

Design thinking is a process that has had a lot of business press, and always surfaces in discussions on innovation. It may be a mainstream process at companies like P&G, but you might be wondering, "Is this another trend, or is it something that might actually help me and my business (and if so, how?)"

Also known as lateral thinking, right-brain thinking, integrative thinking and futures thinking, design thinking is an interdisciplinary approach to business that breaks down the 'turf' mindsets that reward ownership, but impede creativity, collaboration and knowledge sharing (all necessary for innovation). Incorporating design thinking into the corporate structure is a long-term vision shift... while your CEO may (or may not) be thinking about changing your company's structure, it is possible for you to learn how design thinking can have a positive outcome on a single initiative, and to experience the design thinking process firsthand.

How is this kind of thinking different?

Design thinking helps get bigger and better ideas, faster and more efficiently.

Design thinking combines empathy, creativity and common sense to engage and delight consumers while driving business success.

- **It is a non-linear process that integrates a right-brain, holistic mindset with left-brain, analytical thinking.**

How does it work?

Design thinkers are skilled in identifying, then solving problems with the user as the central point of focus; looking at habits, behaviors, perceptions; incorporating new learning at every step in the process.

- **The design thinker is left and right-brained, and has experience opening doors and finding multiple solutions to problems.**

The "tools of the trade" for design thinking are visual [sketches, mind maps, prototypes] and mental [brainstorming, roleplay].

Design thinking encourages collective ownership, experimentation and risk.

Should I be using design thinking?

Brands need design thinking when the answer is not clear, the situation is unique (new or different), and the old way of thinking isn't working anymore.

- Design thinking generates solutions that have emotional power as well as functionality; for consumer brands, this connection can be a valuable differentiator.

Typical projects that benefit from the design thinking process include:

- innovation
- new growth
- new products
- brand strategy and extension.

Can I do it myself?

Maybe! But be honest with yourself...if you are more comfortable with certainty than with a blank slate, or if you excel at the numbers game and love defined processes, then this may not be your forte.

PROCESS STEPS OF DESIGN THINKING

1. CONTEXT: using observation and conversation to define stakeholder (client and user) problems.
2. INSIGHT: assimilate information and frame the problem(s).
3. IDEATION: open doors [to unspoken and unmet needs] generate concepts that solve the problem(s).
4. SOLUTIONS: select concepts that solve the problem(s).
5. TEST: test concepts that solve the problem.
6. REFINE.
7. FINALIZE. Implementation/Execution.



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