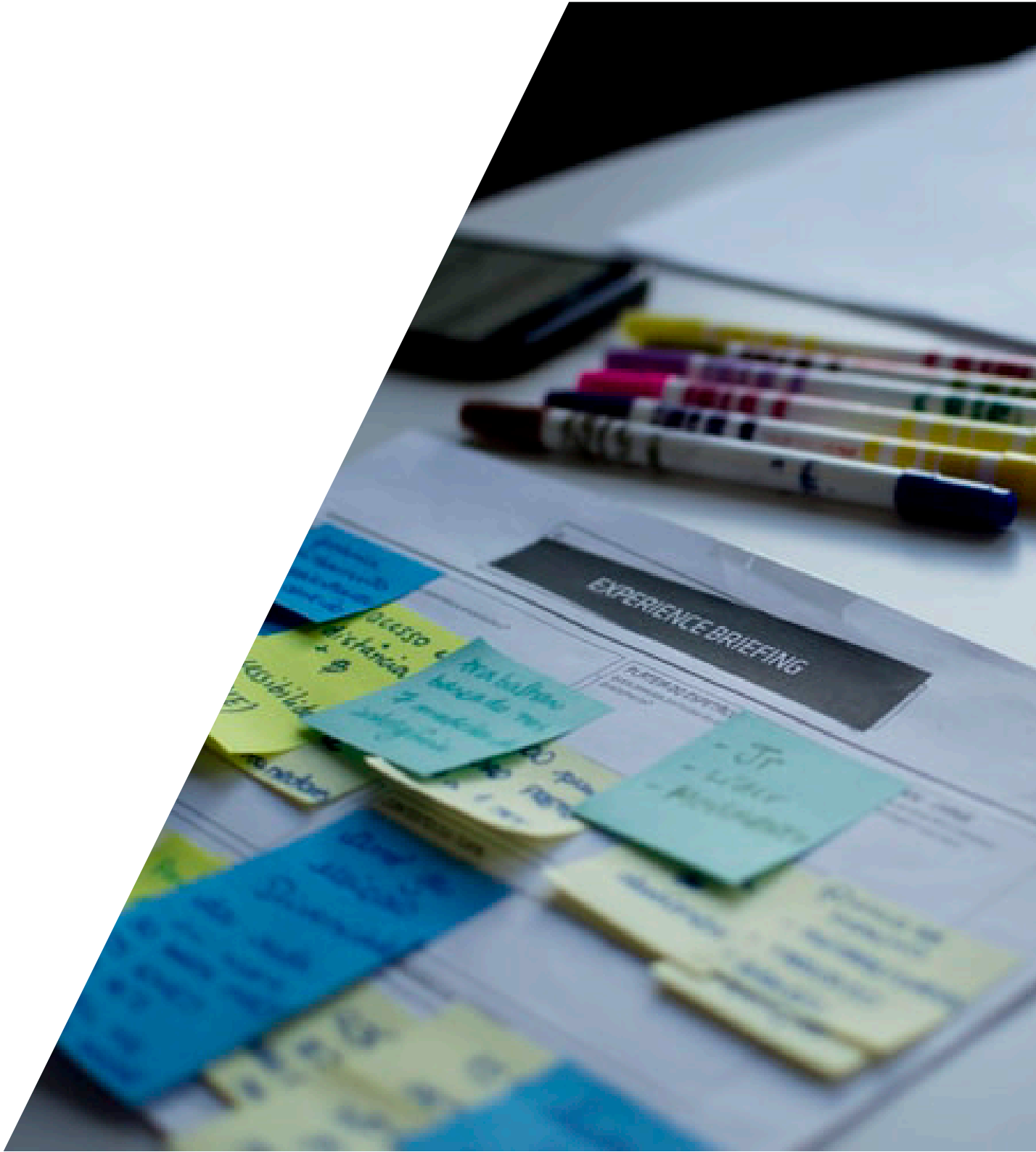
focusu

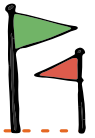
ALL ABOUT YOU!

Design Thinking



hello@focusu.com

TABLE OF CONTENTS



Chapter 1:
What is Design Thinking?

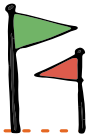
When we hear the term 'design thinking,' we automatically assume that it has something to do with the creative space, and would be better reserved for the understanding of designers themselves. But that would be a big mistake on our part.

Design thinking has been around since ages, and all innovators in the fields of music, art, science, literature, and business have practiced it in some capacity or another.

So, what is it exactly?

Design thinking is a continual process wherein we try and seek further understanding of a certain problem by looking at what's beyond immediate comprehension. The design thinking process requires us to understand the user and redefine the problem in a way that offers creative and innovative solutions.

Designers have used certain human-focused techniques to solve problems in several imaginative ways, and these techniques have proven to be relevant for problem-solving across all fields of work. In fact, several top-notch organizations and schools around the world, such as Apple, Google, Samsung, and universities like Harvard,



Stanford, and MIT, have inculcated the values of design thinking into their daily work and curriculums as well.

In essence, design thinking is a way of formulating the thought process and using a collection of well-understood methods to approach our problems differently. When we design products and services, using certain design thinking methods can help us develop an understanding of our clients and their exact needs. Design thinking involves the human psyche into business by pushing the need for us to observe our clients and develop an empathetic relationship with them.

HOW IS DESIGN THINKING USED?

Design thinking first encourages us to go through a process of questioning the problem, identifying the assumptions, and further analyzing the implications of the issue at hand. When we encounter a problem that we don't have an expertise in navigating, we can use the process of design thinking to pose the problem in more human-centric ways, thereby easing

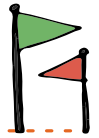
Image Credits: Pixabay

our understanding of the problem altogether. First, the problem can be re-framed in a more understandable way, following which, a creative brainstorming session helps bring solutions that can effectively tackle the problem. In design thinking, experimentation is key. You will find people using this technique by including prototyping, testing, sketching, and finding new ways to assess ideas.

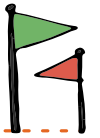
Design thinking has a deep-rooted interest in real-world techniques. In the world of innovation, it is certainly not enough to follow just historical data or market research to identify what could potentially click with the target audience. Design thinking is used by professionals to engage customers using prototypes, and the insights they gain from these methods are used to innovate with minimized risks and uncertainties.

HOW DOES DESIGN THINKING PROVE TO BE USEFUL FOR A COMPANY?

Design thinking has a significant impact on a company's culture. The values associated with design thinking, such as empathy, teamwork, experimentation, and a curiosity to learn, are deeply embedded in human nature. When these values are brought to the fore, it automatically influences the way in which people work and further creates a company culture that relies on a commitment to innovate at every chance. Several companies, knowingly or unknowingly, set up people for failure by instilling in



them a fear of messing up. When employees are not given the liberty to mock up new ideas and test them to see how they function, they will feel less innovative when the time to create actually comes around. Organizations that implement design thinking use failure as a tool to know what works and what doesn't, rather than a reason to reprimand those who like to think outside the box. Overall, a company's success lies in the way its employees work, and when you give your team time to explore uncharted territories and do fulfilling work, you are carving the road to success.



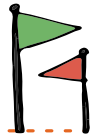
Chapter 2:
The five stages of design thinking – and how it can be used in an organization

One of the most reputable design schools around the world, The Hasso Plattner Institute of Design at Stanford (d.school), has categorized design thinking into five stages. Interestingly, these stages are not sequential, and can be used in any which order, sometimes even parallel to one another. These steps have gone forth to become a highly valuable set of references for when an organization looks for ways in which they can boost innovation.

These five steps can individually contribute to the ultimate goal – which is to come to a deeper understanding of the customer and their thought process.

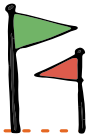
1. Empathise

We are often taught that the world of business does not have space for more human-like emotions like compassion and empathy. But this is certainly a dated notion. The ability of an organization to understand their customer lies in the way they match their thinking process. Empathy proves to be a very useful tool



for the same. An organization must cultivate an empathetic understanding of the problem they are currently facing, and look at ways in which they can deal with it from a human-centric viewpoint. This would require employees to interact with experts and discover solutions through observation and engagement, but with a special focus on empathising with the person. Empathy allows you to look into people's experiences and their motivations, and absorbing the physical environment of the person goes a long way in understanding the problem from a fresh perspective. Design thinking relies on human-focused values, and there is no bigger lesson than obtaining a deep personal understanding of the issues involved. One key element is to set aside assumptions and look for new things that can be learnt from people who are actually facing the problem, and find out what exactly can resolve the issue at hand.

At this stage of the process, the focus lies on gathering relevant information that can be used to understand the user and their needs, while also tackling problems first-hand.

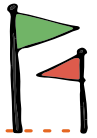


2. Define

Following the empathise stage is the Define stage, which essentially, requires you to define the problem at hand. With the information obtained from the empathise stage, you can move forward and analyse the observations you have made by connecting with the users of your product or service. The team will need to offer their inputs to define the core problems that have been identified and put them down in writing.

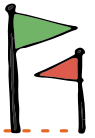
One key factor that comes with this stage is the need to retain the human-centric value based on which observations were made in the empathise stage. For instance, if your company is involved in skincare, your observation must not be “We need to inculcate more focus products that specifically target our male demographic”. Doing so shifts back the focus to your organization and what you need to target. Instead, you must define the problem as “More men are opening up to inculcate a thorough skincare regimen in their day-to-day life.”

The Define stage is important because it gives the team the right starting point to establish the functions and features that will enable problem-solving. By defining the problem, it gives the team members a basis to begin brainstorming ideas that will eventually lead to solutions that can effectively handle the problem at hand.



3. Ideate

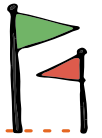
The basic requirements of the empathise and define stages were to get to know your target audience better and synthesise your observations with more clarity. After these stages, you are left with a human-centric problem statement, and based on this very statement, you begin your journey into finding a solution. This is the point where the designers in your team begin to generate ideas that can effectively address the problem statement. Designers are encouraged to think outside the box and come up with non-traditional ways of looking at the issue. The core of this stage lies in the process of free thinking, because ultimately, the goal is to find a solution that hasn't been implemented before. For this, organizations all over use a variety of ideation techniques like SCAMPER, Worst Possible Idea, Brainstorm, and more. There is a certain degree of importance laid upon using a fresh mind to generate ideas. The beginning of the ideation phase is definitely the perfect time to bring forth as many new ideas and solutions as possible. Once enough ideas have been collected, you must pick the ones that stand out the most, or look the most promising. These ideas will then be tested to find whether they lead directly to the solution, or whether some other external elements are required to effectively lead up to the solution.



4. Prototype

This stage leads us to the part where the ‘experimentation’ part of design thinking comes to the fore. First, a few of the scaled-down or inexpensive versions of the product or features in the product are produced by the design team. These prototypes give the design team a good starting point to actually begin testing out the ideas and solutions that were gathered during the ideate phase. The problem statement is referred to multiple times, and after that, each problem solution is looked at in a more elaborate manner. Each solution is tested out with the prototype one at a time, and during this investigation process, they are either accepted and then improved, or rejected based on the response gathered from users.

The prototype stage is essential in giving the design team a perspective into how the problem-solutions actually pan out in real life. It gives a deeper understanding of the inherent problems and roadblocks with regards to the product, and allows the organization to gather a clearer perspective of how customers would actually feel about the end product.



5. Test

The last stage of the design thinking process is the testing phase. By this point, designers would have identified and gathered the solutions they think would best tackle the problem at hand. These solutions are then tested on the complete product to understand the extent to which the problem is solved. Although this comes across as the final stage of the design thinking process, it is ultimately just part of an iterative course of action. This implies that, not all problems are solved by the end of this stage. The results from the testing phase can give designers access to more alterations to the end product. In this stage, problems can be redefined, the user experience is accounted for, and the product is adjusted accordingly. It is a continual process wherein designers seek to gather the deepest understanding of the product and users, so as to give rise to a solution that can give value to the entire process of design thinking.

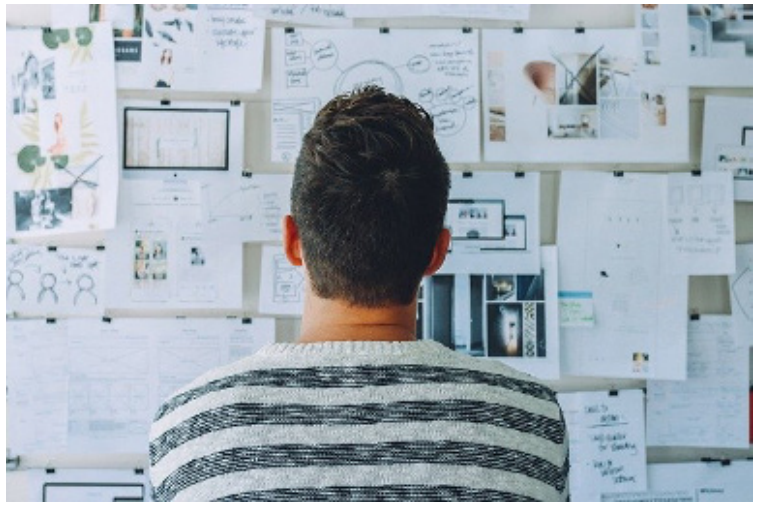


Image Credits: Pixabay

Chapter 3:
How can you implement design thinking in your organization?

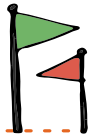
Team heads within an organization often feel that the implementation of design thinking would be an unrealistic pursuit and push it off to the side. But what they don't understand is that such a process does not require the knowledge of unknown concepts of technicalities. The crux of design thinking lies in its need to connect with the end-user, and implementing this kind of a strategy will benefit your organization in other spheres as well.

Here are some steps that organizations can take to implement design thinking effectively –

1. Come into a problem-focused mindset

In order to identify the problem, you need to open up your mind to a few things that aren't often taught.

First and foremost, you need to listen. Listening attentively allows you to put yourself in the user's shoes and see the problem from their perspective.



Next, think about how this problem generated. Why hasn't there been a solution for this problem yet? What is standing in the way of this problem being solved?

Moving on, you need to work collectively as a team. For this, each member needs to share and discuss ideas outside of their team and bring in new and fresh perspectives each time.

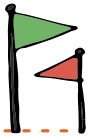
Lastly, you must stay open-minded. It is easy to fall into the trap of believing you know exactly what the problem or the solution is. Seek to work through the problem and understand every aspect of it, not just what seems apparent.

Using this problem-focused mindset will help you get to the solution quicker, and also with better understanding.

2. Encourage your entire team to use design thinking as a tool

It is understandable that not everyone on your team can think with the mindset of a designer. But there are ways in which you can push them to attain this kind of a thinking process.

Firstly, you need to begin approaching every problem with design thinking. Even if your role requires you to just overlook certain aspects within the



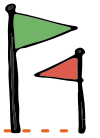
organization, think about ways in which you can make the process more creative. Don't just brush aside common problems, but think of ways in which you can solve it with innovations in the process.

Furthermore, encourage your team members to also use this approach. If they have an interest in thinking creatively, allow them to use this method to work upon their own set of projects. It would also prove highly beneficial to implement design thinking as a course that the members of an organization can participate in.

3. Embrace feedback

The process of design thinking is a continuous one because it has deep-rooted significance in the process of learning. Basically, design thinking focuses on learning and understanding, regardless of failures and roadblocks along the way. Keeping this in mind, it is more than important to be open to setbacks.

- Be open to the idea that failure is just as much a part of the process as is success. Allowing your team to be open to the idea of failure will only encourage them to think outside their assumptions and come closer to real solutions.
- Find new ways to test your assumptions by going against the grain. Even if you try



and fail with your approaches, with each passing one, you will find a new lesson that will prove handy.

- Having frequent feedback sessions will give you the freedom to innovate, but with caution. Feedback lets people know that their direction or approach is working, and also prevents the same mistakes from repeating.

Image Credits: Pixabay

CONCLUSION

Design thinking is essentially a problem-solving approach that comes very much in handy within organizations. The process of design thinking encourages companies to opt for a more human-centric approach to identifying problems and finding solutions, by focusing on the need to try and learn from failures. This acts as a direct contrast to the well-known scientific approach, wherein concrete ideas and theories are tested to arrive at success or failure. The free-thinking approach offered by design thinking allows organizations to question assumptions, thereby allowing more space to redefine problems and find meaningful solutions.

Design thinking is like a muscle that only gets stronger the more you build and use it. Giving the employees within the organization the freedom to practice this mindset will help them provide their valuable inputs into the problem-solving process, and ultimately come across solutions that are innovative, and perhaps, even highly successful.

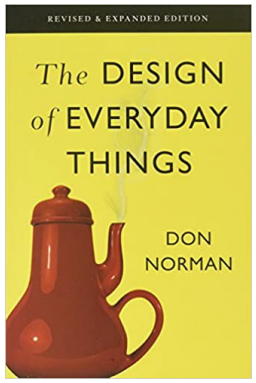
Design thinking encourages thinking outside the box, and this approach is definitely the key to untapped potential within every organization.

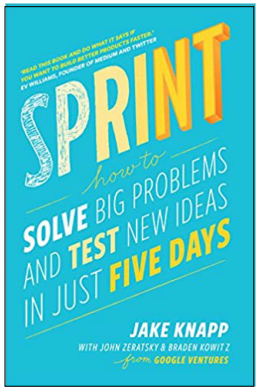
Image Credits: Pixabay

focusu

ALL ABOUT YOU!

A few books that we recommend:





www.focusu.com