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**Social Innovation Brokers**  
WE FOR YOU

**GUIDEBOOK FOR TRAINERS & TRAINEES**  
**MODULE 4.1.2**

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## Social Innovation Brokers

WE FOR YOU

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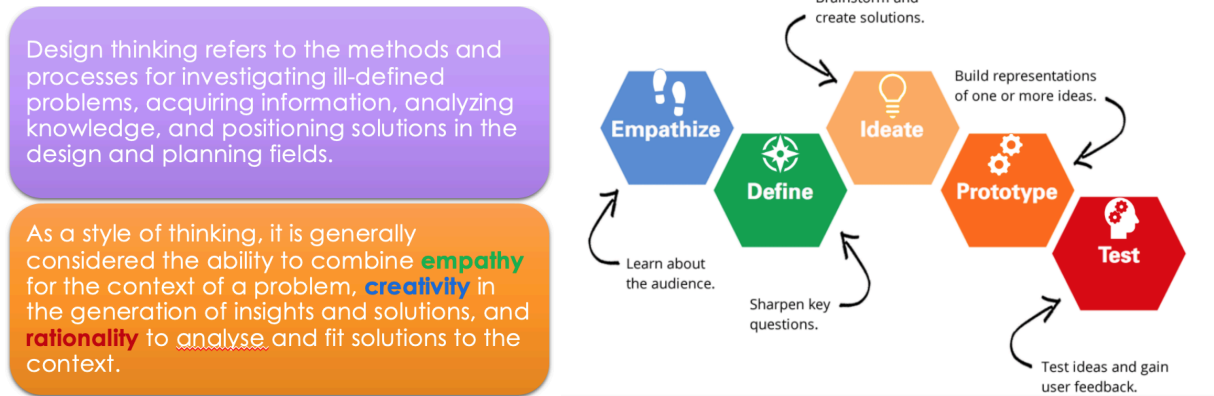
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## Tool 10: Human Centered Design Thinking Approach



Design thinking has long been considered the holy grail of innovation—and the remedy to stagnation. Design thinking originally came about as a way of teaching engineers how to approach problems creatively, like designers do. One of the first people to write about design thinking was John E. Arnold, professor of mechanical engineering at Stanford University. In 1959, he wrote “[Creative Engineering](#),” the text that established the four areas of design thinking. From there, design thinking began to evolve as a “way of thinking” in the fields of science and design engineering—as can be seen in Herbert A. Simon’s book “[The Sciences of the Artificial](#)” and in Robert McKim’s “[Experiences in Visual Thinking](#)”.

By the start of the 21st century, design thinking was making its way into the world of business. In 2005, Stanford University’s design school began teaching design thinking as an approach to technical and social innovation.

So what exactly is design thinking?

Design thinking is both an ideology and a process that seeks to solve complex problems in a user-centric way.

Check out the Youtube video: <https://youtu.be/-ySx-S5FcCl>

Design thinking focuses on achieving practical results and solutions that are:

- **Technically feasible:** They can be developed into functional products or processes;
- **Economically viable:** The business can afford to implement them;
- **Desirable for the user:** They meet a real human need.

## What are the principles of design thinking?

There are certain principles that are pivotal to design thinking. The design thinking principles manifest themselves in a design thinking framework.

### 1. User-centricity and empathy

Design thinking is all about finding solutions that respond to human needs and user feedback. People, not technology, are the drivers of innovation, so an essential part of the process involves stepping into the user's shoes and building genuine empathy for your target audience.

### 2. Collaboration

The aim of design thinking is to pool a diverse variety of perspectives and ideas; this is what leads to innovation!

Design thinking encourages collaboration between heterogeneous, multidisciplinary teams which may not typically work together.

### 3. Ideation

Design thinking is a solution-based framework, so the focus is on coming up with as many ideas and potential solutions as possible. Ideation is both a core design thinking principle and a step in the design thinking process.

During the ideation participants should **focus on the quantity of ideas**, rather than the quality.

### 4. Experimentation and iteration

The ultimate goal of the entire exercise is not just about coming up with ideas, but turning the best ideas into prototypes, testing them, and making changes based on user feedback. Design thinking is an iterative approach, so be prepared to repeat certain steps in the process as you uncover flaws and shortcomings in the early versions of your proposed solutions.

### 5. Focus on action

Design thinking is an extremely hands-on approach to problem-solving favoring action over discussion. Instead of hypothesizing about what your users want, design thinking encourages you to get out there and engage with them face-to-face. Rather than talking about potential solutions, you'll turn them into tangible prototypes and test them in real-world contexts.

The above five key principles result in five key [steps in the design thinking process](#):

- **Empathize**
- **Define**
- **Ideate**
- **Prototype**
- **Test**

Although these steps appear to be sequential, it's important to point out that **design thinking doesn't follow a strictly linear process**. At each stage in the process, you're likely to make new discoveries that require you to go back and repeat a previous step.

### Step 1. Empathize

**What?** During the empathize phase, you'll engage with and observe your target audience.

**Why?** The aim of this step is to paint a clear picture of who your end users are, what challenges they face, and what needs and expectations must be met.

**How?** In order to build user empathy, you'll conduct surveys, interviews, and observation sessions.

### Step 2. Define

**What?** Based on what you've learned in the empathize phase, the next step is to define a clear problem statement.

**Why?** Your problem statement sets out the specific challenge you will address. It will guide the entire design process from here, giving you a fixed goal to focus on during the entire journey.

**How?** When framing your problem statement, you'll focus on the user's needs rather than those of the business.

A good problem statement is human-centered, broad enough for creativity, yet specific enough to provide guidance and direction.

### Step 3. Ideate

**What?** With a clear problem statement in mind, you'll in this stage of the process come up with as many ideas and potential solutions as possible.

**Why?** The ideation phase gets you thinking outside the box and exploring new angles. By focusing on quantity of ideas rather than quality, you're more likely to free your mind and stumble upon innovation!

**How?** During dedicated ideation sessions, you'll use a range of different ideation techniques such as bodystorming, reverse thinking, and worst possible idea.

#### Step 4. Prototype

**What?** Having narrowed your ideas down to a select few, you'll now select the product or concept you want to test.

**Why?** The prototyping stage gives you something tangible that can be tested on real users, which is crucial in maintaining a user-centric approach.

**How?** Depending on what you're testing, prototypes can take various forms—from basic paper models to interactive, digital prototypes. When creating your prototypes, have a clear goal in mind; know exactly what you want your

#### Step 5. Test

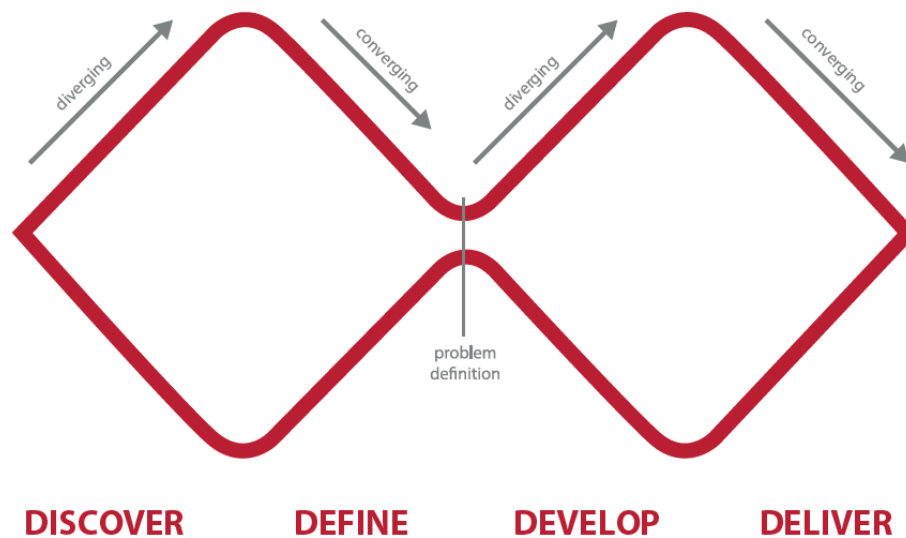
**What?** In this phase of the design thinking process, you will test your prototypes on real or representative users.

**Why?** During this phase you need to decide where your prototype works well and where it needs improving. Based on user feedback, you can make changes and improvements before you spend time and money developing and/or implementing your solution.

**How?** You'll run user testing sessions where you observe your target users as they interact with your prototype. With everything you learn from the testing phase, you'll make changes to your design or come up with a completely new idea altogether!



The design thinking process can be best represented in **the Double Diamond Model**, which was first introduced by the British Design Council in 2005.



The model is divided into four phases:

- DISCOVER insight into the problem;
- DEFINE the area to focus upon;
- DEVELOP potential solutions;
- DELIVER solutions that work.

In the middle of the two diamond shapes, is where the real problem is defined and it is here we can start to look for solutions. The divergent- convergent thinking is iterative.

This way an ideas is created, tested and refined several times

Until we get to the strongest possible solution.



**If you want to find more human-centered design testing tools, check out:**  
**<https://www.designkit.org/>**

**Some ICT tools that can help you in the process:**

- Are you looking for an online board to share ideas and easy sketches?  
[www.padlet.com](http://www.padlet.com)
- Are you looking for a task management tool? [www.asana.com](http://www.asana.com)
- Are you looking for a tool to find dates with your team? [www.doodle.com](http://www.doodle.com)
- Are you looking for a smooth video-conferences organizing tool  
[www.zoom.us](http://www.zoom.us)