LEARNING DESIGN

Critical Analysis

Beth Pennington

University of Maryland Global Campus
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Dr. Andrew Gump
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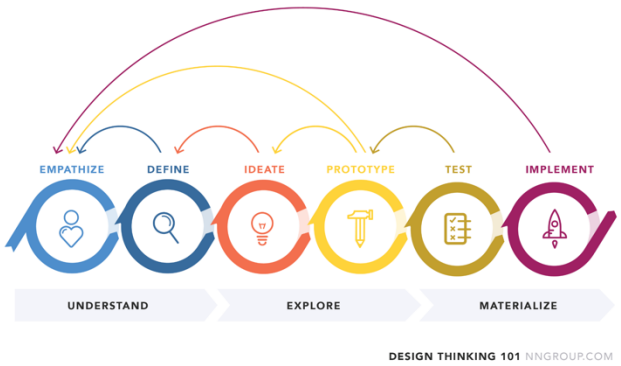
Table of Contents

Introduction

Design thinking is not a new way of thinking. Since the dawn of humankind, we have been using design thinking to plan, design, and develop tools that make our lives easier. Whenever we take a step back and examine all sides of an issue, develop potential solutions or action plans, and then take action to solve problems, we are using design thinking. This solution-based thinking begins with a specific goal and then investigates all possible paths toward that goal (Purdy, 2020). While the process of design thinking and the process followed to reach a solution may seem simple, easy, or even a magical feat that only people born with talents can pull off, it is essential to note that just because we don't see the work of design doesn't mean it's not there (Clark, 2020). Finding solutions to instructional problems is working effectively with a team and following the six steps in the learning design process.

Introduction to the Six Steps of Design Thinking

When presented with a unique challenge, a systematic approach must be used to develop and test data-driven and data-supported solutions. The advantages to design thinking outlined in the six steps of the learning design model are easy to conclude. The diagram below shows the steps linearly, but as you can see, the model allows for flexibility. With each iteration within the process, the opportunity to analyze and adjust is present.



The process itself is centered around the needs of the end-user. It begins with an understanding by key stakeholders that there is an issue or opportunity for

improvement. Then, as the process evolves, user data is used to create artifacts that address the user's actual needs.

As a caveat, allowing the expertise of team members to be considered when designing possible solutions, you get a greater buy-in for the process and the outcomes. Following this process allows your team's expertise and creativity to shine.

Six Steps: Learning Design Model

Empathize

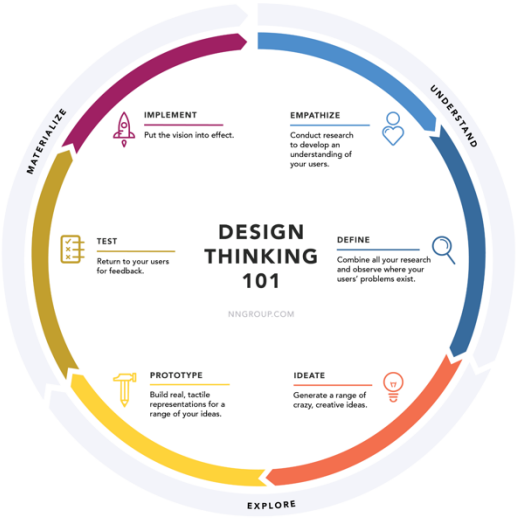
Define

Ideate

Prototype

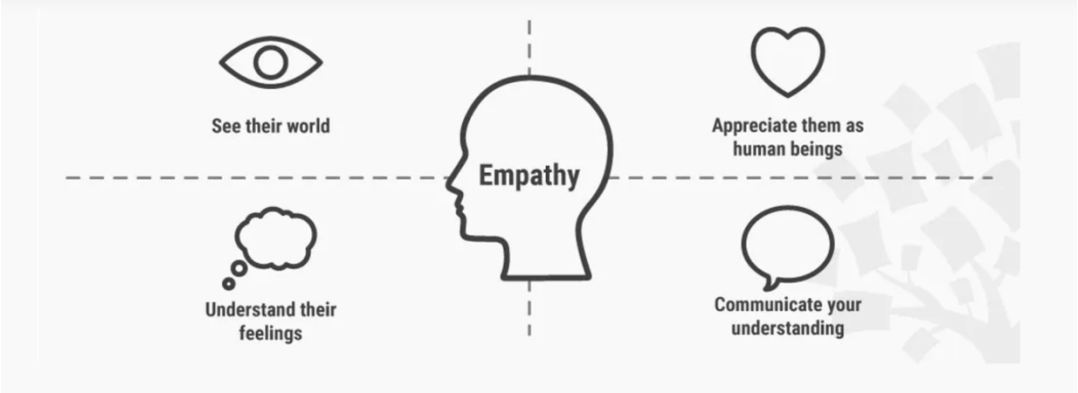
Test

Implement



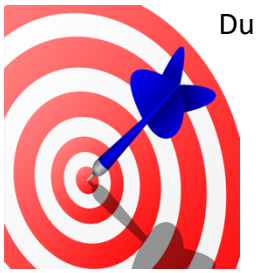
Empathize

It is crucial for you, as a design thinker, to empathize with the people you're designing for so that you can understand their needs, thoughts, emotions, and motivations (Mortensen, 2022).



When beginning the design process, it is essential to approach the solution with a beginner's mindset. Gathering as much data as possible as part of the design process is necessary. Interviews, surveys, check-ins, and digital suggestion boxes keep open the lines of communication regarding the learner's needs. By taking the time to determine the who? what? why? and how? Asking questions such as: Who is this individual? What motivates them? and Why do they need to acquire this new skill? will help the designer work from the learner's perspective and help developers design experiences with the learner in mind. It is essential to keep in mind that no two learners are the same. Be sure that your contacts and data include information from extreme users. It is vital to "ask the right questions" (Gump, 2022).

Define



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During the next design phase, the define stage, the designer evaluates the qualitative and quantitative data collected during the empathize phase. This phase allows the design team to pinpoint the core problem and highlight areas where improvements can be made. The statement of the problem must be made in a human-centric manner.

The define stage will allow the team to collect ideas on how to solve the identified problem. During this phase, the design team will often encounter suggestions that stakeholders, clients,

and even end-users have suggested. These suggestions are essential when moving to the next step, Ideation.

Ideate

In the define phase, the learning design team identified the needs to be addressed. During the

Ideation phase, the team works together to brainstorm creative ideas to solve the user needs. This phase brings your team members together to share ideas and build on the opinions of others. This phase must be approached from a place of empathy. Empathy is crucial to a human-centered design process such as design thinking because it allows you to set aside your assumptions about the world and gain real insight into users and their needs.

"The design thinking process kicks into gear when a cross-functional group gathers to brainstorm possible solutions" (Boller, 2020). To be successful, this group must contain a diverse group of people with skills in technology, visual, and instructional design. Communications with SMEs, target learners and stakeholders need to be integrated to ensure the plan is on target.

Prototype

This phase aims to understand what components of your ideas work and which do not. In this phase, you begin to weigh the impact vs. feasibility of your thoughts through feedback on your prototypes (Purdy, 2020).

This step also aims to create prototypes that can be quickly tested with learners who have been identified in earlier phases as ones who provide quality feedback. These models should be "quick and dirty" prototypes that can be discarded if they are not a good fit for the program. These prototypes do not need to be fancy and can even be simple pen and paper activities. Based on the feedback received from stakeholders, learners, and other design team members, a solution will begin to take form. It is then essential to put these solutions in from more learners and verify whether the goal of the learning experience has been achieved.

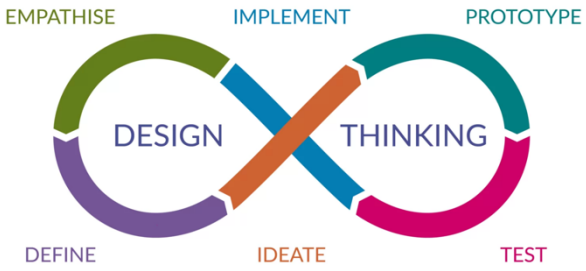
Test

Testing may seem like the final step in the process, but it is simply time to put the prototype in front of real customers to determine the validity of the process. You will need to ask yourself, "does the design meet the needs of the learner?" and "does this solve the problem?" As the learning experience is being executed, data, feedback, and testing results must be evaluated for success.

Implement

Once you have received approval to move forward with your solution, it is time for implementation. During implementation, the design team's transformative solution begins to touch the lives of end-users. The desired outcome is for the learning experience to be empathetic, engaging, and successful. However, as the implementation is occurring, it is vital to continue to monitor and adjust the program as needed to ensure the highest level of success.

Final Thoughts on the Six Steps



https://www.system-concepts.com/insights/design-thinking-introduction/

The key to the successful design of learning experiences is flexibility. Designers should not think of the Learning Design Process as linear. It should be thought of as a framework. "Each phase is meant to be iterative, and cyclical as opposed to a strictly linear process" (n.d, 2022). Once the learning experience has been implemented, it is essential to monitor the processes to assess and determine if the design solution works accurately. If gaps or issues arise, it is important to loop back to whatever phase of the learning design process is required to make the needed adjustments to the program. It may also be necessary to repeat stages until an impactful outcome is achieved. Considering the different backgrounds and expertise of the design team members can help ensure that each step is sound and that the team stays focused on the project's goals.

Conflict Resolution Strategies

Dealing with conflict between team members can cost time and effort on any project. An effective leader must have a toolkit of strategies to address a wide range of potential conflicts. Simple conflicts related to meeting availability are part of reality for many remote teams. As a team, we prefer to utilize a collaborative, compromise-based response. For example, meetings are set using an availability poll tool, and a recording is offered for those who cannot meet at the best time determined by the software.

In some cases, conflicts can arise based on the feelings of an individual team member. They may feel undervalued in meetings or unheard. One way to avoid this is to foster an environment of intense collaboration in meetings. By structuring arrangements to allow each member to speak and contribute, team members should feel sufficiently heard. Alternatively, the effective delegation of labor can be another way of addressing these conflicts. By ensuring that each team member understands and respects not only their role but those of their teammates, we would be able to avoid any perceptions of overvalued or undervalued input, as the importance of each role and contribution would be firmly established.

Designing for Change

Real change requires a shift in organizational culture, and cultural change doesn't happen without much repetition and rationales for the change, so that core beliefs and values change too (n.d, 2020). Below is a diagram of Kotter's eight-stage process of creating a significant difference (Pollack, 2015).

Kotter's eight-stage process for creating change within an organization is based upon the importance of helping others see the need for change. By being bold and inspirational, an

organization can develop a sense of urgency and the need for change. Forming a cohesive vision for the future of any organization can help make the future a reality. The key to successful implementation is demonstrating the need for change and encouraging buy-in from critical stakeholders and learners. It is essential to "articulate the connections between the new behaviors and organizational success, ensuring they continue until they become strong enough to replace old habits" (Pollack, 2015).

Conclusion

Learning design is a process that allows for the incorporation of empathy for the learner and change management for an organization. The non-linear process is flexible and encourages buy-in throughout the organization. Using the learning design process to develop learning opportunities is very efficient and has also had great success in driving change management.

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