

MISC

DESIGN THINKING
AND INNOVATION

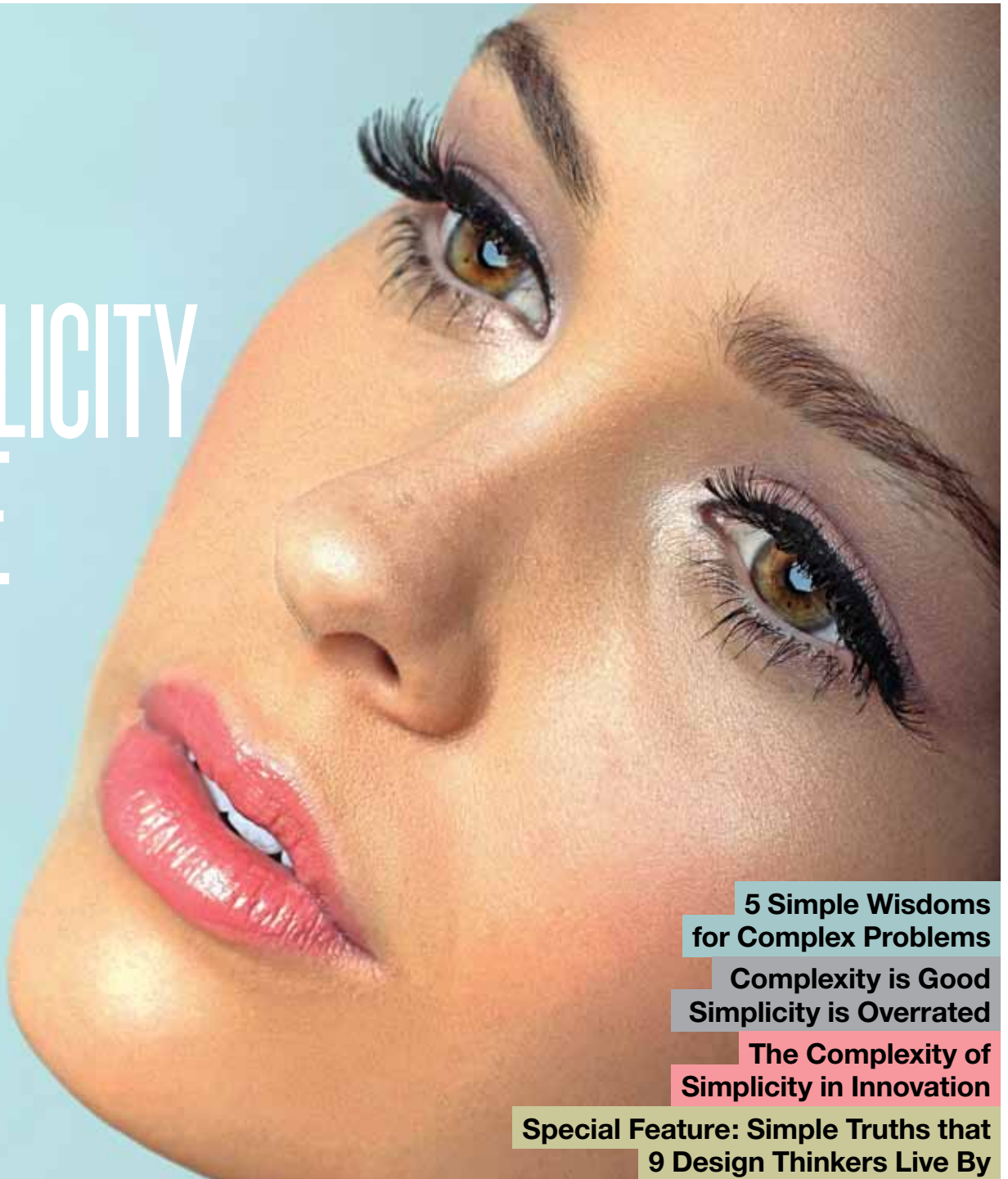
MOVEMENT
INTUITION
STRUCTURE
COMPLEXITY

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THE SIMPLICITY ISSUE



5 Simple Wisdoms
for Complex Problems

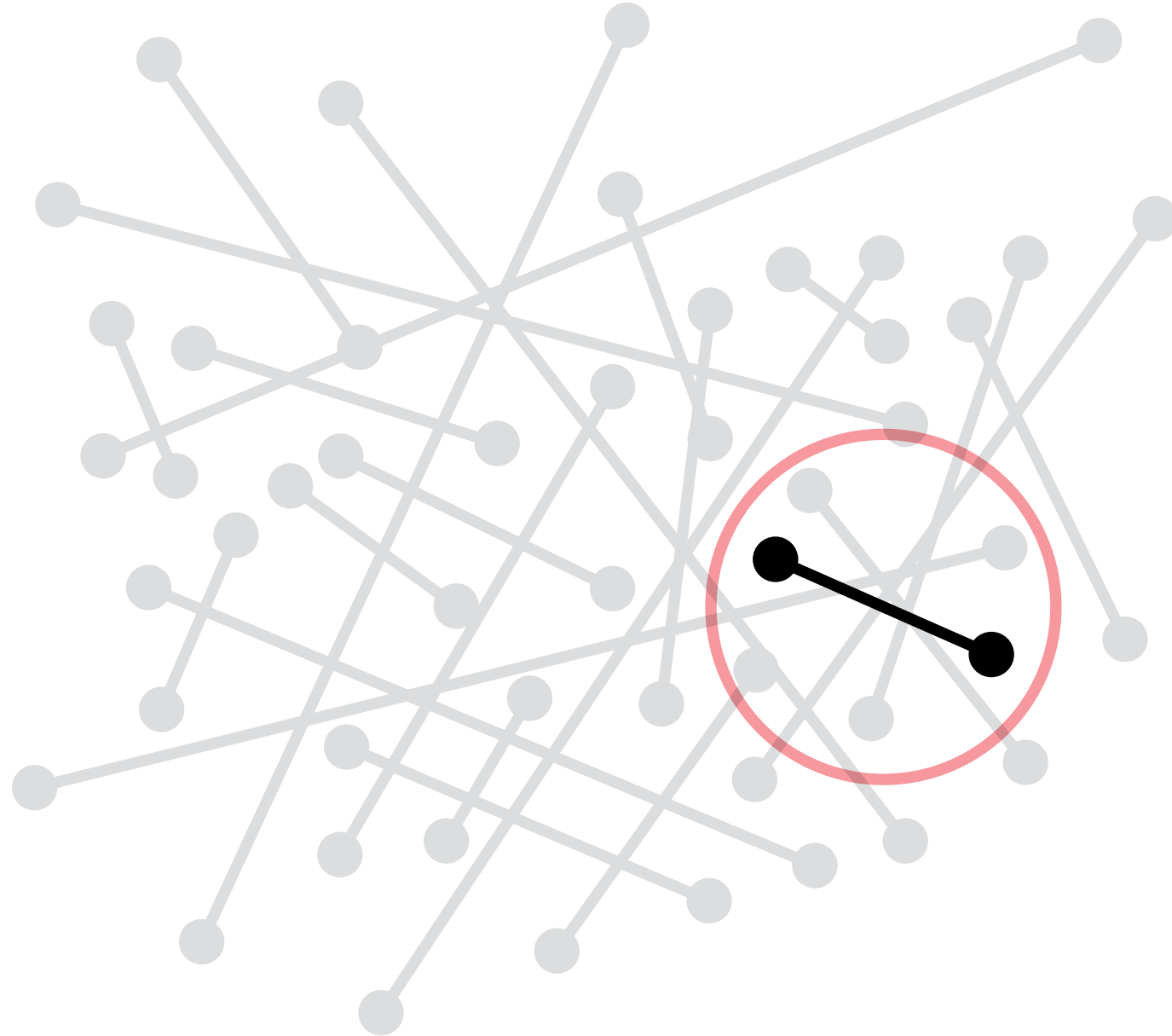
Complexity is Good
Simplicity is Overrated

The Complexity of
Simplicity in Innovation

Special Feature: Simple Truths that
9 Design Thinkers Live By

Delivering Simplicity:

Organizational Contexts and Service Design



By Jacqueline Wechsler

Within organizational contexts simplicity and complexity are intimately linked. In an increasingly complex world people want their interactions with organizations, and the products and services they provide to be simple. In a competitive market the delivery of simplicity is becoming a key differentiator.

Firstly, I must state for the record that I am a great fan of complexity. Complexity brings challenge, interest, intrigue, interdependence, possibility, innovation as well as challenges. Without complexity life

and work would be predictable and uninteresting. Designers are comfortable with complexity, particularly whilst navigating through the 'fuzzy front-end' of the design process and envisioning simple solutions to complex problems.

In my work as a designer, working within the domain of customer experience, I straddle the elusive dichotomy between simplicity and complexity on a daily basis. While I strive to design products and services that customers deem as simple, I am conscious of the fact that in order for me to achieve this outcome both I and the organization must embrace and learn to manage complexity.

A Complex World

We are living within a crowded and pluralistic consumer landscape and have a plethora of product and service offerings available to us at any given time. Due to the accessibility of technology, businesses have broadened the breadth of their service delivery over a wide variety of touchpoints. We can choose to interface with a brand in-store, online, on a mobile device, through an in-store kiosk or over the phone. Customers want to interact with organizations in a consistent way no matter which channel they use. From an ontological perspective, this is in itself a complex notion. A customer considers their relationship with a brand as a one-to-one relationship. In reality, a small army of people, utilizing a plethora of tools, systems and processes to service the customer, mediates this relationship. From the customer's point of view, it is more of a one-to-many relationship. Also, organizations and their staff interface with a multitude of customers with heterogeneous needs. So from the organizations' perspective, the relationship between the customer and the organization is actually a many-to-many one. Sounding complex yet? Organizations are by nature complex and dynamic. They exist in a continual state of flux, evolution and change – and they need to, in order to survive a competitive landscape. They must continually design and refine both their internal and customer facing processes and systems to keep ahead of the curve all while keeping things simple and consistent for their customers.

Designing Simplicity with Service Design

Service design is an emergent design discipline, which can assist organizations to navigate through these complexities and design holistic and simple services and experiences for customers. It is a cross-disciplinary design practice that focuses on the design of systems, artifacts and processes aimed at providing a holistic and valuable service to the customer over time, through an understanding of their needs.¹ Discussion of this design-led approach appears in business literature under a number of banners including, 'design thinking,' 'experience design,' 'interaction design,' 'human centered design' to name a few. Whatever the labels, the fact is that businesses are taking the area of customer experience very seriously. Within many organizations, customer advocacy is being measured through metrics such as the Net Promoter Score (NPS)² whereby customers are asked how likely they would be to recommend a brand to a friend on a scale of one to ten. The internet too has given consumers a powerful voice to praise or defame brands with ease. Many organizations are turning to designerly approaches for guidance. Service design applies design principles, processes and methods to the design of services. It explicitly asks a few questions important for managing complexity and providing remarkable customer experiences:

What should the customer experience be like through multiple touchpoints over time?

What should the staff experience be like to support this customer experience?

How can organizations enact an authentic brand experience for both their staff and their customers?

Service design is essentially about brand experience and how things are connected. It can be a powerful approach to help simplify customer interactions, improve customer experience and facilitate individuals having a positive one-to-one relationship with a brand.

The services sector is growing as is the number of service design consultancies, practitioners and university courses emerging to assist with this demand. In 2011, services contributed to approximately 75%

of the GDP in both the EU and the USA.³ Increasingly, organizations are turning to services to differentiate themselves and dodge the 'commodity trap,' i.e. a situation where consumers purchase products according to price alone. For example, Apple has cornered the media player market by offering portable media devices that sit within a broader service eco-system. Not only does Apple sell portable media products but it also provides complementary services through the iTunes platform where people can purchase, catalogue and share their media. Through their delivery of a Product Service System, Apple has made media acquisition, storage and consumption simple.

Service Design is closely related to customer experience, business strategy and organizational change. It exists in a 'translation space' between strategy and delivery and requires commitment and collaboration from within the organization. The fact that services are indeed co-created between various staff members through multiple touchpoints necessitates a relationship with the domain of organizational change. My work as a service designer requires that I work in a collaborative manner with many parts of a business, and through research with customers, I assist business stakeholders to understand the types of experiences that customers value. In suggesting service improvements, my work also requires that I assist organizations to both understand and be able to discuss the related complexity. Often, staff members are not used to thinking outside their particular activities or spheres of influence, and their understanding of the different services and associated processes that facilitate the general customer experience tend to be fragmented. According to Peter Senge (1990),⁴ innovation stems from the 'creative tension' between current realities and future possibilities.

Through customer research, visualization and modeling, organizations can understand and discuss what is and what can be. In this context, models and the use of visualization can help simplify complexity. For example, customer journey maps⁵ can help staff understand the interdependencies required from a customers' perspective and can provide a framework to map the current state and identify opportunities for improvement. Another effective tool that can help enable empathy amongst a cross-disciplinary team is the delivery of personas constructed

// **service design can play a valuable role in helping organizations manage complexity and deliver simplicity to the customer** //

from research with actual customers. These fictitious characters can assist staff to understand the heterogeneous goals, motivations and needs of their customers in order to identify opportunities. There is no such thing as 'the customer' in a singular sense. These models can help organizations

conceptualize, manage, modify and discuss the many-to-many relationship, which is the reality of service delivery. Simply put, service design can play a valuable role in helping organizations manage complexity and deliver simplicity to the customer. ////

1 <http://www.cxacademy.org/a-definition-for-service-design.html>
2 <http://www.netpromoter.com/>
3 <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2012.html>
4 Peter Senge, 1990, *The Fifth Discipline*,
5 Shostack, L. G. (1984). "Design Services that Deliver." *Harvard Business Review*(84115): 133-139

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