

MISC

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and foresight

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Redefining
Customer
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Reimagining
Capitalism
P.38

Reification and
Research in
the Real World
P.86

Rethinking
Indulgence
P.100

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Contents

Theory, So What? 8

Signal, So What? 10

Insight, So What? 12

More Human than Human 24

Redefining Customer Experience 34

Reimagining Capitalism 38

Developing a Killer Foresight Strategy 54

Rethinking Design: A Perspective from
the Lululemon Whitespace Team 58

Reification and Research in the Real World 86

Create 96

Rethinking Indulgence 100



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As publishers of *MISC*, our aim is to provide a new level of understanding in the fields of insight and foresight. We navigate the blurred boundaries of business, design, and innovation through in-depth articles from some of the preeminent voices of design thinking, technology, customer experience, and strategy.

Idea Couture helps organizations navigate and innovate in complex and uncertain environments. We use design thinking methodologies to solve problems and exploit business opportunities – generating new growth, meaningful differentiation, and economic value.

By taking an insight and foresight lens to our explorations in *MISC*, we can thoroughly examine the impacts and opportunities of change in a vast range of industries, allowing businesses to plan for the present and the future.

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As a result, students at CEDIM develop an extensive sensitivity of their social, economic, and cultural environment, and go on to make real, pragmatic change in the world of design and innovation.

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Great Minds



Reframing thinking and doing within service design and delivery

BY JAX WECHSLER

Objects of design are becoming increasingly complex. In a growing number of cities around the world, organizations and governments are applying design approaches to help solve a variety of problems, including social, wellness, and environmental challenges. Businesses are also increasingly relying on design methods to effectively deliver more functional and innovative multichanneled service-systems. These days, design techniques are commonly being applied to the non-tangible, especially within the multifaceted domain of service.

PHOTO: DANIEL FOSTER

Unlike traditional design domains, service design does not stop with the delivery of a product, building, or thing. Service design requires continuous implementation and depends on the ongoing collective efforts of large numbers of diverse stakeholders – all necessary for good service experience. Here, we explore how collective design and co-creation can help to reframe thinking and doing within organizations. How can design support ongoing implementation and its associated change processes? How can design empower not only customers or service recipients, but also those involved in the service delivery, such as organizational members and partners?

Service design is complex; many people need to work together to deliver valuable experiences to customers via distinct products and services that function holistically and seamlessly. It requires embracing change to create value, change that is co-created by many. Consider the vast range of people involved in the design and delivery of a financial or medical service, for example. Different stakeholders are required for different things at different times. This can be challenging to coordinate, particularly when stakeholders have dynamic requirements and needs. Just like a seamless concerto, service design and delivery can be challenging for organizations to orchestrate effectively.

Henry Mintzberg, an authority in organizational studies, defines organizations as “collective action for a common purpose.” We all have our own meaning-making frameworks informed by our experiences, education, social groups, and culture. The notion of a common purpose can, therefore, be problematic when everyone sees and acts in terms of his or her own perspective. Each individual has their own mental model, and this disparity can result in working within silos. In organizational contexts, the mental models of employees, customers, and partners can vary considerably, but the service design journey often demands a modification of these mental models and a redefinition of personal and collective assumptions.

Questions like “what are we delivering together?,” “what is my role in this?,” and “what does my organization stand for and why?” can shift as a consequence of the design journey. This is important as individual and collective thought informs decision-making and behavior. As such, some of the critical questions designers should be asking are not only about how they can ensure that their proposed designs get implemented, but also how their work can support collective action and the associated change processes required by implementation. What can they deliver to the organization that will help guide change and

support others in their work? What tools could they create for organizational stakeholders to empower them to sustain widespread change? Using some examples from an Australian case study located in a large telecommunications organization, let’s reflect on how design artifacts (also known as design objects) can help support service design and implementation.

Design artifacts are created through the design process and include visual representations such as infographics, videos, posters, models, visualizations, and maps. Well-considered design artifacts are useful tools for navigating social processes, helping to reframe thinking, and guiding stakeholders through messy design and implementation processes towards better collective outcomes.

As Einstein noted, you can’t solve a complex problem by using the same consciousness that created it. The way individuals think independently will inevitably affect collective outcomes, and the resulting customer experience. Otto Scharmer, in his book *Theory U: Leading from the Future as it Emerges*, discusses the importance of dialogue and reframing thinking for co-creating improved futures. *Theory U* points to the importance of supporting generative dialogue in designing and enacting improved futures. According to *Theory U*, the quality of results produced by any system depends on the quality of awareness from which people in the system operate. Scharmer suggests that the formula for a successful change process is not “form follows function,” but “form follows consciousness.” By reframing consciousness, catalyzing empathy, supporting reflection, and generative dialogue, collective co-creation can come from a deeper level of humanity or intention. Scharmer and his colleagues, including Peter Senge, have written about these ideas in their work on presencing and *Theory U*, offering practical tools and concepts to support change, innovation, and the collective co-creation of improved futures.

In 2013, I conducted an academic inquiry exploring the roles played by design artifacts within human-centered innovation contexts. Through a practice-led case study located in a large Australian telecommunications organization, we investigated the different roles some specific design artifacts played within a design-led innovation project. This involved the design of a new ordering and activation portal for complex IT products using human-centered design methods. The objects studied included infographics, videos presenting findings from customer research, personas, journey maps, a video communicating the conceptual design of the proposed service, design principles, high-level specifications, and wire-frames.



Within the study, several distinct roles were noticed for the artifacts, pointing to their value as mediatory and enabling tools within innovation contexts.

The case demonstrated that design artifacts can function as political and persuasive tools, facilitate customer empathy amongst diverse staff, support organizational change by communicating customer-centric insights, provide valuable sensemaking frameworks, support collaboration and reframe thinking, communicate design knowledge, share visions for the future, and motivate collective action. How design artifacts can reframe thinking – and how it is possible to do the same with service design projects – is detailed below using examples from the case.

Unlike design, innovation requires implementation. Innovation also requires persuasion, as do most service design initiatives. Executives need to be persuaded to fund projects, and many different stakeholders throughout the design and implementation journey require reasons to buy-in. To enact change, people first need to understand why change is required. Design artifacts, due to their engaging formats, can communicate the “why” in accessible ways. If compelling enough, well-produced design artifacts may be shared across the organization organically, creating a persuasive groundswell for person-centric change.

In the case project, the design team created a series of videos consisting of first-person customer quotes discussing their challenges with the current services. The videos brought the existing problems to life in a more compelling format than a text-only report would have. The format helped stakeholders feel empathy for the customers, and staff shared it around the organization unprompted. The videos were shown to call center staff to help these employees understand the frustrations of the people on the other end of the phone, and were also included in a traveling roadshow aimed at staff who service this customer group to promote understanding of customer frustrations. These objects gave the customer a voice. They also helped staff understand the impact of their collective efforts when it comes to customer experience. As the videos were shared organically, it can be assumed that well-produced design artifacts that touch the human heart have the potential to spread customer empathy within an organization, supporting person-centric organizational change. Additionally, by sharing narratives about improved customer experiences, staff were reminded that their actions contribute to a shared common purpose that can have a positive impact on people.

Design artifacts can also offer accessible frameworks for stakeholders by providing cognitive frameworks to orient both individual and collective thinking. Customer journey maps – which visually depict a customer’s pathway through a service and its associated touch-points – for example, can provide useful tools to orient discussion about present and future states. Senge talks about innovation stemming from the creative tension between the current state and a preferred future state, and these types of maps can provide useful frameworks for stakeholders to consider. They can outline things like the customer’s journey and their challenges, as well as opportunities for improvement; they can help to reframe thinking and provide shared reference points to orient thinking, dialogue, and action.

Design artifacts such as these can also provide valuable “boundary objects” that sit between different organizational groups, supporting the collaboration required for better service outcomes. Whereas innovation is supported by the dissolution of organizational silos and stimulation of collaboration between departments, visual frameworks can help to seed innovation, smoothing the translation between differing mental models and supporting teams to think, talk, and act together.

In the case project, a series of journey maps were used to communicate the customer experience, and clearly illustrated the complexity of current ordering and activation systems. They visually depicted the different touch-points, tools, forms, and systems customers required to order and activate products, and served as a framework to illustrate the current state, displaying the different staff departments and systems currently relied upon. Pain points and opportunities were indicated across the ordering, and an activation customer lifecycle highlighted areas where service improvement should be focused. These maps were used to springboard conversations about how to address current issues. They also played an important persuasive function, as they illustrated the inefficiencies of the existing service, substantiating the need for the proposed design recommendations.

In organizational contexts, where lots of different groups need to work together to deliver complex services, design objects like journey maps can help staff understand

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Design artifacts, due to their engaging formats, can communicate the “why” in accessible ways.
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how their work fits into a larger ecosystem, helping to reframe thought about individual work practices in relation to an integrated whole; they offer stakeholders and staff alike a more holistic overview.

This social, collaborative dimension of service design is important to consider when determining how to support change processes, and is a space in which designers are increasingly playing. They may consider asking the following questions in order to support service design and implementation:

- / **Which stakeholders are important for the initiative during both the design and ongoing deployment phases?**
- / **Who needs to be involved in design and delivery? Who needs to be persuaded?**
- / **What design objects can support the work of these different stakeholders during implementation? What might others be able to use to persuade change and widely communicate the service vision?**

Service innovation requires a reframing of how people think and act, and well considered design artifacts can play powerful roles as mediatory, supporting tools. Design artifacts provide organizations with influential social tools that can assist diverse stakeholders to implement change. Within service contexts, well-considered design objects can help make change stick. *////*

Jax Wechsler is a human-centered design practitioner at Sticky Design Studio, and also teaches UX and design. She is based in Sydney, Australia.

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