



AN INTRODUCTION TO SERVICE DESIGN

WHAT IS SERVICE DESIGN?

Service design is a method used to develop a new service offering or to improve an existing service offering.

Service design takes the perspective of people who use the service as well as those who provide it.

The goal is to develop a service that meets the needs of both the users and the providers of the service as closely as possible, and to do so in a manner that is as effective and efficient as possible for the organisation.

What are the origins of service design?

Developers have successfully developed and refined their creative methods throughout the years.

The increasing importance and growing complexity of services mean that developers now are also asked to find solutions in a similar way for service provision.

Over the past ten years, design consultancies worldwide have been applying current research to improve the means of doing this. *Namahn* is one of these consultancies.

WHAT IS CHARACTERISTIC OF THIS METHODOLOGY?

A service offering created from design practice is based on several core values:

- people are central;
- solutions result from collaboration;
- the full context is worth examining;
- design techniques ensure concrete and solution-oriented thinking;
- it is a step-by-step process that is regularly tested and evaluated.

People are central

Service design views service provision from the point of view of people: the user of the service and the service provider. The objective is to develop services that are useful, useable and valuable from the point of view of the user, and effective and efficient from the perspective of the service provider.

In the service design methodology, you complement quantitative research with qualitative research to reach deeper design insights. In concrete terms, this means

that you go on site where the service is being used or will be used, and you observe and ask questions of the (future) users.

You want to find out what you often can't via quantitative research: what are the real needs, desires and aspirations?

Solutions result from collaboration

A service does not exist in isolation; it's about people, processes, and partners - in short, a whole and its related parts. As many different stakeholders (and disciplines) as possible are engaged in the process to capture, comprehend and make visible this complexity.

Service design brings techniques to bear to get all stakeholders to work together and create solutions in a way that is understandable and accessible for everyone.

In addition, this way of working leads to the creation of a consensus. A new or updated service offering usually goes together, in fact, with a change process within the organisation. Involving employees in this process is an important step in creating consensus.

Creating space for participation, creation and failure is crucial.

The full context is worth examining

Service design searches for holistic solutions; you look at the service in its entirety. You look at all the interactions between the user and the service, through time and channels, and adjust these as efficiently and consistently as possible with each other.

The interests and ideas of all stakeholders are taken into account here, not only those of end-users and service providers, but also those of management and other interested parties.

Looking holistically for solutions also means that you take into account the organisation: its goals, capabilities, processes and structure. You figure out together with the organisation what is needed to make the future service offering possible.

You also look at what the differences are between today and tomorrow, and how you - often in phases - can grow towards the future service provision.

Design techniques ensure concrete and solution-oriented thinking

The designer uses techniques that stimulate empathy, creativity and

analytical thinking. These techniques are brought to bear in service design in order to find solutions that are smart, valuable for people and feasible for the organisation.

To make the idea clear to everyone, solutions are worked out at an early stage in diagrams, drawings and prototypes. By introducing everything in as visual a manner as possible, everyone knows what it's about. A picture paints a thousand words.

Frequent testing and evaluation

Design is a way of working in which one departs from several rough ideas. These are continuously improved, refined and rejected. Ideas are run by stakeholders and users as soon as possible. Concepts are worked out in prototypes so that they can be tested in a realistic usage environment.

This frequent testing is essential. A service offering is complex; there are many elements that cannot be captured by thinking about them from an ivory tower. In practice, testing ideas is a boundary condition for success.

WHAT DOES IT DELIVER?

Simply put, service design leads to more efficient service provision (at a lower cost) and at the same time to greater satisfaction, both among end-users and among employees.

While this may seem like a paradox, for the following reasons it is not:

- by examining the service offering in its entirety, you get a complete picture that helps you to adapt the different services and underlying processes to each other;
- by analysing, visualising and designing the updated service together with your employees, you create a dynamic in which everyone feels involved. In this way, you increase the feeling of responsibility and engagement among your employees;
- in the long-run, service design is a continuous process, a way of working, and an attitude in which you take a fresh look at your service provision each day and tinker with it continuously.