



# Design Thinking In Action

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**Design.** Once a narrow term synonymous with fancy packaging, colorful displays and eye-pleasing forms has transformed into a body of knowledge that approaches business from a human perspective. Advertising guru *Rory Sutherland highlights the example of the Eurostar*, which spent over 6 billion pounds merely to shorten the journey from London to Paris by 40 minutes. He humorously notes that for half the money spent, he'd rather "have all the top supermodels walking the length of the train handing out chateau petrus wine for the entire duration of the journey and people would be asking to have the trains slowed down." The example serves as a reminder that merely increasing efficiency or adding a host of features does not lead to a great product experience. That's where design thinking steps in ... *to bring a human centered approach to innovation.*

## What is Design Thinking?

Design thinking is creating meaningful and relevant solutions to the challenges a business faces with a process that is open, flexible and human-centric. While it is commonly used to build better products and customer experiences, it can also be used to streamline a company's *internal process and empowering its employees*. There are plenty of tools, methods and processes which companies can adopt to suit their requirement, but design thinking is more than that; it is a holistic approach to problem solving.

Simon Sinek, bestselling author of *Start with Why*, narrates a story which illustrates the importance of having a holistic mindset in his book. He tells the story of a group of executives of an American car company visiting their Japanese counterparts. They were startled to find a difference in the assembly line. While in America, at the end of

the line, a mechanic with a rubber mallet taps the edges to see if the doors fit snugly, in Japan there was none. On being asked how they ensured the doors fit perfectly, the Japanese executive said, “We make sure it fits when we design it.”

## The Process: Unraveling design thinking

Design Thinking is anything but new. It was first propounded in 1969 by Nobel laureate Hebert Simon in his seminal work, *The Sciences of the Artificial*, laying out a seven-stage model. Every subsequent model has been inspired from this.

Of the more popular models, the *d.school* at Stanford proposed a *five-step model* to design thinking, which we shall look into in more detail:



**Empathize:** The first step is to get into your customers' shoes. Observe, interact and immerse yourself in their day-to-day experiences.



**Define:** The findings from the initial customer research should be rephrased into problem statements. It is important to frame the statement from the customer point of view.



**Ideate:** This is the stage to let the ideas flow and explore all alternatives. The focus is on quantity, not quality. There are many techniques to foster free-flow of ideas such as brainstorming, mind mapping, *SCAMPER*, storyboarding, role-playing and so on.



**Prototype:** Make quick workable models from the ideas generated. Prototypes are experimental in nature, to be tested and refined. At the conclusion of this stage, the team would be

well aware of the constraints of the product, the problems and possible solutions, and ways in which real-world customers interact with their products.



**Test:** The feasible solutions are integrated into the product and they are tested again to see if they meet the acceptance criteria. Being an iterative process, the results and information gained here will be used to re-define the problem, generate new ideas and prototypes till a final product emerges.

Though the process outlined is in a step-by-step format, design thinking is essentially a non-linear process and multiple stages can occur simultaneously or in a flexible manner with no specific order.

## Playing it Out: Design thinking in action

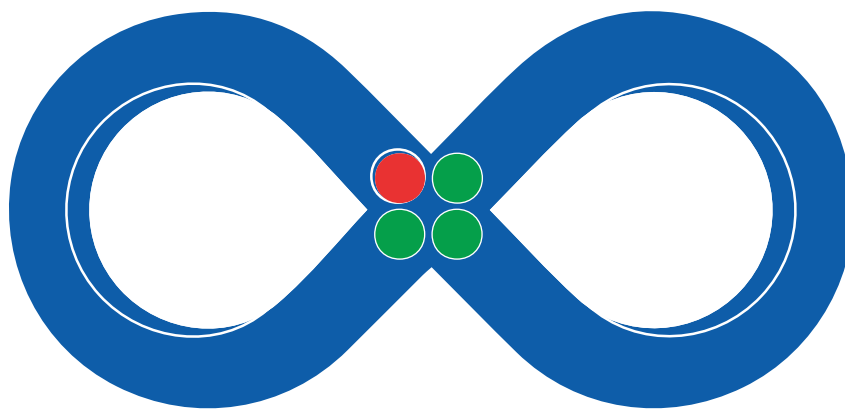
How are companies across sectors and countries adopting design thinking? The process and methods vary as per the situation, but the core idea is the same. Now we take a look at the different approaches that companies have adopted to incorporate design into its DNA.



## A Design First Company: IBM's human-centered overhaul

IBM noticed software was increasingly consumed over the internet and sold as services, not products. The decision to purchase software was decentralizing to respective departments from centralized IT procurement. The challenge IBM faced was to “**re-think and re-imagine**” the customer experience to suit their changing needs. **The answer: to design think a new customer experience.**

IBM quickly realized that if it were going to implement design thinking, it would have to create a model to fit its size and complexities. Accordingly, it created *The Loop*, in the shape of the infinity symbol, which represents the iterative process of software development. The four dots at the center represent the *customer* (red dot) and the actions such as *observe*, *reflect* and *make* (green dots) that keep the process going forward.



Observe

Reflect

Make

One of the *success stories to emerge from the design thinking strategy was the IBM Bluemix*, a cloud based app development platform. The idea was to empower developers to unearth ideas to sustain a business in a secure and scalable environment. During the observe phase, the team collected data through interviews, tests, mapping and evaluations and came to identify customer requirements like ease of access, effective pricing and quick execution times.

The rapid development and deployment of Bluemix resulted in mass adoption, at one point, *adding 8000 users every week*. IBM Bluemix and the Loop are only pieces of the jigsaw puzzle that is setting about the transformation of IBM. In the *words of John E Kelly, senior vice president*, “In the past, we changed what we were working on, but we were pretty much working the same way. Now, we’re changing how we work too.”

## Competing for Mindshare: Pepsi’s foray into design thinking

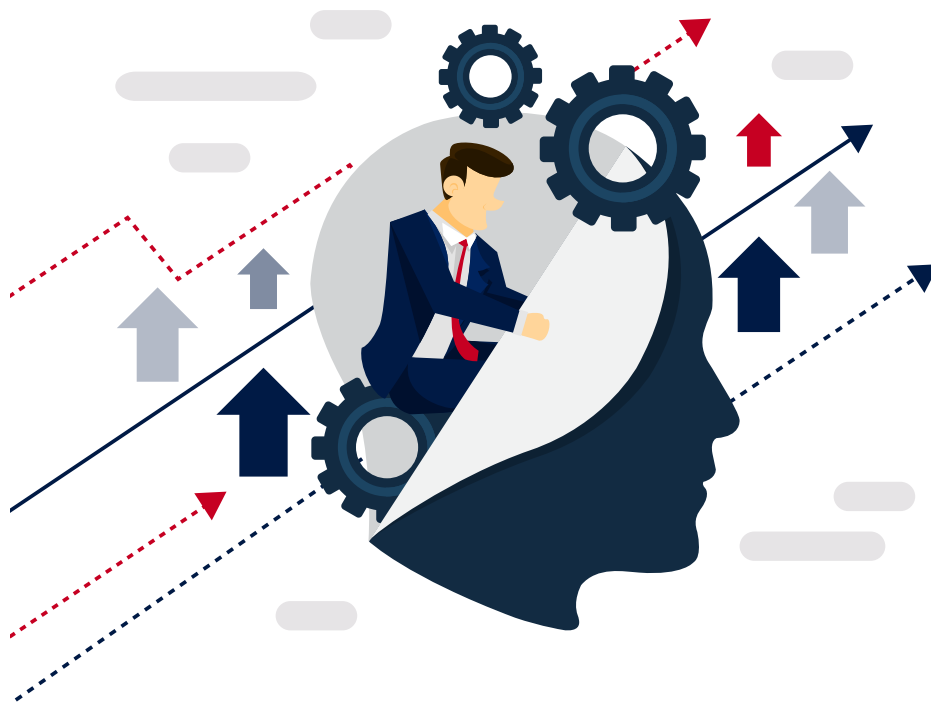
When Indra Nooyi took over as the CEO of Pepsico in 2006, the company was going through an existential crisis. A complex portfolio, rising competition and environmental issues plaguing the company, she decided the brand needed to be redesigned to stay relevant in the market. Taking a top-down approach, she hired designer Mauro Porcini from 3M to become Pepsi’s first Chief Design Officer to implement design thinking across the organization.

Porcini came with the insight that people don’t buy products anymore; they buy experiences. *In his own words, Pepsi*, “competes with the latest song of Beyoncé, with the latest telephone from

Samsung or Apple. We compete for mindshare and relevance in the life of people.”

In an interview with Fortune’s Brian O’Keefe, he shares insights on the initial stumbling blocks and later ‘leaps of faith’ that any design thinking initiative would go through. The first response is denial. The second phase is where they are mostly ignored as whimsical fantasies. And in the last phase, there are a few ‘co-conspirators’ who will believe in the initiative and help take the process forward.

Speaking to HBR’s Adi Ignatius, Indra Nooyi *revealed some of the insights gleaned from the design thinking approach*. One insight pertained to the size of the chips of Sunchips brand. It was discovered through focus groups that customers wanted bite-sized chips and in Pepsi’s case the chips were one inch by one inch. She says, “I don’t care if our mold can only cut one inch by one inch. We don’t sell products based on the manufacturing we have, but on how our target consumers can fall in love with them.”





Mountain Dew Kickstart was another product which emerged out of understanding the customer's need. In the past, Pepsi would have just introduced new flavors. However, Kickstart was different: counting less calories and more juice, it came sporting a sleek look aimed at attracting women. The results have been stunning, *generating more than \$300 million in sales in 2015*, offsetting the sluggish sales in its traditional offerings. The Pepsico brand is well on its way to redefining itself by redesigning itself.

## Denmark's First: When a nation embraced design

Politics is a dirty game and each party tries to undo what the other did. But in Denmark, there is one exception: **Design**. Cutting across all party lines, design has got prime position with every political party wanting to improve its national design policy.

Yes. Denmark is the first country to have a national design policy. High taxes and an ever-rising expectations on the public service has ensured that design thinking is the only way forward to improve the experience of the citizens.

The Danish Design Center, established in 1987, has played a crucial part in establishing the national policies on design. It opened a sparkling facility at the center of Copenhagen, making a statement that design was here to stay. They set up the *INDEX award* to honor the best designs that "improve life" with a prize money of half-a-million euros. In 2007, DDC launched a number of initiatives that promoted user driven innovation, even allocating over \$16.5 million for developing and testing ideas. This has had significant impact on how private businesses and public-sector undertakings

operate. The Good Kitchen is an ideal example of matching great design with a noble cause.

## The Good Kitchen: A breakthrough in service design

One of Denmark's biggest challenges is to take care of its aging population with almost *19% of the total population being over 65*. It is estimated that over 125,000 senior citizens rely on sponsored meals catered by government-run agencies. There were several challenges, from low-self esteem to poor nutrition. This led to one of the meal services – the Holstebro Municipal Meal Service – to engage Hatch & Bloom in a service design demonstration, funded by the Danish Enterprise and Construction Authority (DECA).

*Through user studies and interviews, they discovered insights* that went beyond the original scope of the demonstration. The first insight was senior citizens seldom enjoy their meals, which are usually had alone. Changing the method and frequency of the meals could make a dramatic impact in the enjoyment. For instance, when the setting changed to eating meals in front of the television, the situation tended to improve. This meant changing menu to include snacks and smaller meals and also increasing the frequency of meals to enhance nutritional intake.

The second insight was in understanding that elderly people faced significant health risks as they moved about daily life, such as a fall or sudden illness. The only people frequently visiting them were the drivers who went to deliver food. They could be equipped to give basic first aid to deal with such situations.

Many more insights emerged from sensitizing the kitchen staff and drivers who deliver food to redesigning the menu by taking suggestions from the senior citizens and allowing the chefs to experiment with the menu. To complete the look and feel, the name of the meal service was changed to the “Good Kitchen” to invoke images of a restaurant. The results have been stupendous with a *500% increase in orders and an 8% increase in customers within three months*. The efforts transformed the Good Kitchen from a municipal service into a global inspiration.

## To Think is to Act: First steps in design thinking

Design thinking doesn't begin with a problem or a solution; it begins with observations that lead to insights. By getting to know your customers in a deeper way, you would have begun the process of design thinking. In fact, your employees may already have insights about your customer preferences. By keeping an open mind and open door, you have covered the most important part. From there, using design thinking frameworks and tools is but a step away. Design thinking is not a magic wand to wave away business difficulties, but it will enable your business to tide through the challenges arising from a chaotic and noisy environment. If you would like to know more about design thinking and how to apply it to your business, write to us at [services@suyati.com](mailto:services@suyati.com).

## About Suyati

Suyati is a fast-growing, digital transformation solutions company that helps you rebuild your customer experience for the digital consumer. We collaborate with businesses to strategize and implement impactful digital initiatives that position our clients ahead of the competition. We are digital-first and we focus on delivering digital transformation solutions that support your various engagement strategies. With our niche and rich expertise in a wide range of technologies and services- CMS, CRM, e-commerce, Cloud, IoT, Data Analytics, and Product Engineering- we help companies leverage their best on web/cloud/mobile platforms.

We enable you to create insights driven customer engagement across all touch points to build a unified marketing approach. Our custom technology solutions have been deployed successfully in companies across the globe, especially in the US, UK, Europe and Australia.

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