# GETTING STARTED WITH DESIGN THINKING

The canvases and roadmaps from this book can be downloaded at:
www.lerenmetfloot.nl/designthinking

# GETTING STARTED WITH
# DESIGN
# THINKING
INCLUDING 20 CREATIVE TECHNIQUES

EVELINE VAN ZEELAND

FlooT

# "CREATIVITY IS INTELLIGENCE HAVING FUN!"

**(Albert Einstein)**

# FOREWORD

Have you ever experienced a lecture that was literally mind-blowing? Years ago, I attended a guest lecture by Professor Emeritus Joan van Aken and when I returned home, I said to my husband: "My life has just changed. My view of science, my approach to the world — everything is different." The guest lecture was all of one hour and it was about a design-oriented way of practicing science: Design Science Research. Until that moment, it was my belief that science was all about analyzing processes and finding truth from that analysis. I had never thought that science could also be about creating new truths, about *solving* problems rather than analyzing them.

That guest lecture literally changed my life. I was inspired by the design-oriented approach toward looking at the world and I read everything there was to read about design-oriented thinking and working. However, it did not only affect my way of practicing science. It also led me to train countless students and professionals in this methodology and supervise various projects. And in doing so, I discovered that everyone who started doing 'something' with design thinking became enthusiastic about the energy of a design thinking project and the logic behind it. But I also saw everyone struggling with the fact that, although it seems so simple, it is so complex to implement. That's why I felt the need to write this book. I have tried to make the complexity manageable so that genuinely everyone can get started with design thinking.

This book contains many quotes from inspiring people. In design thinking it is appropriate to be inspired and challenged by others, and I value the fact that you get original work: credit where credit is due. I have tried to tackle every possible question about design thinking in this book. Of course, I can never be 100% successful in doing so. So, if you still have a question, please contact me. I would love to help you!

Warm greetings,

**Eveline**

Scan this **QR code** if you want to know more about me.

# CONTENTS

# INTRODUCTION

## WHY THIS BOOK?

This book has been written not only to teach the reader the basics of design thinking, but also to tackle the very questions that are not answered in other books. Students and professionals I train and coach in design thinking have asked me many questions in recent years. I have collected those questions and I answer them in this book. With this book, I would like to sincerely thank all of those hundreds of students and professionals who came to me with their questions about design thinking. You have shown me what you struggled with and have thus determined an important part of the contents of this book.

## WHO IS THIS BOOK FOR?

In this book, design thinking is mainly seen as a method for approaching (research) projects. Of course, it is much more than that: it's a way of looking at the world. After you have started working with design thinking on a project basis, I think you will automatically become animated by the design thinking mindset. However, the word 'mindset' does not go over well with some design thinking specialists who consider design thinking from a scientific-philosophical perspective and prefer to speak of a 'way of reasoning' rather than 'mindset.' In my experience, a scientific-philosophical perspective makes design thinking unnecessarily complex.

Design thinking is complex, which is precisely why the practice of it benefits from making design thinking widely accessible. In this book, I therefore follow the views of Tim Brown, the godfather of design thinking. Brown believes that design thinking in organizations is much more effective when everyone can apply it and it is not reserved for the lucky few. So, this book is for anyone who wants to get started practically with design thinking.

## HOW DO YOU READ THIS BOOK?

After being introduced to the design thinking method in Chapter 1, you'll get right to work starting with Chapter 2. Each of the Chapters 2 to 6 deal with a phase of the design thinking process and you will find plenty of useful tools and practical tips here. In Chapter 7 you will learn how to implement your design. Chapter 8 offers tips for writing a report about your project. This last chapter is particularly useful for students who are writing a thesis.

Each chapter ends with a roadmap that shows what you can and/or should do during this phase of the design thinking process. The roadmap is your guide to getting started with design thinking. In the roadmap, you'll find checkboxes that show how far you are on your way and what you still must do. Of course, your own path may differ from the roadmap. Design thinking is never a linear process, and that makes every design thinking project different. So always feel free to go 'off road' and explore your own path; you will automatically recognize when your project needs that. It also may very well be that you have to take a detour now and then, make an extra trip around the rotary, or go in reverse for a bit. This is all part of the game: design thinking is never a straight 'road' (line) from A to B!

The roadmaps at the end of each chapter mainly aim to help you get started with design thinking, especially if you have little experience with design thinking. You will also see colored clouds with questions in each roadmap. These questions are meant for reflection, and they serve to keep you focused and critical. Before each roadmap, you will find all kinds of exercises for practicing elements from the roadmap and the corresponding chapter. Each exercise concludes with a few reflective questions (in italics). The exercises support you in developing a design thinking mindset and thus help you actually get started.

STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

# 1
# WHAT IS DESIGN THINKING?

## DESIGN THINKING PROJECT

| 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| EMPATHIZE | DEFINE | IDEATE | PROTO-TYPE | TEST |

# 7
## IMPLEMENTATION

# 8
## REPORTING

# 1
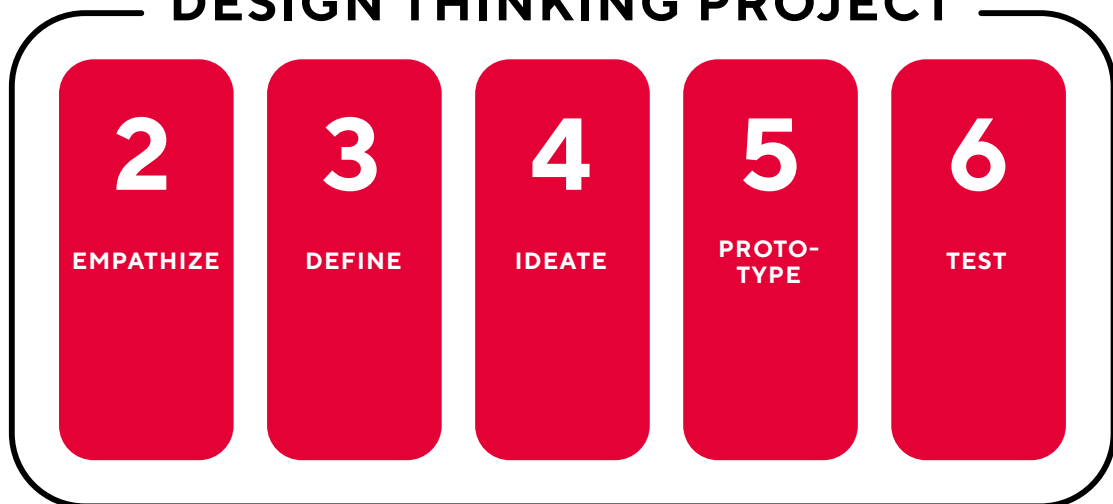
# WHAT IS DESIGN THINKING?

Design thinking has moved beyond buzzword status. It is one of the best-known approaches of the 21st century. When improvement, renewal or innovation is the goal, design thinking is often the way to achieve it. At the same time, design thinking is more easily raised as an approach than it is implemented. It sounds simple, but it certainly isn't.

Before I explain what **design** thinking is, it is good to establish what design is. Kees Dorst gives a sharp definition of design in his book *Frame Innovation* (Dorst, 2015, p. vii):

***"Design** = to consider a situation, imagine a better situation, and act to create that improved situation."*

So, design has a lot to do with imagination and the desire to make things better. Logically, design thinking has the same properties. On the relationship between design and design thinking, Tim Brown, the aforementioned godfather of design thinking, writes: "The evolution from design to design thinking is the story of the evolution from the creation of products to the analysis of the relationship between people and products, and from there to the relationship between people and people" (Brown, 2019, p. 48). Yet design thinking is difficult to capture in a definition. After all, it is not only a technique but also a mindset, an approach and a project method. By far, the best definition of design thinking is Idris Mootee's (2013, p. 33), to the right.

What you learn from Idris Mootee's definition is that design thinking actually **combines two worlds**: the business, logical and controlled world on the one hand and the creative, playful and intuitive world on the other. In this chapter you will learn exactly how to combine these two worlds.

**DEFINITION OF DESIGN THINKING**

**IDRIS MOOTEE**

"Design thinking is the search for a magical balance between business and art; structure and chaos; intuition and logic; concept and execution; playfulness and formality; and control and empowerment."

DESIGN THINKING IS LIKE USING A CAMERA: YOU **FOCUS** ON WHAT IS IMPORTANT, CAPTURE THE **BEAUTIFUL MOMENTS**, DEVELOP FROM **NEGATIVES** AND WHEN THINGS DON'T WORK AS INTENDED, YOU TAKE A **NEW PICTURE**.*

* adaptation of a quote by Ziad K. Abdelnour

# 1.1

# WHY
# DESIGN THINKING?

Before we go into *what* design thinking entails, it is good to take a moment to consider *why*. After all, why learn a completely new method if you don't have an answer to the question "Why exactly that method?"

Design thinking arose from a need to want to change. For example, in his book *The Sciences of the Artificial*, **Herbert Simon** — a scientist and the founder of design thinking — describes a designer as someone "who is concerned with how things ought to be, how they ought to be in order to attain goals and to function" (Simon, 1996, p. 5). With his work, Simon made an important contribution to putting design-oriented methods on the map. His thinking evolved, partly under the influence of Dutch business expert and Professor Emeritus **Joan van Aken**, into the scientific methodology also known as Design Science Research. From a practical perspective, Simon's thinking evolved into what we now call design thinking. **Tim Brown** played an important role in this development. In his book *Change by Design* (2019) — an absolute must-read for every design thinker — Brown emphasizes the innovative nature of design thinking. It is precisely this innovative character that is responsible for the current unprecedented popularity of the method.

Scan this **QR code** to watch Tim Brown's TED Talk about design thinking.
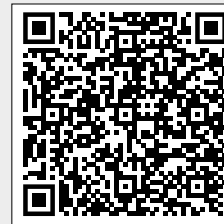
Big companies like Google or Philips, as well as top business schools such as INSEAD in Paris, have all taken up design thinking. Why? Partly it has to do with the stage we now find ourselves in. It has been said that we are in the midst of the fourth industrial revolution. This revolution, also known as Industry 4.0, is characterized by the *Internet of Things* (IoT), smart technology and 'connectedness.' As everything and everyone becomes interconnected, numerous new opportunities arise at the production and consumption level. To adequately respond to these opportunities, flexibility and agility are crucial. As a result, all kinds of methods are being developed to meet this need: agile working, Lean Canvas, and thus also design thinking. Therefore, design thinking is

| INDUSTRY 1.0 | INDUSTRY 2.0 | INDUSTRY 3.0 | INDUSTRY 4.0 |
|---|---|---|---|
| STEAM POWER MECHANIZATION | ELECTRICITY MASS PRODUCTION | COMPUTER AUTOMATION | NETWORKS INTERNET OF THINGS |
| LATE 18TH CENTURY | LATE 19TH CENTURY | MID 20TH CENTURY | EARLY 21ST CENTURY |
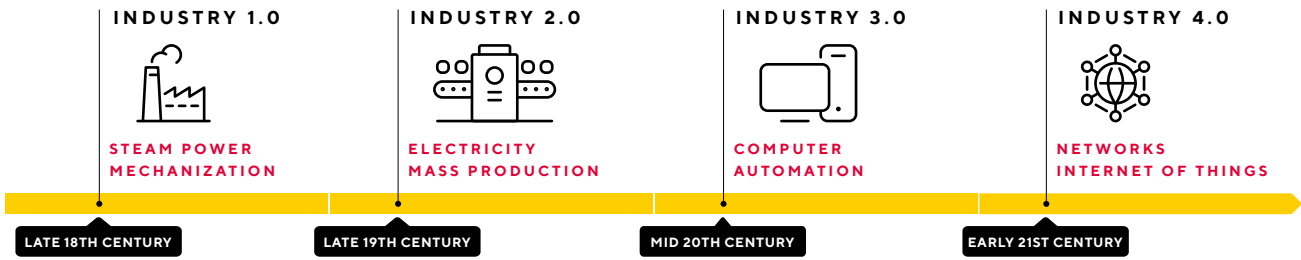
**Four industrial revolutions**

also referred to as a **meta-current**, a kind of mother of several currents that are agile and oriented around solutions.

That solution-oriented — as well as innovative — nature is an important characteristic that explains the popularity of design thinking. Its solution-oriented character is fundamentally different from the practices used in most studies, which have a more analytical mindset. There the emphasis is more on investigating a problem. The idea is that if you investigate a problem thoroughly enough, the solution will appear automatically, as an obvious thing. In practice, this rarely turns out to be the case. A good problem analysis is important (which is why it is included in the step-by-step plan of design thinking; see the next section), but it does not automatically lead to a good solution. The English have a very apt saying for this: "Old ways won't open new doors." In other words, just because you have unraveled why things previously went wrong doesn't mean that you are home free. You must do things differently

in the future to get where you want to go. Design thinking helps you do that.

This **innovative and solution-oriented nature** of design thinking is nicely described by the Interaction Design Foundation: "What's special about design thinking is that designers' work processes can help us systematically extract, teach, learn and apply these human-centered techniques to solve problems in a creative and innovative way — in our designs, in our businesses, in our countries, in our lives" (Dam & Siang, n.d.). Because design thinking is both innovative and solution-oriented, the method is also called "out-of-the-box thinking." Out-of-the-box thinking does involve much more than an afternoon working with Post-its. After all, out-of-the-box solutions really don't come out of the blue. The 'Post-it image' is something the field of design thinkers suffers from. Many people think that a creative afternoon with stickers and Post-its will get you there. The reality is very different, as you will discover in this book. This out-of-the-box thinking, by the way, can be applied to a lot of domains.



| ANALYTICAL MINDSET | DESIGNER MINDSET |
|---|---|
| WHAT IS THE PROBLEM? | WHAT IS THE SOLUTION? |
| HOW DO THINGS WORK? | HOW CAN THINGS WORK? |
| LEARNING BY STUDYING | LEARNING BY CREATING |
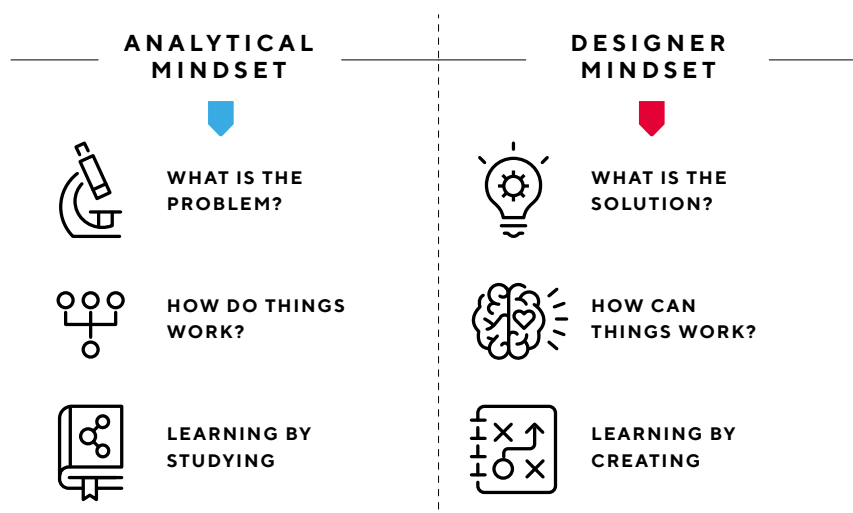
**Analytical mindset versus designer mindset**

So, design thinking is a method that can be very broadly applied by people in a variety of professions, from HR professionals to marketeers and from teachers to product designers.

**CORE PRINCIPLES OF DESIGN THINKING**
The best way to get a grasp of exactly what design thinking means is to just use it. This book gives you all the practical tools you need to simply do that. Because design thinking always follows a clear step-by-step plan, it is basically very easy to learn. Before we discuss the method's step-by-step plan, we will first go over some basic principles. Design thinking is characterized by the following core principles:

1   **Put the user or customer center stage.** The focus is always on the person or group of people you are designing for. You are not designing something for yourself, but for someone else. Ideally, the user or customer is also actively involved in the design process.

2   **You can learn by trying.** Design thinking is known as a method where creativity prevails. While this is true, it is also only one side of the story. Design thinking is also a method where trial and error is central and nothing is implemented without being tested in practice. You may think something is a great idea, but what is important is that the person you are designing it for thinks it is a great idea. That is why a prototype is always made. This prototype is presented to the target group to see how an idea might turn out in practice. The purpose of these prototype & test phases is that the focus is constantly on learning and improving.

3   **Speed is important, but not leading.** Design thinkers are generally people who like to speed things up by working in a short-cycle manner. Initially, concepts are not worked out in detail but there is a regular check to see whether you are following the right course. Endless meeting sessions, permission requests and policy planning documents are therefore completely out of place in design thinking. Design thinking projects are generally characterized by an energetic, positive energy.
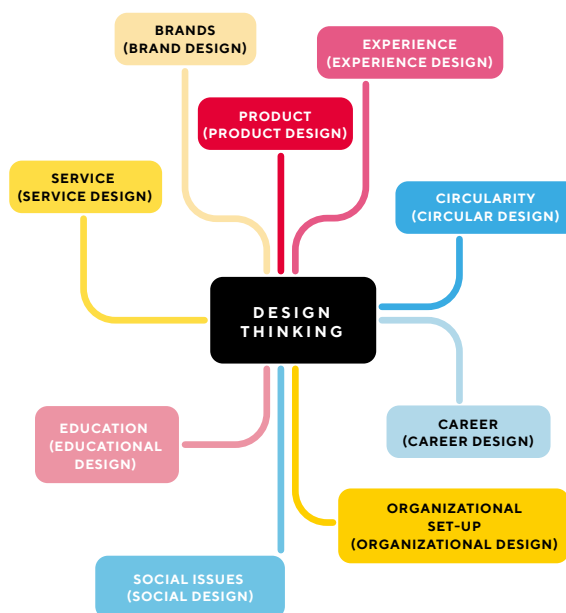


**Applications of design thinking**

4   **Make it visual.** Images usually capture the imagination more than words. To develop ideas and explain them to others, design thinking prefers to work with images rather than words.

5   **Context is key!** A design always fits in a context. Therefore, what works in one particular context does not automatically work in another. Every designer will therefore first map out the context before sketching the contours of the design. This is no different for a design thinker.

**TIP**

Experience shows that most people who get started with design thinking struggle with the fourth principle: make it visual. For that, I want to give you three tips:

1   Try visualizing your text or the point you made with an icon. These days, you can easily insert icons in Word and PowerPoint; use those kinds of handy tools!

2   Practice business drawing. You can find very useful tools for this on social media, but there are also many good books on the market in this area. One of my favorites is *Het Betekenboek* ("The Book of Meaning," available only in Dutch). Personally, I keep a visual dictionary in the back of my bullet journal (see Section 1.6).

3   Try to express yourself in metaphors as much as possible. Thinking in metaphors stimulates your imagination and it's a great way to explain something visually without having to draw.

| DESIGN THINKING **VERSUS** LEAN STARTUP | DESIGN THINKING **AND** AGILE |
|---|---|
| Similarities:<br>In both methods, **testing** or **validation** plays an important role.<br><br>Differences:<br>You use design thinking when you want to **design** a **solution** for a problem or challenge.<br><br>**If you already have an idea in your head**, use the Lean Startup method to develop that idea. | Design thinking is more about **what** you do and Agile is more about **how** you do it.<br><br>With Agile, you work in short **sprints** and constantly review what is needed and what needs to be done.<br><br>You can set up a design thinking project agile, but the Agile method works especially well when **implementing** the design. |

**CONDITIONS FOR A BROAD IMPLEMEN-TATION OF DESIGN THINKING**

Design thinking is not a resounding success in every organization. For instance, it does not help if the management widely implements design thinking while putting strong emphasis on the financial figures. Design thinking projects flourish in an organization where there is room to experiment, to explore new ways, and to work out ideas together. For this, trust needs to be a core value of the organization. It also helps if the building facilitates this by being an inspiring environment. But the absolute must for widespread implementation of design thinking in an organization is optimism! Tim Brown defines optimism as "the unshakable belief that things could be better than they are" (Brown, 2019, p. 82). Or, in the style of Barack Obama, there has to be a 'Yes-we-can' mentality. According to Tim Brown, it is easy to spot organizations that are bursting with optimism. "To find out whether a company is optimistic, experimental, and attuned to risk, people should simply use their senses: look for a colorful landscape of messy disorder rather than a suburban grid of tidy beige cubicles. Listen for bursts of raucous laughter rather than the constant drone of subdued conversation" (Brown, 2019, p. 83).



# "I'VE NEVER DONE IT BEFORE. SO I THINK I CAN DO IT." (attributed to Pippi Longstocking)

# 1.2

# THE
# STEP-BY-STEP PLAN

In design thinking, you are methodically thinking like a designer. Designers design things. They usually do that designing from a certain perspective or frame. Everyone should be able to think like a designer because it is precisely this designing mind that makes us human. After all, this started back in prehistoric times with designing tools. Now we design digital twins, robots, and smart houses. Yet, by our nature, not all of us use our designing ability. To help you think like a designer, a step-by-step approach is therefore helpful.

Just as all roads (different roads) lead to Rome, there are also different ways to shape a design thinking process. For instance, there are several phased plans for design thinking in circulation, but at their core they all boil down to the same thing. In this book, we use the best-known and most widely used step-by-step plan, drafted by the Stanford Design School — **EDIPT: 1) Empathize, 2) Define, 3) Ideate, 4) Prototype, and 5) Test.** Because the last two phases are often mentioned in the same breath, you also see roadmaps that identify four steps. The best known of these is the 4 Ds of design thinking: 1) Discover, 2) Define, 3) Develop, and 4) Deliver. In essence, these are the exact same steps found in EDIPT, only the naming is a bit different and the last two steps of EDIPT are merged.

There are also step-by-step plans that pack the first two stages together, such as is done in the book *Designing for Growth* by Jeanne Liedtka and Tim Ogilvie.

The different phased plans of design thinking that are in circulation are similar because they have one big thing in common: you are always **diverging** and **converging** sequentially. Diverging means that you are seeking breadth. You then collect as many thoughts and ideas as possible. Converging means you are narrowing. You then link certain facets together and add focus. In design thinking, divergence and convergence alternate twice in a row. This is also visualized by the double diamond.

Repeated broadening (diverging) and narrowing (converging) is best done in multidisciplinary teams. When different individuals from different perspectives collect, link, and select ideas together, the divergent and convergent natures are fully exploited. Especially in the divergent phases, it is important to avoid 'group thinking.' This is easier when you put people together who naturally look at an issue through very different glasses or frames. Section 1.5 discusses the ideal design thinking team in more detail.

immersing yourself in the customer

formulating the design challenge

generating ideas for a solution

developing an idea into a prototype

testing the prototype on the target group

| Stanford Design School | Empathize | Define | Ideate | Prototype | Test |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 4 D's | Discover | Define | Develop | Deliver | |
| Designing for Growth | What is? | | What if? | What wows? | What works? |

**DIVERGE**
**CONVERGE**

PROBLEM — EMPATHIZE — DEFINE — IDEATE — PROTOTYPE + TEST — SOLUTION

DESIGN CHALLENGE
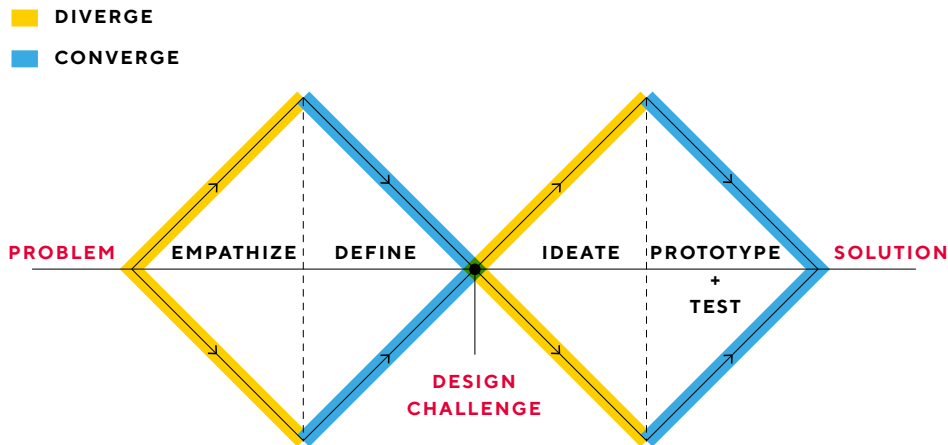
**The double diamond of design thinking**

Ideally, the user or customer should be on the design thinking team (this is called 'co-creation' or 'participatory design'). If not part of the design thinking team, the user or client still has an important role to play in the process. A design thinking process always begins and ends with the user or customer. The process starts with an exploration of what the customer or user is confronted with (the empathize phase) and it ends with testing the design with the customer or user. This test phase is a crucial aspect of design thinking. If you don't test whether your conceived solution indeed does what it is supposed to do, you can't really call your process a design thinking process. Note that an important choice is whether you enter the design process **with the user or customer** or whether you design **for the user or customer**. This is one of the first things you should ask yourself.

Of course, you can deviate from the step-by-step plan. After all, a plan is just a tool. If another phased plan helps you to better achieve your goal, you should certainly use it! Even with a different step-by-step plan, your approach can still be a design thinking approach, as long as it is based on the following **four criteria**:
1  The process begins and ends with the user or customer.
2  It is characterized by alternating divergence and convergence.

*In the following five chapters, you will be guided through the EDIPT phases of the design thinking process.*

3  Central to the process is 'thinking like a designer.' This makes idea generation an important part of the process.
4  Testing, testing, and more testing.

The step-by-step plan of design thinking is the beginning and the end of your project. So, it's not like you have to draft a separate research or project plan or anything like that beforehand. That just takes a lot of your time and gets you nowhere — which by no means says that you shouldn't use a considered approach. Instead of drafting a big research plan or project plan beforehand, make a mini plan at the beginning of each step of the design thinking process. In that **mini plan**, make sure you have a clear idea of your goals for that step. What do you want to find out? Who do you want to involve in this step of the project? How do you want to explore and research the possibilities? How will you monitor the quality of the final product of this step? Is it necessary to inform others about the results of this step and, if so, how? This is why I advise you to draw up a **bullet journal** (see also Section 1.6) in which you note these thinking steps in a structured way and, at the same time, register your progress.

**TIP**

Most students are taught in their courses that you start a project with a problem analysis and the formulation of SMART objectives, a problem definition, and a set of sub-questions. You are also taught to elaborate on the research method for each sub-question. You don't do this in a design thinking project. Well — you do, but in a different way. The problem analysis takes place in the empathize phase. Then you arrive at a combined objective and problem definition during the define phase, when you formulate a design challenge. In this phase, you also draw up design criteria, which you can think of as demarcations or conditions. Each step in the design thinking process is actually similar to a sub-question from a 'classic' research process. It may still make sense to formulate sub-questions for each step in the design thinking process (see Section 8.1). In that case, you don't formulate the sub-questions before you start the project, but before you start a new step in the design thinking process. You then write down these sub-questions in your mini plan for that step. In the mini plan, you also briefly elaborate on which research methods you want to apply in that step and how. At first, it may seem strange to not draft an entire research plan before getting started, but instead create a mini plan (one sheet of paper) for each phase of the project. But there's a very simple reason for this. At the beginning of the project, you never know exactly where you are going to end up at the conclusion of the project. I have supervised hundreds of student research projects over the years and almost always I have seen that students had to adjust their plan as the project progressed. After all, a project is not something static but something dynamic. You gain new insights and adjust your plan accordingly. This is very much the case in a design thinking project. After all, the results of one phase form the input for the next phase. Because you can never know beforehand what the output of a phase will be, you can never properly estimate beforehand what you will have to do in the following phase to move forward. Therefore, abandon the 'traditional' research plan and make a mini plan for each step of the design thinking process:

At the beginning of the project, you never know exactly where you are going to end up at the conclusion of the project. After all, a project is not something static but something dynamic. You gain new insights and adjust your plan accordingly.

| Mini plan | Empathize | Define | Ideate | Prototype | Test |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Goal | | | | | |
| Who to involve? | | | | | |
| Which methods/tools? | | | | | |
| Points of attention | | | | | |
| Schedule | | | | | |
| Milestone | | | | | |

# DESIGN THINKING
# LOGIC

## OPINIONS ARE ABOUT HOW IT SHOULD BE; IDEAS ARE ABOUT HOW IT COULD BE*

**\* translation of a Ducht quote by Omdenken**

As explained in Section 1.1, design thinking does not point out the analytical, but rather the designing aspect. This shifts the accentuation from understanding to improving or changing. Of course, to change you also need to understand the situation, which is why the process starts with the empathize phase; this is where you try to understand the situation. At the same time, you may not really understand the situation until you try to change it. The well-known psychologist Kurt Lewin, also the founder of Action Research, put it nicely: "You cannot understand a system until you try to change it" (Lewin, 1951).

That power to change is at the heart of the entire method of design thinking. It makes you start asking yourself not how things work, but how things **could** or **might** work. Adding the words 'could' and 'might' seems like a very small change but, in reality, it is like the difference between night and day. Because when you ask yourself how things could or might work, you really have your designer glasses on and you see the world not as it is but as it could be.

Adding the words 'could' and 'might' changes your whole approach from an analytical perspective to a design perspective. In an analytical perspective, you study what was done and how it was done and then you ask yourself what the result was. In design

thinking, you reason the other way around. You think about where you want to end up, what change you want to realize. So, you take the end point as given and then ask yourself what you should do (and how!) to get there.

By the way, this sounds much simpler than it is. Flipping the formulas looks very easy to do, but to do it successfully requires, above all, a different mindset than the one you have needed in projects so far. That is why we discuss that mindset in detail in the next section.

**HOW THINGS WORK:**

**WHAT + HOW = RESULT?**

**HOW THINGS COULD WORK:**

**WHAT? + HOW? = VALUE**
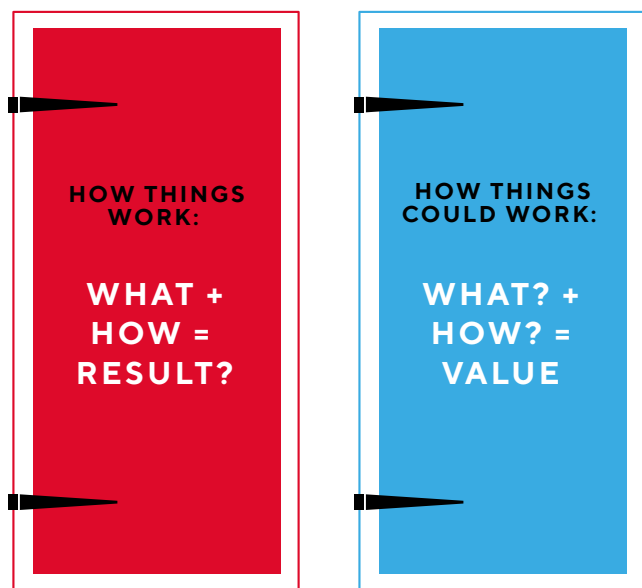
**Inspired by the work of Kees Dorst**

# THE
# MINDSET

**THE MINDSET OF LEONARDO DA VINCI**

The greatest design thinker the world has ever known is undoubtedly Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519). Indeed, he was one of the first to clearly combine the creative design world with the factual scientific world. He has therefore been described as "a man who observed sciences in an artistic way and art in a scientific way" (Tal & Gordon, 2020).

A number of Leonardo da Vinci's traits and behaviors are very typical of the design thinking mindset (Van Zeeland, 2020). First and foremost is his drive to constantly aim to make things better and more beautiful. In doing so, Da Vinci acted not only from an aesthetic perspective, but he also had a clear user perspective in mind. He did not want to make things better and more beautiful for himself, but rather for others. For instance, when he sketched his ideal city, he thought about how the city could look beautiful, but also (mainly) about its liveability.

Da Vinci's method of observation is also characteristic. He observed everything and everyone around him, as well as how these different elements interacted with each other. He was curious, and he studied the effect of the environment on things and people.

Leonardo da Vinci additionally held the homo universalis as his ideal image: in his eyes, the ideal human being was a very broadly developed being. Accordingly, he personally was also widely developed. He was an artist, an inventor, an architect, a scientist, and an engineer. He was thus the personification of a multidisciplinary approach.

Another of Da Vinci's strengths was his ability to put his ideas on paper. He made sketches of everything. He also liked to build scale models to see what his idea would roughly look like in real life. In other words, he continuously built and drew prototypes of his world of ideas. You can still admire those prototypes in the Parc Leonardo da Vinci near the French castle Clos Lucé.

**TOGETHER
WE
WILL
CHANGE
THE
WORLD**

There are several attitudes and talents that are part of the fixed mindset of a design thinker. Things you cannot do without. These attitudes and talents fall under the **need-to-have** category. They are the basic attitudes that are sensible to discuss with the team and clearly put on the table when you jointly embark on a design thinking project. There are also some attitudes and talents that are useful, but not necessary. We call this part of the mindset the **nice-to-have**. But trying to find people who have it all is like looking for a needle in a haystack: it is virtually impossible to capture all need-to-haves and nice-to-haves in one person. So, use the list of nice-to-haves mainly as a checklist to see whether all attitudes and talents are represented in at least one person on your team, and adjust your team accordingly. After all, design thinking projects are team projects! So don't feel overwhelmed by all the attitudes and talents discussed below but use them as input to build a great team. Specific team composition is discussed in more detail in the next section.

Let's start with the need-to-haves. Top of the list, of course, is **customer focus**. I cannot say it often enough: every design thinking project always starts (in the empathize phase) and ends (in the test phase) with the customer, and ideally the customer is involved throughout the entire project (co-creation). After all, you don't design for yourself. In their article 'The Need for Design Thinking in Business Schools,' Roy Glen, Christy Suciu and Christopher Baughn write: "Unlike the solution to a scientific problem, which can be judged in terms of correct or

incorrect or true or false, design solutions are assessed in terms of better or worse, which is highly dependent on the specific context of use. The judge in this case is the customer or user, and the evaluation is based on preferred realities rather than objective truth. These preferred realities may involve emotionally resonant as well as functional considerations. Design Thinking has, therefore, been portrayed as a human-centred process incorporating insights and understandings of the needs and problems experienced by users" (Glen, Suciu & Baughn, 2014, p. 657). Therefore, the word 'customer' is a broad term; it does not necessarily mean the person is buying something. You can also replace the word customer with user, resident, employee, learner, et cetera.

A second element of the design thinking mindset is **openness**. As you could read at the beginning of the chapter, design thinking is also called out-of-the-box thinking. Only when you are open to new sounds, new ideas, and different mindsets can surprising things emerge. Because each person's personal mindset is different, it is crucial to be open to the mindset of others. That openness to other sounds, by the way, seems easier than it is. The human brain is full of pre-programmed thinking errors, also known as biases, that block the path to openness. As a result of these pre-programmed thinking errors, we think in stereotypical images and mainly listen to people who say things we could have said ourselves. Surprise requires diversity. So, surround yourself with people who force you to take off your blinders.

A design thinker is also **solution-oriented** by definition. Their goal is not purely to design something new, but to solve a problem. Often those problems are difficult problems, also called wicked problems. Wicked problems are large-scale and complex problems, usually in the social system, often involving confusing information and/or different parties with conflicting interests. Wicked problems are a bit like a waterbed: if you push in one place, a bump arises somewhere else (Van Zeeland, 2020). So, the solution to a wicked problem can create a new problem somewhere else. But there is a
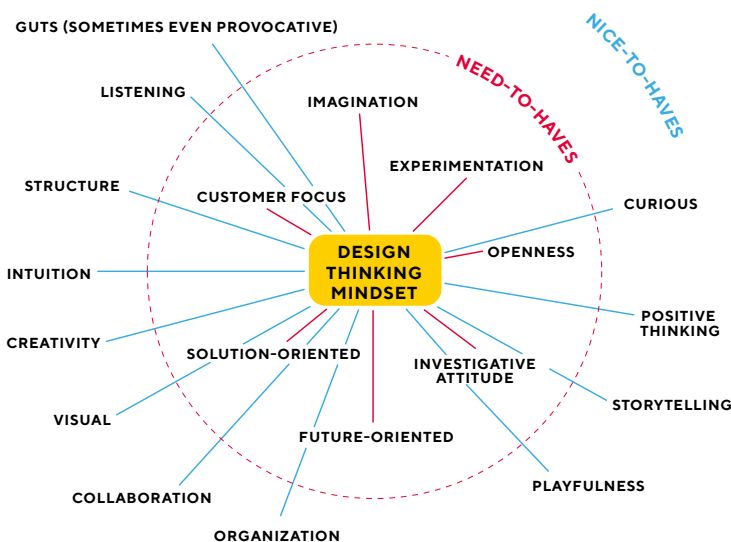


The mindset of a design thinker
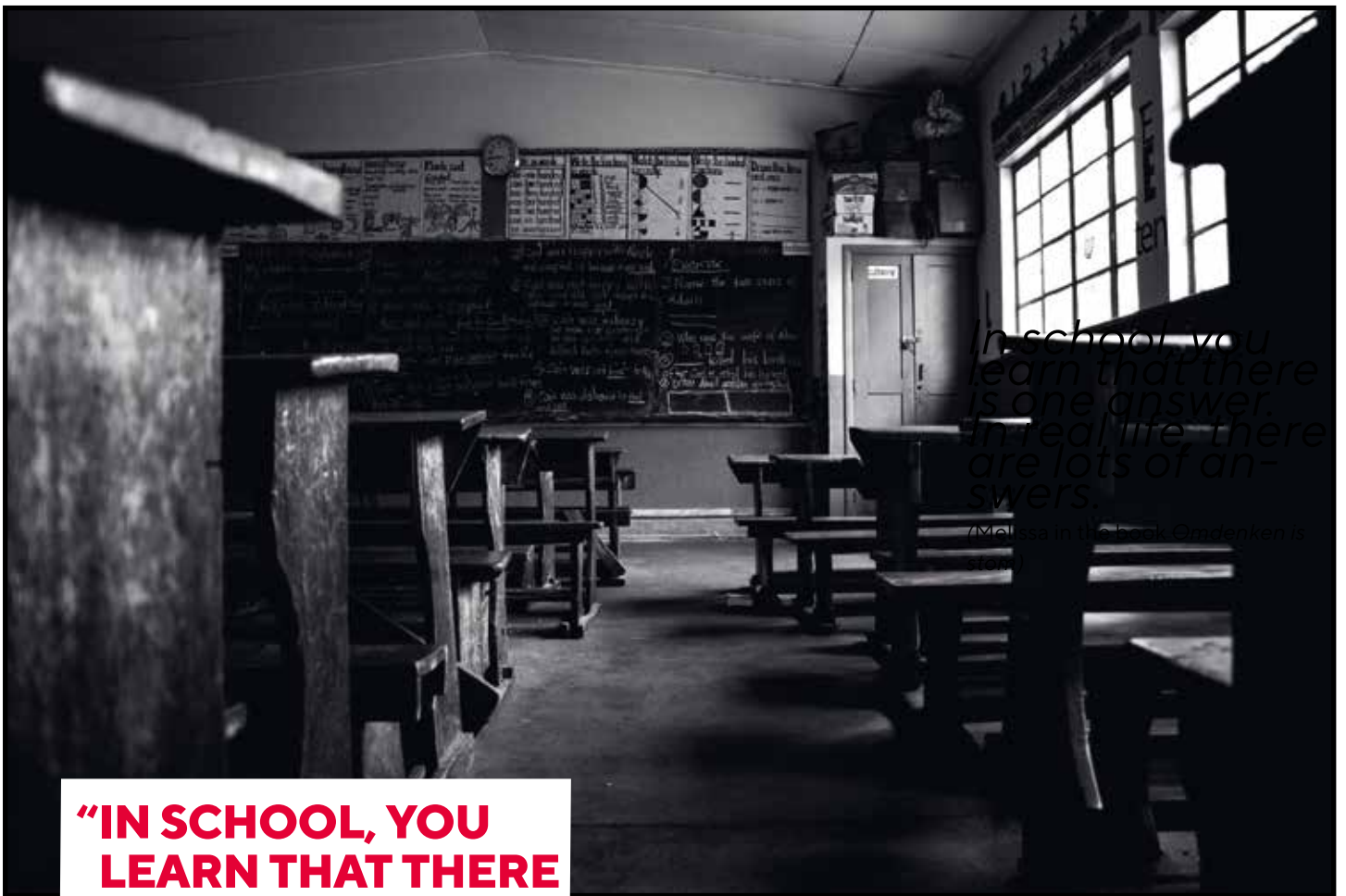
# "IN SCHOOL, YOU LEARN THAT THERE IS ONLY ONE ANSWER. IN REAL LIFE, THERE ARE LOTS OF ANSWERS."

**(Melissa in the book *Omdenken is stom*, "Reverse thinking is stupid")**

second reason why being solution-oriented sounds easier than it is, and that reason is within ourselves. As David Allen writes in *Getting things done*, "People think a lot, but most of that thinking is of a problem, project, or situation — not about it" (Allen, 2015, pp. 16-17). In other words, when we are thinking of a situation, most of us worry more than we think about how to actually solve the situation. One way to keep the focus firmly on designing the solution is to hang the design challenge (see Chapter 3) in large print on the wall. This reminds you and your team of what you are doing: designing a solution to that particular design challenge!

However, that solution will not come out of the blue. It will take hard work originat-

ing from an **investigative attitude**. What is exactly going on? Who has dealt with this situation before? Who has investigated this issue before? What are the best practices? One of my personal maxims is: "Every output needs an input." In other words, to arrive at a cool solution (output), you do need to gather enough ingredients (input). Your research provides those ingredients. An investigative attitude is the result of your curiosity. As Albert Einstein said: "I have no special talent. I am only passionately curious."

Besides researching, **experimenting** is also a crucial element of the design thinking mindset. Think of life as a big laboratory, full of natural and organized experiments, and learn from those experiments. Experimentation is also literally ingrained in the design thinking roadmap. In fact, in the prototype and test phases, you are doing nothing but experimenting. Your prototype is the experiment itself and in the test phase you will learn whether your experiment succeeds. Does it succeed? Super, then you can move on to implementing your solution. Does it not succeed? No problem, then you've learned from it and you can see what you need to adjust. This is why design thinking often has a short-cycle character.

In this respect, there are many similarities between design thinking and agile working. When working according to the Agile method, the way of working is often explained with a drawing of a submarine and a dolphin. The submarine typifies a 'traditional' project in which the results of a project team are only visible at the end. A short-cycle agile way of working is typified by a dolphin that is always briefly underwater and then shares its interim results. Each dive underwater is a new experiment.

Another need-to-have is to be **future-oriented**. After all, the past is hard to design. So, you don't start from the IST situation (how things are now) but from the SOLL situation (how things could or should be). Or, rather, design thinking is the way from IST to SOLL. This does require **imagination**. No one has a crystal ball so no one can actually see into the future, but you can work out future scenarios (see also Section 4.3.1.1) and imagine how things might turn out in those future scenarios. Albert Einstein placed great value on this power of imagination. He famously said, "Imagination is more important than knowledge. Knowledge is limited; imagination encircles the world."

And then the nice-to-haves. To really color outside the lines (think outside the box) takes some **guts**. A design is allowed to be somewhat provocative. To do that, you do need to challenge your own brain and those of your teammates a bit. A simple brainstorming session usually won't get you there. Chapter 4 therefore presents an extensive toolbox of all kinds of creative techniques to really challenge the brain. However, you



WHAT YOU CAN CHANGE

THE PAST          THE FUTURE
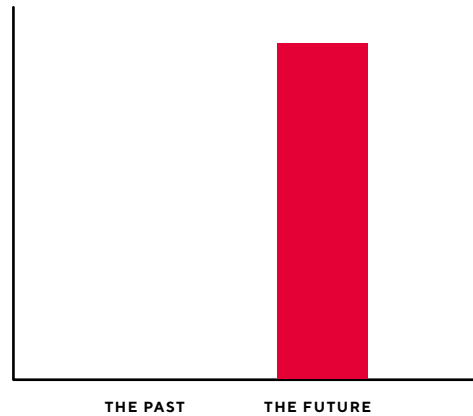
should see this toolbox as a means and not as an end in itself. Ultimately, you want to generate impact with your design. And when it comes to impact, a dose of guts is also needed. To achieve more, you must start thinking with guts, thinking big. Making an Impact Ladder (see Section 3.4) can help you do this.

Thinking boldly and achieving impact only works if you know how to turn problems into opportunities and possibilities. So, **thinking positively** is definitely a nice-to-have. However, positive is not the same as being naive. Of course you should keep an eye out for critical comments and possible bears on the road; just don't let them guide you. See problems not as obstacles but as opportunities to sharpen your design. Tim Brown summarizes this attitude in his statement quoted earlier, "The unshakable belief that things could be better than they are" (Brown, 2019, p. 82).

Besides a positive mindset, being **curious** is a great contribution. "Our curiosity is the exciting electricity we feel in the presence of potential" (Carroll, 2018, p. 147). So, curiosity is a combination of excitement on the one hand and seeing potential on the other. This combination is very important for allowing designs to emerge. Will Gompertz, arts editor at the BBC, says, "If necessity is the mother of invention, curiosity is the father" (Gompertz, 2015, p. 58). A curious disposition helps to get your brain thinking out of the box. After all, when you are curious, you are more likely to explore paths you have not previously explored. As a result, you



SEE YOU SOON!

SEE YOU LATER!

VISIBILITY

TIME
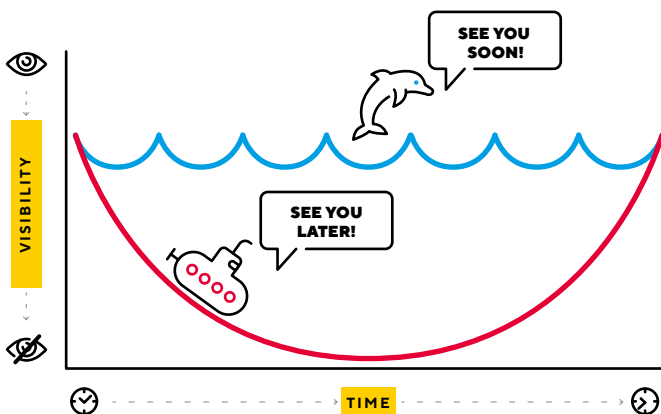
**Submarine or dolphin?**

**"LIFE ISN'T ABOUT WAITING FOR THE STORM TO PASS. IT'S ABOUT LEARNING HOW TO DANCE IN THE RAIN."** (Vivian Greene)

make it harder for your brain to think in its usual pigeonholes and so you really train an open mind. Or, as Ryder Carroll nicely puts it, "Curiosity points the needle of our inner compass toward the hopeful magnetism of possibility and meaning. It's the force that compels us to venture out of our comfort zone into unfamiliar territory filled with uncertainty and risks" (Carroll, 2018, p. 150).

With that open mind, you may certainly follow your **intuition**. Great innovators like Steve Jobs (see also the box on Steve Jobs' mindset on page 27) recognize the importance of following your intuition. Einstein said, "I believe in intuitions and inspirations. I sometimes feel that I am right. I do not know that I am." Giving space to your intuition does not mean you have to let it be leading. In a design thinking project, you must make a lot of intuitive choices, but ultimately you test those choices with your target audience in the test phase. And even if you use design thinking not as a project, but more as an

approach to life, it is still good to test your intuition with friends or acquaintances.

In the beginning of this chapter, I mentioned that design thinking really has two sides: on the one hand, it is intuitive; on the other, it is **structured**. That structured element is found not only in the step-by-step plan, but it is also useful if it is in your mindset. A structured person is going to cluster sounds and ideas, helping the process move forward. Another fine talent is being able to listen: really **listening** to (which is not the same as hearing) the other person. Remember, you are not designing for yourself, you're designing for someone else. Really listening to what the other person is saying and continuing to ask about those things that affect you absolutely benefits the process!

At the same time, a design thinking project can use some **playfulness**. It's okay to have some fun in the project, since this definitely helps the vibe. And playful techniques like

LEGO Serious Play also benefit creativity during the process. But less playful forms of **creativity** also serve the process. Design thinking is often mentioned in the same breath as creativity. Design thinking is not the same as creative thinking, but creative thinking certainly helps design thinking.

You don't have to be able to express yourself visually, but **visual thinking** is something that fits very well with design thinking. So, draw, build, cut and paste. As the famous inventor Thomas Edison put it: "Learn with both your head and hands." If you try to express the sounds you hear and the ideas you form in icons, drawings, or metaphors, you will usually have come a long way. But don't let your perfectionism get in the way of this. It doesn't matter if it is the ugliest drawing ever, as long as it helps the other person imagine what you mean.

From visual thinking, it is only a small step to **storytelling**. You generate impact only if you can make others understand your design. Storytelling will help you a lot with that. Most people are not born storytellers, but fortunately many tools exist in this area. In Chapter 8, I share some storytelling tools with you.

To properly guide your team and other stakeholders through a project, **organizational skills** are also very welcome. After all, there are all sorts of things awaiting you. Client meetings must be planned, a team must be assembled, creative sessions must be devised and executed, a prototype must be developed and tested, and an implementation process must be proposed. In other words, there is work to be done!

The final element of the design thinking mindset is the desire to want to do it together. **Collaborating** with others ensures that you bring together different perspectives, talents, and thoughts. I cannot stress it enough: All the above attitudes and talents do not have to be in one person. But make sure they are within the team!

## "WE DON'T STOP PLAYING BECAUSE WE GROW OLD; WE GROW OLD BECAUSE WE STOP PLAYING." (George Bernard Shaw)

## THE MINDSET OF STEVE JOBS

Steve Jobs can be called a legend. Adam Grant (2021) interprets his success as follows: "The key to his greatness was his ability to bend the world to his vision." **Bending the world towards you** is the ultimate answer to the typical design thinking question of 'How might we … ?'. Bending the world towards you starts with **believing** you can actually do it. In an iconic 1997 Apple commercial, Steve Jobs said, "The ones who are crazy enough to think that they can change the world, are the ones who do." For this, you need an internal **locus of control**. With an external locus of control, things happen to you because of factors outside of yourself; with an internal locus of control, you are convinced that things happen because of your actions. Steve Jobs had a solid internal locus of control.

But bending the world towards you is something you never do alone. You need a good **team** for that. Steve Jobs made sure he surrounded himself with people who challenged his thinking: "If Jobs hadn't surrounded himself with people who knew how to change his mind, he might not have changed the world," says Adam Grant. On a team, everyone's **expertise** counts. Expertise is important to take the right thinking steps. You could convince Steve Jobs if you actually proved that you were savvy.

Steve Jobs always let his team **challenge** him. For instance, Jobs was not a fan of the development of an Apple smartphone. He even made a list of all the reasons why it wouldn't work. So, if Steve Jobs hadn't had such a good team around him, the iPhone might never have been developed. His team eventually challenged him by asking, "Wouldn't there be a Windows phone eventually?" That triggered Jobs. So even the greatest innovator of the 20th century needed **provocative interventions** to pave the way for progress.

You do have to be **open** to those provocative interventions, though. That did not come naturally to Steve Jobs. In 1985, he was forced to quit Apple, and he did not take this lightly. Jobs once said of this period, "It was awful-tasting medicine, but I guess the patient needed it." He learned to let go of his own beliefs and be open to the vision of others. He also actively opened his brain to embrace **creative flow**. Steve Jobs practiced meditation and exercised a lot to get into that flow. He knew very well that a creative idea does not fall from the sky, but that you must train your brain for it. Meditation, in particular, helped him to listen to his **intuition**. Steve Jobs said, "The people in the Indian countryside don't use their intellect like we do, they use their intuition instead, and their intuition is far more developed than in the rest of the world. Intuition is a very powerful thing, more powerful than intellect, in my opinion. That's had a big impact on my work" (Headley, 2018).
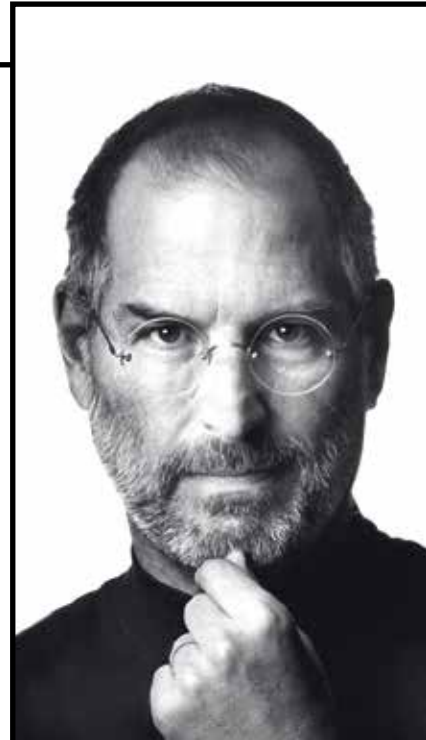
> "INTUITION IS A VERY POWERFUL THING, MORE POWERFUL THAN INTELLECT."

Scan this **QR code** to watch Apple's iconic 1997 commercial.

In some organizations and training courses, rather than talking about talents or mindset, the talk is all about competences. The table below links the stages from the design thinking process to the corresponding competences.

| Competence | Empathize | Define | Ideate | Prototype | Test | Notes |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Innovating | X | X | X | X | X | Design thinking is fundamentally an innovation process. |
| Communicating | X | X | X | X | X | For a project to be successful, it is important not to think about communication only at the end of the project but to incorporate storytelling throughout the project. |
| Planning and organizing | X | X | X | X | X | In design thinking projects, speed is important. That's why it's important that everyone on the design team knows where they stand and that sessions are planned in a timely manner. |
| Result-oriented acting | X | X | X | X | X | You are not doing a design thinking project because it is so incredibly fun to do (of course it is!), but because you want to solve a (practical) problem! Focusing on where you want to go is therefore crucial. |
| Collaborating | X | X | X | X | X | Design thinking is fundamentally a multidisciplinary activity. This means that working together is important to successfully complete all stages of the process. |
| Investigating | X | | X | | X | In a design thinking project you are investigating during three phases: 1) investigating the problem during the empathize phase, 2) investigating the solution during the ideate phase, and 3) investigating the effectiveness of the solution during the test phase. |
| Analyzing | | X | | | X | Analytical ability is especially important in the converging phases of the process: the define and test phases. |
| Creating | | | X | X | | Creating is, of course, done mainly in the ideate phase. Because an idea is often developed further in the prototype phase, competence in creating is also important there. |
| Experimenting | | | | X | X | Experimenting especially alludes to trying things out. In the design thinking process, this is mainly reflected in the prototype and test phases. |

In conclusion, no project is perfect. There is always more to research, more to do, or more time needed to talk to people. **Time is scarce**, which is why it is important to be smart with your time. There will always be open ends, but as long as you know where those open ends are and why you are leaving them open, there is nothing to worry about. Consciously manage your time and the time of others and make do with what you've got. Are the results disappointing? Think about it, be positive, change your tack, and figure out how to make the most of those results. There's a nice saying that illustrates this: "If life gives you lemons, make lemonade."
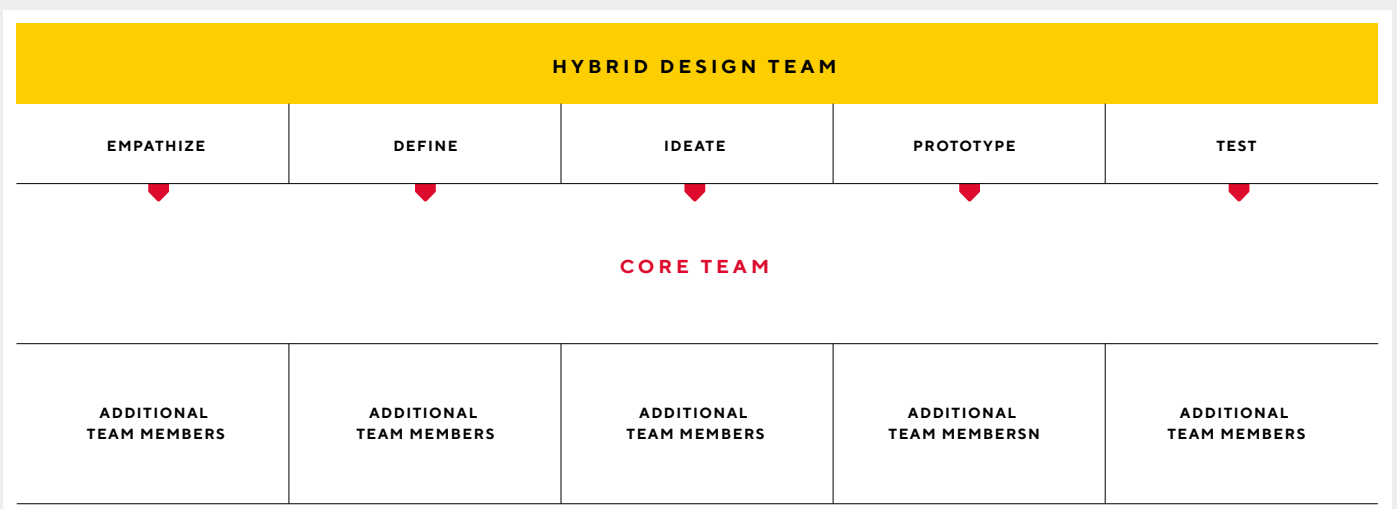


## "IF LIFE GIVES YOU LEMONS, MAKE LEMONADE."

# THE
# DESIGN TEAM

You never design alone, you do it with a team. First and foremost, it is important to put together a nicely **diverse** team so that there is room for different voices and per-spectives. As General George Patton said, "If everybody is thinking alike, then somebody isn't thinking." Everyone contributes their own knowledge, experience, and talent. As discussed in the previous section, make sure your team has as many different attitudes and talents as possible.

At the same time, a diverse team also de-mands a lot from the individual team mem-bers. They must be able to rise above their own expertise, want to understand others, and have the patience to bridge different perspec-tives. Tim Brown puts this nicely in his book *Change by Design*: "It requires us to identify individuals who are confident enough of their expertise that they are willing to go beyond it" (Brown, 2019, p. 33). Here, Brown makes a comparison with the **T-shaped profession-**

**al**: the vertical leg of the T symbolizes the depth of expertise that each individual team member brings, and the horizontal leg of the T symbolizes how the individual team member can make connections with other individuals and other disciplines. When team members don't know each other very well, it can be good to identify those talents first. This can be done by having each team member create a 'passport' of themselves and share it with each other (see also the Passport exercise at the end of this chapter).

In design thinking, it is very common to work with a **hybrid team**. That means that the team is constantly changing in terms of size, composition, workplace, and role per team member. In each phase of the design think-ing process, the team then looks different. A hybrid team usually works well with a fixed core team and a flexible shell around it. It is customary for the team to start a little smaller and end up a little larger.

| HYBRID DESIGN TEAM | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| EMPATHIZE | DEFINE | IDEATE | PROTOTYPE | TEST |
| CORE TEAM | | | | |
| ADDITIONAL TEAM MEMBERS | ADDITIONAL TEAM MEMBERS | ADDITIONAL TEAM MEMBERS | ADDITIONAL TEAM MEMBERSN | ADDITIONAL TEAM MEMBERS |

**Hybrid teams in design thinking**

"WHEN BANKERS DINE TOGETHER THEY DISCUSS ART, WHEN ARTISTS DINE TOGETHER THEY DISCUSS MONEY." (Oscar Wilde)

In a true design thinking project, your customer or user should not be missing from the team. Tim Brown writes, "We need to invent a new and radical form of collaboration that blurs the boundaries between creators and consumers. It's not about 'us versus them' or even 'us on behalf of them.' For the design thinker, it has to be 'us with them'" (Brown, 2019, p. 64). In some teams, customers are permanently represented. One then speaks of co-creation. In other teams, customers play a role mainly in the initial and final stages of the design thinking project. This difference is characterized by a difference in perspective: do you design **for others** or do you design **with others** (see also Section 1.2).

Besides the customer or user, you can also include different people on your team. Jake Knapp, author of the book *Sprint*, speaks of an ideal team of seven people: his **Ocean's Seven**. That dream team consists of the following people (Knapp, 2016):

**1** a decision-maker (the CEO, founder of the company, manager of the team, et cetera);

**2** a finance expert;

**3** a marketing expert;

**4** a customer expert (or, of course, the customer themself!);

**5** a technical expert;

**6** a design expert;

**7** a 'troublemaker' (the person who starts making trouble when not involved with the team).

Whatever the team looks like, you must give the design team a certain amount of freedom. To quote General George Patton again, "Never tell people how to do things. Tell them what to do and they will surprise you with their ingenuity." Make sure the team has room to explore different directions, but also make sure there is room for the team to make its own decisions and mistakes. in his book *Change by Design*, Tim Brown describes this nicely as "a culture that believes that it is better to ask forgiveness afterward rather than permission before, [one] that rewards people for success but gives them permission to fail" (Brown, 2019, p. 38). Along with various degrees of freedom, there is also a need for calm. Therefore, you should not want the design team to be working non-stop as a group.

Scan this **QR code** for more tips on making a stakeholder analysis.
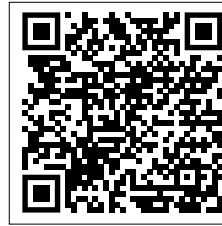


Sometimes focus, rest, and concentration is also needed. Cal Newport, in his book *Deep Work*, called concentration "the superpower of the 21st century" for a reason (Newport, 2016). Ultimately, it is about finding a balance between the creative dynamics of the group, on the one hand, and the calmness and concentration of the individual, on the other hand. Design thinking is a continuous search for the right balance between extremes; look again at the definition of design thinking at the beginning of this chapter.

Finally, as a team, you do bear an important responsibility. Together, you are going to create a design that will ultimately bring about a change. That change must be good. But what is good is different for everyone. That is why I personally like to start with a joint exploration of what is good by doing an exercise called 'The first judgement' as a team. You can find more on this in Section 7.6.

**TIP**

**Prepare a proper stakeholder analysis in advance. This will help you include the right people on your team at the right moments in the process. You can also create a stakeholder analysis as a team by, for example, mapping all stakeholders together in a collective mind map (see Section 4.3.3.3).**

# BULLET JOURNAL

Before you start, there is one more thing to think about: How will you report on your process? Whether or not you are going to write an entire report (see also Chapter 8), it is always important to keep a **logbook**. In that log, write down every day who you talked to, what you discovered, what you did, what ideas came into your head, or what else you found remarkable. Also, take lots of **pictures** so that your logbook will have a visual character.

I, personally, use Ryder Carroll's (2018) **bullet journal method** for recording my activities. This method is so much more than just recording things; it's a way to live intentionally and learn to use your time and energy sparingly. Carroll summarizes the method as to help you "track the past and order the present so that you can design your future." The advantage of the bullet journal method is that it is a systematic method that simultaneously encourages you to visualize and to use your imagination. This journal method fits nicely with design thinking because it has that same dualism: structured, systematic, and purposeful on one side and creative, visual and playful on the other. Ryder Carroll's method is meant to keep track of everything in your life and to help you design your life intentionally and meaningfully. If you want to delve more into that, I can certainly recommend Ryder Carroll's book. The bullet journal method is like design thinking: you can learn about the method in five minutes, but if you really want to get into the philosophy behind it, you need to read more about it.

A bullet journal has a modular structure that is best compared to a set of LEGO bricks. You use the bricks according to your own needs. This makes the method flexible. Specifically for design thinking, I have adapted Ryder Carroll's bullet journal so that it becomes a log of the design thinking project. All you have to do is buy a notebook



"The Bullet Journal method will help you accomplish more by working on less. It helps you identify and focus on what is meaningful by stripping away what is meaningless."
**(Ryder Carroll)**

(you can, of course, buy a real bullet journal). Then you fill it in as described below.
Next, you can start your log. You start with the empathize phase. First, reserve two or three pages for your **mini plan**. These are summary pages where you formulate concisely what you want to do. What do you want to achieve? What do you want

| Page number | What? |
|---|---|
| **1** | **Impression of the project**<br>What is the working title of the project? What inspirational quotes fit the project nicely? What images do you associate with the project? |
| **2-3-4-5** | **Index**<br>This is your table of contents. When you have filled a journal page you can make a reference to it in your index (so make sure all pages in your notebook are numbered). This way, you can find things easily. My index contains at least the following elements:<br>a  Empathize<br>b  Define<br>c  Ideate<br>d  Prototype<br>e  Test<br>f  Inspiration (such as a quote or an interesting thought)<br>g  Moments of reflection<br><br>But my index is different for each project. If the design thinking project relates to a theme around circularity, then that theme will also be reflected in the index. The index is there to help you, so make it the way it works best for you. I always reserve four pages for the index but in practice two or three pages are usually sufficient. |
| **6-7** | **Project overview**<br>Make a schematic overview of the project here. You do this by, for example, outlining the steps of the design thinking project and using brief keywords to record the expected fulfilment of them. |
| **8-9** | **Planning**<br>Create a calendar in which you map out the end date and key intermediate moments. |
| **10** | **Books you want to read**<br>Personally, I always draw a bookshelf here and write the titles of the books I want to read in the books on the 'shelf.' When I have actually read the book, I color the book in. Probably not all the books will be colored in, but that's okay. Let yourself be guided by your learning needs. |
| **11** | **Places you want to visit**<br>Want to find inspiration at a particular museum? Want to visit a specific neighborhood or a shop? Make a nice list here of places where you want to get inspiration. |
| **12-13** | **People you want to talk to**<br>Make a list of people you want to talk to in relation to the project. Of course, this page will continuously change. Names will be added and dropped. That's part of the process, it's a dynamic overview. |

to find out? Who do you want to involve in this step of the project? How do you want to explore and investigate the possibilities? Is it necessary to inform others about the results of this phase? And if so, how? Next, transform the mini plan into a to-do list for that phase. Make sure you save enough space for this. This list will expand during the phase.

After that, your **daily log** begins. Ryder Carroll writes: "The Daily Log is the workhorse of your Bullet Journal" (Carroll, 2018, p. 86). Each day, you write down which tasks from the to-do list you will take on and you make **brief notes** of who you talked to and what you did (these notes are called 'bullets,' hence the name). If it turns out at the end of the day that you haven't done a planned to-do, you can decide to migrate it to the next day (or another day). So, every time you ponder the migration issue, think about how useful and necessary that particular task still is. With regularity, you will come to the conclusion that certain to-do's can just as well be crossed out. The migration question therefore helps you to be very aware of your time. Or, in the words of Ryder Carroll, "Migration keeps you from operating on autopilot, wasting tremendous amounts of time working on things that don't add value to your life" (Carroll, 2018, p. 108). You end the day with a short moment of reflection. So, there are at least two moments a day when you are working with your bullet journal: in the morning and in the evening.

Knowing where you came from is important for moving forward. Your bullet journal is a great archive to flip through every now and then. I recommend you take this moment of reflection not only every day, but certainly every time you complete a phase in the design thinking process. What worked well? What worked less well? What touched you? What are you proud of? What is the next step? Look back, learn from your experiences, and take those insights with you to the next stage in the design thinking process.

When a phase is completed, create a new phase in your bullet journal. When drawing up your mini-plan and to-do list for that phase, first look in your index to see if you happened to have made notes about this phase that you now need to consider. After drawing up the mini plan and to-do list, you create a new daily log again. And so: your bullet journal fills itself.

By using a bullet journal, you will have good insight into your interim goals. Think of the end of each design thinking step as a milestone in your process. And remember: Milestones are for celebrating!

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**In your daily log, you use different symbols:**

☐ box: tasks, things you must do

🟥 colored box: task completed

→ ☐ box with an arrow in front of it: task migrated

☐ box with a line through it: you decide not to spend your time on this

◯ circle: experiences, conversations with others

— dash: notes. information you don't want to forget

∟ chair: moment of reflection

! exclamation point: to indicate that something is very important or urgent

Scan this **QR code** to watch Ryder Carroll's TED Talk.
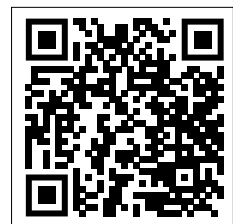
# MILESTONES ARE FOR CELEBRATING!

If you want your bullet journal to be more creative, you'll find lots of cool tips on Pinterest.

## Grocery list

1. A5 (6" x 8") notebook (my favorite is the Hieroglyphs Bullet Journal, but any simple notebook will do)

2. pencils, pens and markers (Sakura fineliners are very nice)

3. bullet journal accessories such as stickers, stencils, stamps and washi tape are nice, but not necessary

You may be wondering why I advise you to keep a paper logbook rather than a digital one. Of course, there are great digital tools for documenting your goals, milestones and interim experiences. Probably, on the face of it, those digital tools are also much more efficient. Still, the bullet journal method offers five key advantages that make me advise you to just use pen and paper:

1. When you write something down yourself, you remember it better so you are also able to reflect on it in a different way.
2. Because writing is slower, you are forced to think about information and then write it down in summary form, which requires you to take an extra step of thinking, so to speak.
3. Flipping through a paper notebook is easy, so your brain will naturally start to see patterns and connections between experiences and thoughts you have written down (*connect the dots*).
4. You determine the content and format yourself, which allows you much more flexibility to respond to your needs at the time than you can within the fixed structure of a digital tool.
5. With pen and paper, it is easier to express yourself visually. This causes you to train yourself in visual thinking, which is so important for design thinking.

On using a bullet journal rather than a digital tool, Bert Webb writes, "As I do daily, weekly, and monthly reviews, leafing forward and backward in my Bullet Journal, my brain inevitably makes more links between ideas that I was not able to do when using my various separate digital tools" (Carroll, 2018, p. 45).

# BEFORE YOU START

You are now almost ready to take off with design thinking. In the next chapter, you will start your project with the empathize phase. Before you get started, it's important to have a good outline of the task you are going to set out on. That outline consists of five elements:

1   **The assignment:** Naturally you're getting started with an assignment. This assignment should make clear what is expected of you and, at the same time, have enough degrees of freedom to go in different directions during the project. It is important that the assignment does not define what needs to be designed. So, it's not: develop a platform on which we, as an organization, can more easily contact our customers. Instead: design a solution that will improve the contact between the organization and its customers.

2   **The team:** For each phase of the design thinking process, be clear about who is on the team. This can be the same group of people in all the five phases, but it can also have a more hybrid construction, with different people and/or different roles in each phase (see also Section 1.5).

3   **The rough schedule:** Make sure you are clear about when you will start and roughly when you want to finish the project. There may also be relevant interim milestones.

4   **The budget:** There are two budget issues that are relevant: 1) how big is the budget for the execution of the project (space, hiring people with expertise, prototyping, presents for customers, et cetera) and 2) how big is the financial space for the implementation of the design? That second question can be an important limitation for the design project.

5   **Desired feedback of (interim) results:** A natural part of the design thinking mindset is providing frequent feedback (think of the dolphin instead of the submarine, see Section 1.4) but, of course,

it's not necessary. For example, feedback may not be necessary because the client is on the team. Either way, make sure you discuss this before you get started. As they say: "Better safe than sorry!"



**TIP**

A design thinking project benefits from a bit of momentum. This means trying to avoid endless discussions. A useful method for this is the ELMO method (Jurkiewicz, 2017). In this method, the letters ELMO stand for: 'Enough, Let's Move On.' When someone feels it is time for ELMO, they raise their hand and remain silent. Others will soon follow and, in no time, there will be silence and the endless discussion will come to an end.

# 1.8

# GETTING STARTED WITH
# DESIGN THINKING

**1    PHOTO CHALLENGE**
For design thinking, it is important to learn to think visually. One way to encourage this is by summarizing your day in images rather than in written text. Each day for a month, take a picture of something that inspires you. Then line up all these photos in a row.

*Which picture stands out? Why? How would you describe that picture if you were allowed to use no more than three words?*

**2    OUT OF THE BOX**
You can train your brain to think out of the box. You do this by getting your brain to process things it never had to process before, such as new tastes, smells, sounds or images. So, instead of always going to your favorite restaurant, go to one that serves food you have never tasted before. Use Spotify to lis-ten to music you've never listened to before. Go to a museum to see art you've never seen before. Try new recipes, new film genres and new magazines. Shock your brain!

Make a schedule for the next 10 weeks, during which you'll try something totally new each week. Make an entry in your calendar and note when you will do it during that week (and possibly with whom).

*What was the one thing that was most shocking to your brain? Where did you draw inspiration from later? What would you like to try more of?*

**3    CREATE A MINI PLAN**
Copy the canvas below on A4 (8½" x 11") or A3-size (about 12" x 16") paper and create your own mini plan. At this point, you can probably only properly fill in the first phase, empathize. That's fine. Just add to your canvas each time, as more becomes clear in the process.

*What do you think you need extra help with? What will be the most exciting step and why?*

| | Empathize | Define | Ideate | Prototype | Test |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Goal** | | | | | |
| **Who to involve?** | | | | | |
| **Which methods/tools?** | | | | | |
| **Points of attention** | | | | | |
| **Schedule** | | | | | |
| **Milestone** | | | | | |

| STAKEHOLDER OVERVIEW | Empathize | Define | Ideate | Prototype | Test |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Who is directly involved in the project?** | | | | | |
| **Who needs to be informed about this project?** | | | | | |
| **Who could you possibly ask for help?** | | | | | |
| **For whom is the outcome of this project relevant and how?** | | | | | |
| **Who do you hope will hear about this project?** | | | | | |

## 4 STAKEHOLDER OVERVIEW

Now map out the key stakeholders for each phase by adopting the canvas below. Again, you can only do this really well for the empathize phase at the moment. Give yourself space not to have all phases cast in concrete, but to see what you need at that moment for each phase.

*Which stakeholders need extra attention? What can you best do to give them that attention?*

## 5 PASSPORT OF YOU

Design thinking is something you never actually do alone, but almost always with a group. And when you do something with a group, it's important to know who you are working with. Therefore, start your design thinking project by making a passport of each team member.

*When you put all the passports side by side, what do you notice? Is an important talent missing?*

## 6 CURIOUS YOU

Design thinkers are curious people. They are constantly wondering what could be done differently. To feed that curiosity, they delve into anything and everything.
Make a 'bucket list' of aspects you would really like to know and discover more about.

*What is at the absolute top of your bucket list of things you are curious about? What could you do to find out more about it? Are there any topics on your bucket list that could in some way inspire your project?*

Scan this **QR code** for the mini plan, stakeholder overview and other canvases.

# PASSP🌐RT

**Photo:**

**Favorite quote / saying / life motto:**

......................................................................................................

**Experiences I bring to this project:**

1. ...................................................................................
2. ...................................................................................
3. ...................................................................................

**I excel at:**

1. ...................................................................................
2. ...................................................................................
3. ...................................................................................

**I excel less at:**

1. ...................................................................................
2. ...................................................................................
3. ...................................................................................

**This is important to me:**

**This really makes me happy:**