Now that we have established that design can have many different definitions, I’m going to throw another term into the mix: Design Thinking.

Many people may recognize this term as part of the newest hype in innovation or part of their company’s innovation policy.

For those who aren’t entirely sure or for those who have never heard this term, Design Thinking is defined as:

The four key ingredients here are:
- Human-centered
- Needs of people
- Possibilities of technology
- Requirements for business success

These four elements are what truly define Design Thinking and make for excellent innovation. However, our first myth that arises here is: ‘Design Thinking simply requires having a designer on your team’. Much to my dismay, this is all too common.

"Design thinking is a human-centered approach to innovation that draws from the designer’s toolkit to integrate the needs of people, the possibilities of technology, and the requirements for business success.” - Tim Brown, Executive Chair of IDEO
THE BASIC STEPS

Considering that the definition of Design Thinking still leaves much to the imagination as to the concrete steps to take, here is a quick how-to for the basic steps involved in Design Thinking (if it were to be viewed as a linear process):

1. EMPATHIZE
   Gain an empathic understanding of the problem and situation by consulting experts and observing and fully engaging with the people involved.
   
   Most important point:
   Remove your own assumptions from the equation by interacting with the users and asking about their needs and desires.

2. DEFINE
   Synthesize and analyze the information gathered in the empathize stage and start to identify the core problems, ultimately defining a problem statement.
   
   Most important point:
   When defining the problem, frame it in a human-centered manner by always placing the user at the center.

3. IDEATE
   Generate ideas on how to solve the problem statement by using generative ideation techniques, such as brainstorming, brainwriting (write down an idea and pass it on, use the previous idea to build on or to inspire a new idea) or crazy eights (everyone sketches 8 ideas in 8 minutes).
   
   Most important point:
   Don’t let the confines of feasibility and viability limit your ideation in the beginning of this phase.

4. PROTOTYPE
   Create a number of basic/scaled down, inexpensive prototypes to investigate the various solutions from the ideation stage and test them to identify the best possible solution for the problems.
   
   Most important point:
   Such prototypes are tested to improve the designs but also to gain a better understanding of how users act and interact with the designed solution.

5. TEST
   Rigorously test the final product with users.
   
   Most important point:
   This is an iterative process, so the results from this testing will be used to redefine the problems, increase the understanding of the users and alter the problem solution.

DESIGN MAGIC

As you can hopefully tell after this brief explanation, this is not something that one of your team members (a designer) can achieve on their own. It takes everyone’s input and effort to follow the Design Thinking process/principles. This is not to say that other methods fall away into the background. On the contrary, Design Thinking should be combined with existing development processes to become the new norm, as opposed to a ‘one-off’ project approach adopted to fulfill the design specifications of a certain project. I believe that Design Thinking is best utilized when it is integrated into the company’s many other research, development and transformation processes.

MYTH 01

SYNECHRON EXPERIENCE DESIGN PRACTICE

Synechron’s Experience Design practice is a sub-specialty of our broader Digital Innovation & Transformation Business in Amsterdam. Our design experts zero in on Strategic Business Design—the integration of customer empathy, experience design and business strategy—for the purposes of developing human-centered, innovative Service Design. We apply the core principles and best practices of design, including qualitative research, context mapping, user journeys and hosting generative design workshops. Our goal is to help organizations move with the business agility of startups and create actionable design criteria for more valuable, immersive, and differentiated future-forward solutions that create value and competitive advantages.

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