DESIGN THINKING

Design Thinking is a systematic process for finding solutions. It is especially useful applied to complex problems or situations. There are various ways of applying it

The following is my interpretation of Design Thinking

Design Thinking has four stages and we can jump back and forth as needed:

WHAT IS? ➡ WHAT IF? ➡ WHAT WOWS? ➡ WHAT WORKS?

FIRST STAGE: WHAT IS?
(THE DEEP LISTENING STAGE)

Here we are intending to explore what is 'actually happening'

We do this by:

• Exploring how to frame the situation
• Exploring who should be involved in finding its possible solution(s)
• Creating a plan to get there

We can therefore start by creating a **design brief**, which will help us clarify:

• The intended outcome
• What questions we're looking to answer
• Who the stakeholders are

(here, stakeholders refers to the individuals or groups of people that have the power to affect an outcome or are affected by it)

There are various tools we can use to find out **WHAT IS**, including but not limited to:

Discussion as a team and with the stakeholders
There are various ways of doing this with stakeholders, including facilitated workshops or questionnaires. Our decisions of which tools to use are always designed to suit the situation

Stakeholder mapping
Where the team creates a map of everyone that can affect the success of a solution. This also helps us see who exactly we are designing a solution for and helps us see the problem from multiple perspectives. An example stakeholder map can be found at: **https://bit.ly/2RCvnle**

Journey mapping
Where we map out a time-line of the stakeholder experience, noting down positive and negative emotional points along the journey. This can be done either as a team with information gathered through questionnaires or by involving stakeholders in the journey map creation

(The intention with journey mapping is to generate important insights about the lived experience. For example, if we were part of a project team that was looking to increase visitors to a museum, we would map out the step of our visitors from their daily lives, to the various experiences that might cause them to consider a trip or day out, to all of their experiences on location, right through to post-visit and the impact of their visit on their lives)

An example journey map and how-to guide can be found at: **https://bit.ly/37hgryv**
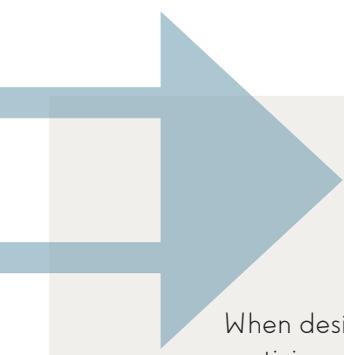
IMPORTANT POINTS ABOUT THE **WHAT IS** STAGE:

The results from this stage are not the solution:
they are helping us have a better idea of what the problem is

When designing a facilitated workshop or questionnaire. we always think through how the participants are being approached. We can ask ourselves questions such as 'Is everyone an English speaker? Can we offer visual tools as well as written? What are the possible barriers to them understanding us and communicating with us and how can we mitigate them?

Engage new voices so you have access to viewpoints beyond your own

Don't push a solution under the guise of co-creation

Stay in the questions: don't rush to solutions

Keep drilling down to what matters most

SECOND STAGE: **WHAT IF?**
(THE IDEA GENERATION STAGE)

This is the solution-focused stage. where we're intending to explore as many different ideas for solutions to the problem as we and the stakeholders can come up with

This is most commonly done through brainstorming

Brainstorming exercises include but are not limited to:

Flipping
The group lists all the known barriers and all the bad ways we can deal with them. They then flip them and explore the opposite approach

No Limits Ideas
The group pushes every idea to its absolute extreme (no limits) and see what that looks like

Idea Generator
We take a time period. like 5 minutes. and get everyone to come up with as many ideas as possible

Archetypes
The group breaks down the issues into their most basic archetype

Mind mapping
Using mind mapping to get to new ideas

IMPORTANT POINTS ABOUT THE **WHAT IF** STAGE:

No judging ideas as they're being created or working out which would be a good/workable solution

There is no perfect answer so don't look for one

Constraints are not signals to stop but signals to keep exploring new ideas

THIRD STAGE: **WHAT WOWS?**
(THE PROTOTYPING STAGE)

Taking everything we've learned from the first two stages. we're now looking to put everything we've learned together and find the best solution(s)

We are looking for solutions that incorporate what the stakeholders want. what we as a team can offer. and what will be a sustainable model going forwards. This is known as the Wow zone

We now start to create prototypes so we can test out the solution(s) we're focusing on. We can do this by creating:

User scenarios
How we think the stakeholder experience/ journey would unfold using our new solution(s)

A visual illustration of a solution
A diagram or drawings showing how a solution would work. such as storyboards or animations

We then take these prototypes back to the stakeholders and get their feedback

IMPORTANT POINTS ABOUT THE **WHAT WOWS** STAGE:

We must keep asking ourselves 'what are the assumptions behind why we think a solution is a good solution for us and for the stakeholders'?. unearthing any biases in play

Remember. we are looking to bring the possible solution(s) to life in the most vivid way. so that we can get the most accurate feedback

Prototype often. with lots of room for iterations

Give stakeholders solutions to choose from. not just one solution

Seek out criticism or bad news

FOURTH STAGE: **WHAT WORKS?**
(THE EXPERIMENTAL STAGE)

Now that we've (hopefully!) found a solution or a few solutions that make the most sense. we can decide how to test it out. The idea here is that instead of investing all of our energy and money and other resources into one solution and later on fnding out that in reality it wasn't the best solution. we test first

The ideal way to do this would be to do a small version of it and test out how well it works (for example. if 17DM were looking to shift its direction and considering designing a new website from scratch. we might start by mapping out how the new site might look or we could set up a one-pager and see how clients respond to it. We might also start redesigning small: perhaps with a few social media posts and see how well that works)

We might also choose to test several examples at once. in small versions

We can also revisit the design brief and see if where we've ended up bears any relationship to where we started

IMPORTANT POINTS ABOUT THE **WHAT WORKS** STAGE:

When asking for feedback from stakeholders and testing out solutions. let go of convincing others that this is the best idea. Really listen and be open to adjusting it or trying something else

Give up ownership: let others reshape solutions as needed to find the best solution

Stay in the questions originally discovered

We can choose not to use feedback but we must understand any criticisms or suggestions