ARCADIS | Design & Consultancy for natural and built assets

Create better solutions with design thinking

Innovating to achieve powerful, lasting results requires a different way of approaching problems. Design thinking brings together multi-disciplinary teams, using a proven process to create new and innovative solutions to meaningful challenges.

The speed of business is accelerating. Decisions need to be made quickly and results are expected sooner. Traditional strategy planning and implementation, however, is a detailed and rigorous process that can take much longer than new standards expect.

Design thinking provides a fast and effective alternative to the status quo. By bringing a multi-disciplinary team together and providing a framework for fast, instinctive decision making, design thinking sheds new light on any business or policy challenge, resulting in more innovative, sustainable solutions.

The human-centric approach behind design thinking encourages stakeholder buy-in from the beginning and a fresh perspective to any challenge. Six clear steps to the design thinking process encourage teams to fail fast, in order to develop solutions that truly work in the long-term. Rapid testing of the solution provides teams flexibility, reduces re-work and equips decision makers with real time feedback to inform implementation.

The design thinking process is characterized by six clear steps. Each of these steps is described in further detail on the following page.

Prepare Empathize Define Ideate Prototype Test
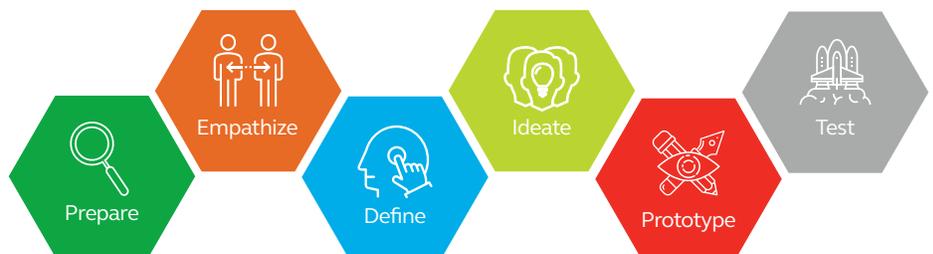
The design thinking process

Prepare
Before diving into design thinking, it is important to reflect and identify a problem truly worth solving. Define the problem with your most important stakeholders and get your team's buy in upfront.

Empathize
Design thinking begins with a deep immersion in the experience your stakeholder has with a product or service. Empathize includes observations, curiosity and asking a lot of questions to better understand your user.

Define
With an understanding of your stakeholder's true needs, you are able to define the right problem to solve. Understanding and identifying the challenge is fundamental to creating a successful solution.

Ideate
Using inspiration from a variety of sources, your team is able to generate a large quantity of ideas to solve your challenge. Ideation starts wide and narrows down to the most feasible and impactful ideas to prototype.

Prototype
With your great idea in mind, your team works to bring their creative solution into reality with a prototype. Prototypes are meant to be built quickly, to easily test with users.

Test
Your team tests and continually refines the prototype with your original user, improving the solution with every iteration.

Design thinking case study

A major chemical manufacturing client wanted to draw better insights from their data, using the vast amount of information they collect to enhance their operational advantage, reduce risk and improve performance certainty and reliability.

After thoroughly exploring the problem with the client virtually, Arcadis and the client team got together face to face for a design thinking workshop, set up as a 1.5 day sprint.

The workshop brought a diverse set of perspectives together, including technology experts, subject matter experts and business consultants to work as one team on improving the use of information and data within the client's remediation liability group. The client knew that their remediation site managers could make better and more informed decisions if they had access to portfolio wide trends and insights.

To begin the workshop, the team underwent a detailed stakeholder mapping exercise, before focusing on the specific stakeholder challenges, issues and pain points. They drew on inspiration from other industries, new technologies and the expertise in the room to develop innovative new ideas to solve the remediation team's challenges.

The team took a critical eye towards reviewing each idea's strength and viability, before deciding on one idea to take forward. By the end of the session, the team had built out a full solution and had the roadmap needed to effectively prototype and test their solution within the client's organization.

The design thinking framework helped this client build a robust data governance strategy, allowing their teams to use the full power of historical site information, and ultimately bring their sites to closure safely and efficiently. The process aligned stakeholder priorities, built ownership of the solution and left the client with a more innovative way to approach challenges in the future.

What makes design thinking different?
- Enlightened trial & error
- Fail fast
- Rigorous testing
- Lightweight experimentation
- Deep stakeholder immersion
- Continuous improvement

Interested in learning more? Contact our team today.

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