop? Where can I find an empty seat? Where can I board with my bike? In this age of rising passenger numbers and increasing frequency of incoming and outgoing trains, the passenger on the platform is under pressure. ProRail and Netherlands Railways (NS), the main public transport providers in the Netherlands, wanted to improve the transfer process on platforms: more comfortable, faster and safer. Agencies STBY and Edenspiekermann worked on innovative service concepts that contribute to a better transfer process - both from the perspective of the passenger experience and the business goals.

In this project, two new service elements were developed to improve the critical moment of getting in and out of the train. By providing travelers with real-time details about the train they are waiting for, they gain control and can better position themselves on the platform before the arrival of the train. The first service element, a 350 meter LED display on the train platform, gives passengers access to up-to-date information about the train that is arriving: where will the train stop in relation to the platform? Where will the doors be? What is the composition of the train (where are the 2nd, 1st and bike carriages)? And how busy is it at this moment in the different train carriages? The other service element, a plugin to the regular train-planning app, also provides travelers with information about the composition of the train and the availability of seats in the different carriages.

2. Process

The design is the result of an intensive discovery and co-creation process where Edenspiekermann, STBY, Prorail and Netherlands Railways (NS Reizigers), including travelers, worked closely together during the whole process, each contributing from their specific expertise and role.

In the initial design research we collected customer insights on train journeys. Passengers were asked to share their daily experiences in dedicated diaries and interviews. In co-creation workshops with them we defined their main problems and worked together on possible improvements.

Based on these customer insights, several possible solutions were developed to improve the transfer process: from communicating platforms, to mobile travel assistants, to new communication concepts preparing passengers for incoming trains. Looking at your phone is not always the best way to navigate through physical space. Standing in front of a sign can sometimes feel more natural or intuitive. This is why a combination of the extended app and the platform screen was chosen for the implementation test.

We evaluated and improved the selected concepts in workshops with all relevant stakeholders: communications managers, platform managers, real estate, travel information etc. Rough ideas became more feasible and connections to other projects were discovered.

In a 3-month test period the use and viability of the new service was validated in a live setting on a train line across The Netherlands (between Zwolle and Roosendaal). During the pilot, 11 trains on that line were equipped with infrared sensors that measured the level of occupancy of the train carriages.

Travelers could have access to this information by downloading the app on their smartphones and by consulting the LED screen which was installed on the platform of one of the Netherlands' main stations, 's-Hertogenbosch.

During the pilot, we used a mix of quantitative and qualitative research methods to evaluate the use and satisfaction of travelers with the new app and the LED display. Over 700 train travelers shared regular feedback through online questionnaires. This data allowed us to analyse the use of the new services and the effect on traveler's satisfaction. This was needed in order to build a business case for a future roll-out of the services. Illustrating this data with the personal-use stories from the qualitative research made it possible to enrich the results of the quantitative data and allowed for an engaging way to communicate them.

3. Benefits

A lot happens when a train arrives at a platform: travelers wanting to board are looking for the entrance to their required carriage (2nd class, 1st class, wheelchair access, or bike storage), and they are trying to get towards these doors quickly in order to have a place to sit. At the same time, other travelers are stepping off the train. These conflicting journeys create a mêlée of people walking on the platform, causing frustration among travelers.

We jointly worked on this innovative service concept that contributes to a better transfer process. Both from the perspective of the passenger experience and of the business goals: less crowded situations at the train doors; less dangerous situations; shorter waiting times; more comfort and overview for passengers; more efficient use of the platform, and shorter dispatch times for the trains.

"It is spectacular to see how strongly the visualisations work. This is a powerful way to point out the essence of the project. Really amazing."

Mirjam Meier, Netherlands Railways (NS)

This project helped Netherlands Railways (NS) and ProRail to respond to existing pain points and new opportunities, and effectively act on them. The combination of a physical solution with digital information provision is an integration that will be more and more important in the future. The project also shows how subsequent stages in the projects built up to a more systemic transformation of the service providers and an innovative final result for the train travelers.

4. Effects

The 3-month live pilot test was a success. The travelers clearly adopted and embraced the new services. Within a week, more than 1500 people applied to participate in the pilot with the app. Moreover, most (i.e. 70%) of the selected participants indicated that during the pilot they had been using the services for 'all or most' of their travels.

Moreover, the service providers NS and Prorail experienced great benefits from the new services, as the accumulated data, as provided through the sensors, can be used to more efficiently plan the deployment of train equipment.

The results of the pilot study are currently being used to investigate possibilities for a national rollout, providing a happy end to the 2-year long service design process.

Service Design projects do not tend to magically transform the service officering and way of working of client organisations in one big push. Rather, the process often involves a long trajectory of small steps that contribute to a substantial transformation. In this project, we learned again that one of the biggest values we as service design agencies can offer is to be committed to these challenging long-term transformation projects, and to support our clients during their journeys of gradual change. For this journey, we need to be as empathic with the organisations of the service provider as we are with the end users of the services.

This project shows therefore that close collaboration and a carefully staged service design process can lead to innovative services and are crucial for

"I'm very satisfied with this pilot. I hope it will be implemented in some way to increase traveling comfort."

From a participant in the pilot.

finding the best solutions for complex logistical challenges in the age of a transition to a more sustainable society.

The application of the LED screen has attracted quite some attention from the press and public. It won various national and international prizes, among them: D&AD Black Pencil Award, Sign Design Award, Rotterdam Design Award, and German Design Award. However, we feel that the overall and more holistic service design approach to the project is the underlying basis of its success. That is why we are submitting it for the Service Design Awards.