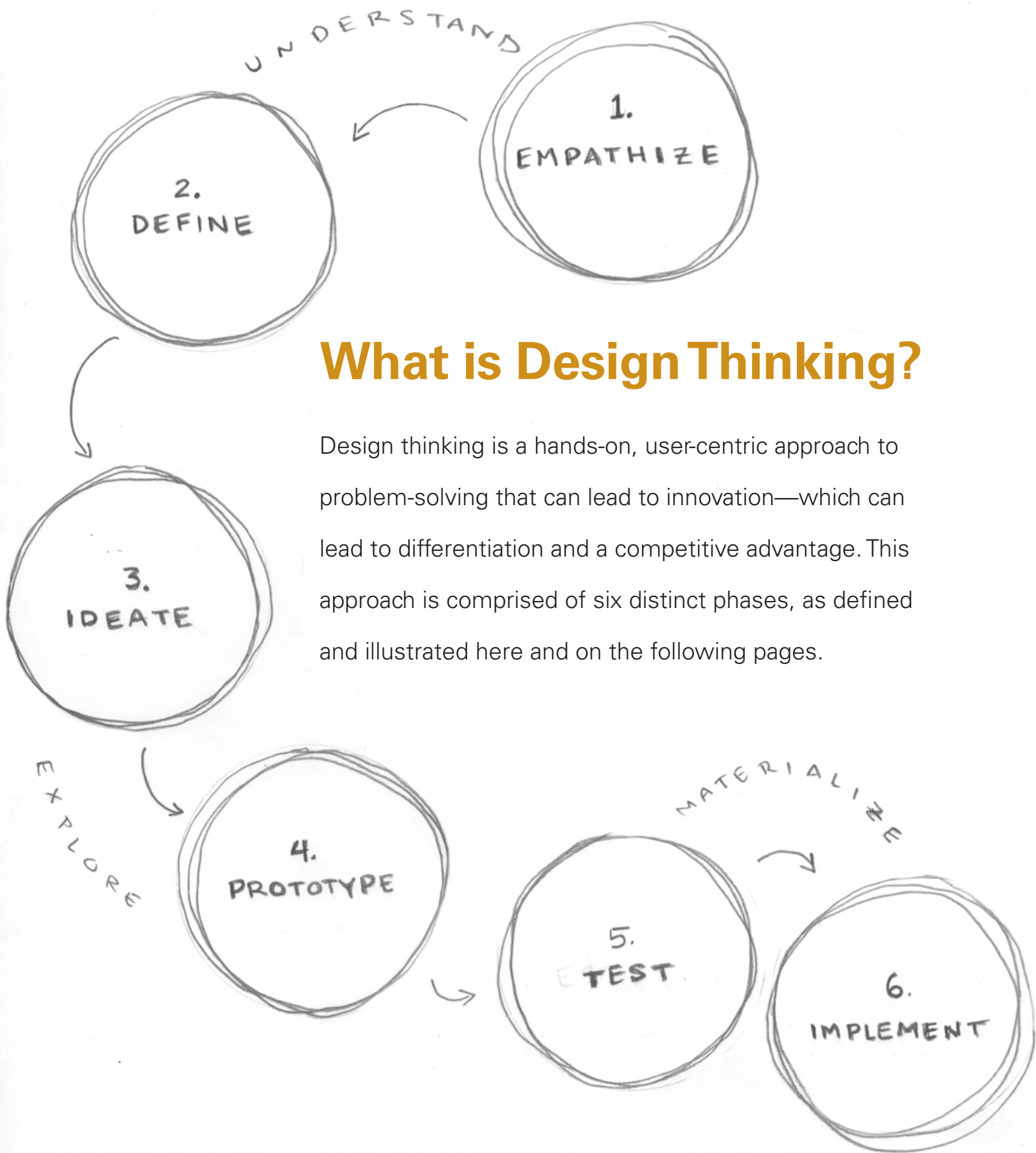


DESIGN THINKING

An Approach to Building

Stronger Brand Ideas 1 2 3





What is Design Thinking?

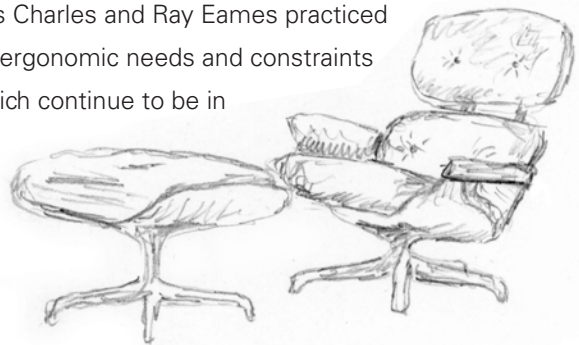
Design thinking is a hands-on, user-centric approach to problem-solving that can lead to innovation—which can lead to differentiation and a competitive advantage. This approach is comprised of six distinct phases, as defined and illustrated here and on the following pages.

History of Design Thinking

HISTORY OF DESIGN THINKING

It is a common misconception that design thinking is new. Design has been practiced for ages: monuments, bridges, automobiles, subway systems, and environmental graphics are all end-products of design processes. Throughout history, good designers have applied a human-centric creative process to build truly meaningful and effective solutions.

In the early 1900s, husband and wife designers Charles and Ray Eames practiced “learning by doing,” which explored a range of ergonomic needs and constraints before creating their famous Eames chairs, which continue to be in production and highly coveted today. 1960s dressmaker Jean Muir was well known for her “common sense” approach to clothing design, placing as much emphasis on how her clothes felt to wear as they looked to others.



These designers’ approaches can be viewed as early examples of design thinking, as they each developed a deep understanding of their users’ lives and unmet needs. Milton Glaser, the designer

behind the famous I ♥ NY logo, describes this notion well:

“We’re always looking, but we never really see...it’s the act of attention that allows you to really grasp something, to become fully conscious of it.”



History of Design Thinking

Despite these and other early examples of human-centric products, design has historically been an afterthought in the business world, applied only to touch up a product's aesthetics. This superficial application of design has resulted in corporations and brands creating solutions that fail to meet their customers' real needs. Consequently, some of these companies moved their designers from the end of the product-development process, where their contribution was limited, to the beginning. This strategy proved to be a differentiator: those companies that used it have reaped the financial benefits of creating products and solutions that are shaped by real human needs.

In order for this approach to be adopted across large organizations, it needed to be standardized. The result was design thinking, a formalized framework of applying the creative design process to traditional business problems.

Design thinking was coined in the 1990s by David Kelley and Tim Brown of design firm IDEO, with Roger Martin of the Rotman School of Management at the University of Toronto. It encapsulated methods and ideas that have been brewing for years into a single unified concept.



Tim Brown



David Kelley



Roger Martin

THE PROCESS

THINK

The Process

The design-thinking framework follows an overall flow of **1) understand, 2) explore, and 3) materialize**. Within these larger buckets fall six phases: empathize, define, ideate, prototype, test, and implement.

Empathize: *Conduct research in order to develop knowledge about what your users or people in your marketplace do, say, think, and feel.*

In this case, “users” can be a variety of audience types—not only users of products, but anyone who interacts with your brand.

In this phase, you talk to a range of actual users. You directly observe what they do, learn how they think, and understand what they want, while asking yourself things like ‘what motivates or discourages users?’ or ‘where do they experience frustration or joy?’ The goal is to gather enough information to enable you to empathize with users and their perspectives.

Define: *Combine all of your research and observe where your users’ problems exist. In pinpointing your users’ needs, begin to highlight opportunities for innovation with your brand offerings.*

Use the data gathered in the previous phase to glean insights. Organize all your observations and draw parallels across your users’ current experiences. Is there a common pain point across many different users? Are there consistent positive perceptions about certain brand interactions? The goal is to identify unmet user needs as well as successful engagements.

The Process

Ideate: *Brainstorm a range of crazy, creative ideas that address the unmet user needs identified in the Define phase as well as those that leverage the positive interactions. Give yourself and your team total freedom; no idea is too farfetched and quantity of ideas is prioritized over quality.*

At this phase, bring your team members together and sketch out as many different ideas as possible. Don't worry about whether they're feasible or not; the objective is to generate a large volume of ideas and to look at the problem from all kinds of perspectives. When you have a long list of ideas to consider, have your team members share ideas with one another, mix and remix combinations of ideas, and extend others' ideas into new ones.

Prototype: *Build real, tactile representations of a subset of your ideas. The goal of this phase is to understand which components of your ideas work and which do not. In this phase, you begin to weigh the impact vs. feasibility of your ideas through feedback on your prototypes.*

Now it's time to make your ideas feasible. If you're working on a new landing page, draw out a wireframe, get some quick feedback, adjust it, then prototype it again in quick and dirty code. Then, share it with another group of people for more feedback. This is called rapid prototyping—scaling up ideas quickly without getting hung up on refinements.

Test: *Take your idea to potential users for feedback. Ask yourself 'Does this solution meet their needs?' and 'Has it improved how they feel, think, or reach their objectives?'*

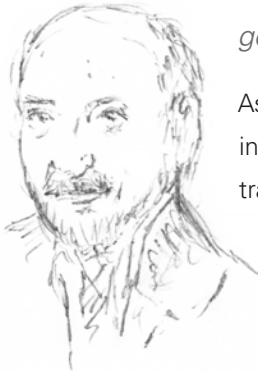
Put your prototype in front of real customers and see if it achieves your goals. Does the new landing page increase time or money spent on your site? Are the ideas going to resonate with your audiences on an inspirational level? As you execute your vision, continue to test along the way.

The Process

Implement: *Put your vision into effect. Ensure that your solution is materialized and impacts the lives of your end users.*

This is the most important part of design thinking, but it is the one most often forgotten. As Don Norman, director of The Design Lab at the University of California, San Diego preaches, we need “more design doing.” Design thinking does not free you from actualizing your design. Legendary designer Milton Glaser says:

“There’s no such thing as a creative type. Creativity...is about taking an idea in your head, and transforming that idea into something real. And that’s always going to be a long and difficult process. If you’re doing it right, it’s going to feel like work.”



Milton Glaser

As impactful as design thinking can be for an organization, it only leads to true innovation if the vision is executed. Design thinking isn’t successful until it actually transforms an aspect of an end user’s life.

INFORMATION

ENGAGE

DRAW

REFINE

INDIVIDUALS

LEARN

CREATE

EXPLORE

MARKETPLACE

CREATIVE

AUDIENCE

BELIEVE

PROBLEM SOLVING

PROCESS

TEAM

WRITE

COLLECTIVE

BRAINSTORM

EXPERTISE

DEVELOP

USABILITY

FOCUS

COLLABORATE

ADVANTAGES
OF
DESIGN THINKING

CLIENT

SCALABLE

FRAMEWORK

PROBLEMS

ORGANIZATION

SOLUTION

PROBLEMS

PHASES

IMPACT

DISRUPTIVE

WIREFRAME

VISION

FEEDBACK

IDEA

TRANSFORM

INTERFALE

FEASIBILITY

LIFE

RESPECT

ENERGY

RESULTS

TALENT

COMPETITION

GUIDE

OPPORTUNITY

INNOVATION

PRODUCT

DISCIPLINE

CHALLENGE

INTERACTIVE

BUILD

GRAPHIC

FORM

SEE

REASON

DETAILS

CHANGE

Advantages of the Design Process

Why should we consider a new way to think about design development?

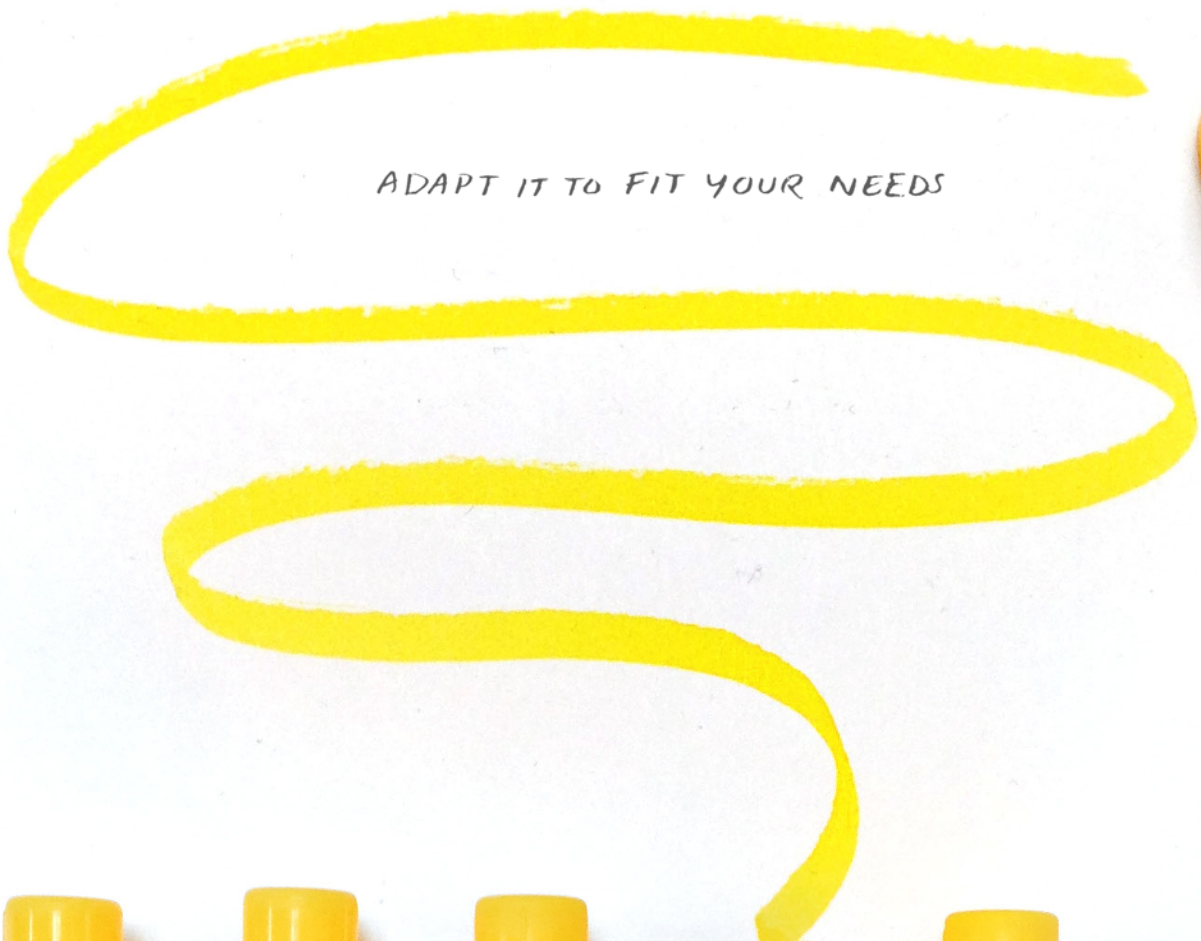
There are numerous reasons to engage in design thinking, enough to merit further discussions with your creative and client teams, and give the process a try. In fact, design thinking can yield all of the following advantages at the same time:

- It is a **user- or audience-centered process** that creates design prototypes which address **real-world marketplace needs**, and allows for further testing and refinement of prototypes.
- It leverages **collective information and expertise** and establishes a shared language and buy-in among members of your creative team and client organization.
- It **encourages innovation** by exploring multiple avenues for the same problem—i.e., rapid prototyping.
- It's a **fun, collaborative process** that allows many individuals to take ownership of the solution, resulting in greater satisfaction and motivation to apply it to other assignments.



Jakob Nielsen

Jakob Nielsen, a renowned Danish web usability expert with a Ph.D. in human-computer interaction, famously said, “*a wonderful interface solving the wrong problem will fail.*” Design thinking unfetters creative energies and focuses them on the right problem.



ADAPT IT TO FIT YOUR NEEDS

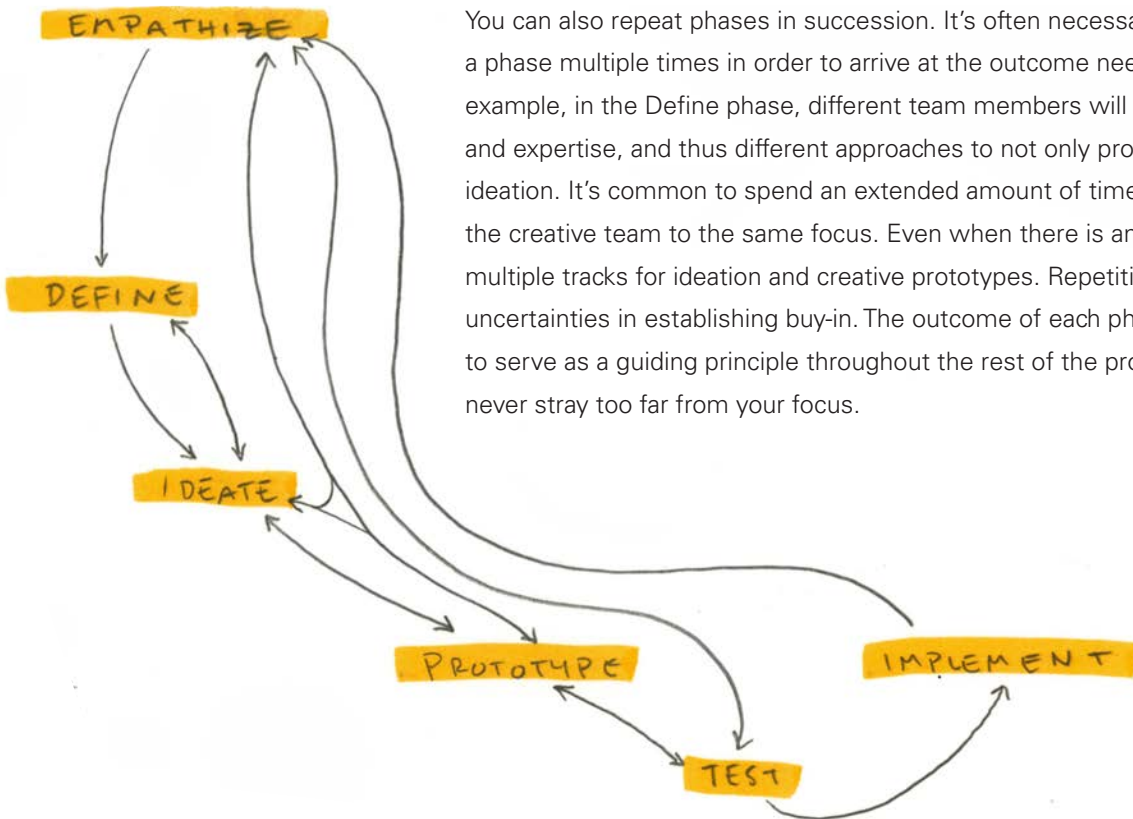


Adapt it to Fit Your Needs

The process might feel difficult to understand or incorporate into your design process at first. Don't think of it as if it as an inflexible, step-by-step recipe for success. Instead, use it as scaffolding to support you when and where you need it. Be a master chef: take the recipe as a framework, then tweak as needed.

Each phase is meant to be iterative as opposed to a strictly linear process. It is common to return to the two understanding phases—Empathize and Define—even after initial prototypes are developed. Often, looping back to your user research is immensely helpful to validate ideas. This in turn helps in preparing the creative team's prototype presentation to the client and allows you to re-assess if your solution is on the right track.

You can also repeat phases in succession. It's often necessary to do an exercise within a phase multiple times in order to arrive at the outcome needed to move forward. For example, in the Define phase, different team members will have different backgrounds and expertise, and thus different approaches to not only problem identification, but to ideation. It's common to spend an extended amount of time in the Define phase, aligning the creative team to the same focus. Even when there is an aligned team focus, there are multiple tracks for ideation and creative prototypes. Repetition is necessary if there are uncertainties in establishing buy-in. The outcome of each phase should be sound enough to serve as a guiding principle throughout the rest of the process and to ensure that you never stray too far from your focus.



Think Bigger

THINK BIGGER

The adaptability and nature of design thinking makes it scalable. Organizations previously unable to shift their way of thinking now have a guide that can be understood regardless of expertise, or range of design talent, while increasing the probability of innovation and success. This doesn't just apply to the traditional discipline of product design, but to every design discipline, including interactive, branding, environmental, graphic, and advertising platforms. Design thinking is simple enough to be practiced at any scope; from small design problems to tough, undefined design problems that might otherwise be overwhelming. Similarly, it can be applied to make small improvements to how a user interacts with a brand, or to design disruptive and transformative brand solutions.

Living and Breathing Design Thinking

LIVING AND BREATHING DESIGN THINKING

We incorporate the principles of design thinking into virtually everything we do—because we know it works. Our portfolio is testament to the power of design thinking in creating innovative solutions to real-world branding challenges. If you want to see how your brand can benefit from our expertise and experience, we'd love the opportunity to show you.



A branding and integrated marketing communications expert

The Design Channel has extensive experience in creating powerful positioning, branding platforms, and content marketing programs for organizations and enterprises in a wide range of industries. Visit www.thedesignchannel.com to learn more about our work, services, and team.



Washington

Baltimore

Atlanta

Branding and Integrated Marketing Communications

The Design Channel, LLC
5420 Wisconsin Avenue
Chevy Chase, MD 20815
p 301.951.9195
f 301.951.9197

www.thedesignchannel.com

