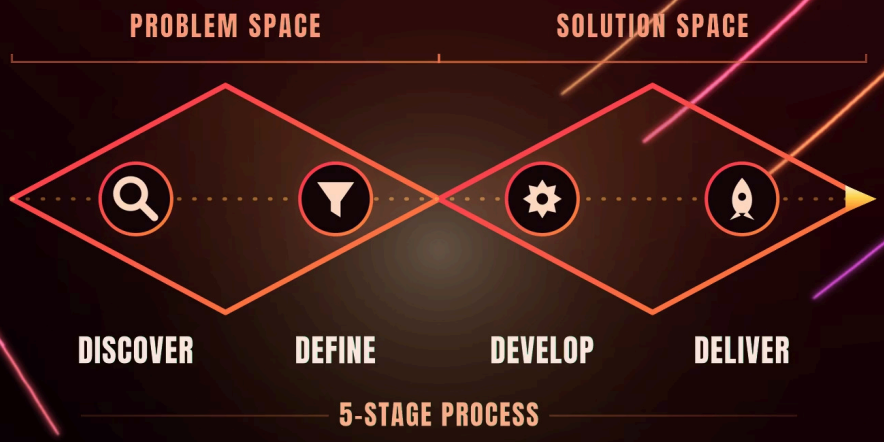
GSDC
Global Skill Development Council

DESIGN THINKING

Frameworks & Methodologies Guide

www.gsdcouncil.org



Introduction

Design Thinking is a human-centered approach to innovation that helps organizations solve complex problems, create meaningful experiences, and develop products and services that truly meet user needs. Over the years, several frameworks and methodologies have emerged to guide teams through the innovation process — each offering a distinct lens through which to understand users, define challenges, and develop solutions.

While these frameworks differ in structure and terminology, they share a set of common principles that form the philosophical backbone of human-centered design. Whether you're a seasoned product manager or exploring design thinking for the first time, these shared principles provide a reliable compass for navigating complexity and ambiguity in your work.

User-Centered Focus

Solutions designed around real user needs

Empathy-Driven Research

Deeply understanding behaviors and motivations

Collaborative Problem Solving

Cross-functional teams create stronger outcomes

Iterative Experimentation

Continuous learning and improvement cycles

Innovation Through Creativity

Exploring possibilities without constraints

This guide provides an overview of the most widely adopted Design Thinking frameworks and methodologies used by organizations, innovation teams, designers, product managers, and business leaders around the world. Whether you need rapid validation, deep customer research, or a structured governance model, there is a framework here to fit your challenge.

Understanding Design Thinking Frameworks

A Design Thinking framework is more than a checklist — it is a structured philosophy for approaching uncertainty with confidence. By providing repeatable process stages and guiding principles, frameworks give teams a shared language and a reliable method for moving from ambiguous problems to validated solutions. Frameworks reduce the paralysis that often accompanies complex, ill-defined challenges and channel creative energy into productive directions.

Each framework structures the innovation process around a core set of activities. While the names and number of stages may vary, virtually every design thinking framework guides practitioners through some version of the following progression:

01

Understanding Users

Deep research and observation to uncover real needs

02

Defining Problems

Synthesizing insights into clear, actionable problem statements

03

Generating Ideas

Broad divergent thinking to explore the solution space

04

Creating Prototypes

Rapid, low-cost representations of potential solutions

05

Testing & Iterating

Gathering feedback and refining based on real-world use

Benefits of Using Frameworks

Process Benefits

- Standardizes innovation processes across teams
- Reduces uncertainty in complex projects
- Accelerates solution development

Organizational Benefits

- Improves cross-functional collaboration
- Encourages a culture of experimentation
- Increases customer satisfaction and loyalty

Core Principles Shared by Most Frameworks

Despite their differences in structure, terminology, and application context, the leading design thinking frameworks converge around a set of foundational principles. These principles are not optional additions — they are the philosophical engine that makes each framework work. Understanding them helps practitioners apply any framework more effectively and recognize when a process is drifting away from its human-centered roots.

Human-Centered Design

Solutions should be built around user needs rather than internal assumptions, business constraints, or technological possibilities. The user's lived experience is always the primary source of truth in any design process.

Empathy

Understanding users' behaviors, emotions, motivations, and challenges requires deep listening and observation. Empathy goes beyond surveys — it means immersing yourself in the user's world to see problems as they see them.

Collaboration

Cross-functional teamwork consistently produces stronger, more resilient solutions. Diverse perspectives — from engineering, business, design, and operations — surface blind spots and generate richer ideas.

Iteration

Solutions improve through repeated cycles of testing and refinement. No first attempt is the final answer; iteration is the mechanism through which good ideas become great products.

Experimentation

Rapid learning through prototypes and user feedback dramatically reduces the cost of failure. Embracing experimentation means treating every test as a learning opportunity rather than a pass/fail judgment.

Problem Reframing

Looking beyond surface symptoms to identify root causes often reveals entirely new solution spaces. The ability to reframe a problem is one of the most powerful skills a design thinker can develop.

FRAMEWORK 1

Stanford d.school Design Thinking Model

The Stanford d.school model is one of the most recognized and widely taught Design Thinking frameworks in the world. Developed at Stanford University's Hasso Plattner Institute of Design, it has become the foundational curriculum for innovation programs at leading universities, Fortune 500 companies, and startups alike. Its power lies in its simplicity — five intuitive stages that can be adapted to virtually any context, industry, or team size.

What distinguishes the d.school model is its emphasis on human empathy as the starting point for all innovation. Rather than beginning with technology or business requirements, the process demands that teams first develop a genuine, felt understanding of the people they are designing for. This empathic foundation shapes every subsequent stage of the process.

Empathize Define Ideate Prototype Test

Each stage of the d.school model builds naturally on the last, creating a coherent narrative arc from understanding people to delivering solutions that genuinely serve them. The model is intentionally non-linear — teams regularly loop back to earlier stages as new insights emerge during testing or prototyping.

1

Empathize

Understand users through observation, interviews, and immersive research. **Goal:** Develop deep user understanding.

2

Define

Synthesize research findings into a clear, actionable problem statement. **Goal:** Identify the right problem to solve.

3

Ideate

Generate a broad range of potential solutions without judgment. **Goal:** Explore possibilities without constraints.

4

Prototype

Create tangible, low-fidelity representations of selected ideas. **Goal:** Learn quickly and inexpensively.

5

Test

Gather user feedback and refine solutions iteratively. **Goal:** Validate assumptions and improve designs.

Stanford d.school — Strengths & Applications

The d.school model has endured as the world's most recognized design thinking framework precisely because it balances accessibility with depth. Its five stages are easy enough for a first-time practitioner to grasp in a workshop setting, yet rich enough to anchor multi-year innovation programs at large enterprises. The framework's flexibility is perhaps its greatest asset — it can be compressed into a two-day sprint or expanded into a semester-long research program without losing its essential character.

Key Strengths

- Simple and immediately understandable for new practitioners
- Strong and unwavering user focus at every stage
- Flexible and adaptable to any industry or team size
- Non-linear structure encourages revisiting earlier stages
- Widely supported by training resources and facilitation tools

Best Used For

- **Product Innovation:** Developing new features or entirely new offerings grounded in user research
- **Service Design:** Reimagining end-to-end service experiences for customers
- **Customer Experience Improvement:** Diagnosing and resolving pain points in existing journeys
- **Education & Training:** Teaching innovation mindsets to teams at any level

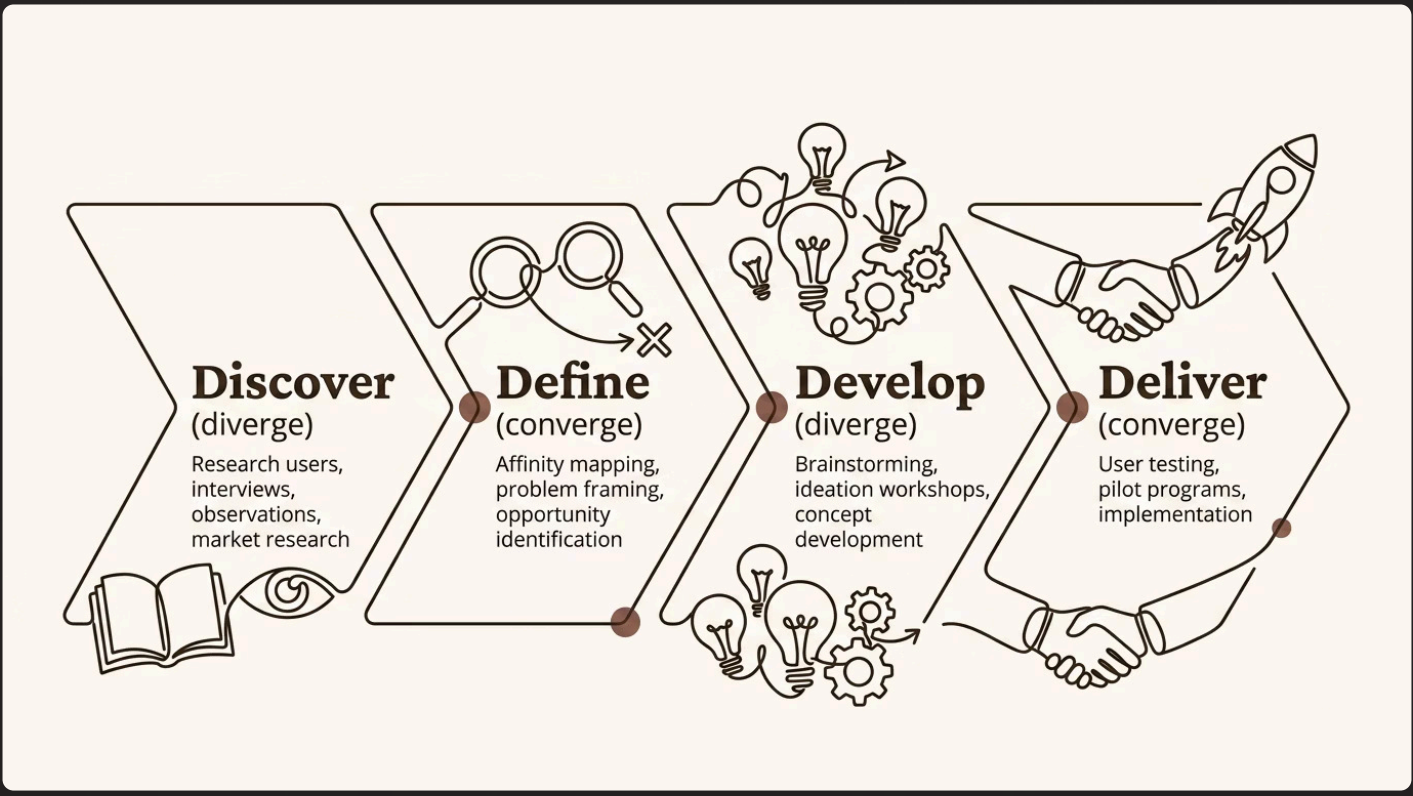
The d.school model is the ideal starting point for any team new to Design Thinking. Its universal applicability makes it the most versatile framework in this guide.

FRAMEWORK 2

Double Diamond Model

Developed by the Design Council in the UK, the Double Diamond framework visualizes innovation as two sequential diamonds, each representing a phase of divergent exploration followed by convergent focus. The model was introduced in 2005 and has since become a cornerstone framework for service design, public sector innovation, and complex organizational challenges where multiple stakeholders and problem dimensions must be navigated simultaneously.

The Double Diamond's most distinctive contribution to design thinking methodology is its explicit acknowledgment that both problem definition and solution development require their own cycles of expansion and contraction. Many innovation failures occur because teams rush to define the problem and then jump straight to solutions — the Double Diamond builds in the discipline to explore broadly before committing to a direction at each phase.



The Double Diamond encourages teams to resist the natural human instinct to converge prematurely. By structuring the process around alternating phases of divergent thinking (opening up possibilities) and convergent thinking (focusing on the best path forward), it ensures that both the problem and the solution have been properly explored before resources are committed to implementation.

Double Diamond — Strengths & Applications

The Double Diamond is particularly well suited for challenges where the problem itself is unclear or contested. In public sector projects, healthcare redesign, and large organizational transformation initiatives, stakeholders often disagree about what the core problem actually is — let alone what the solution should be. The Double Diamond's structured discovery phase creates a shared foundation of evidence and insight that aligns teams before the define phase begins.

One of the framework's most valuable features is its visual clarity. The diamond shape communicates instantly that innovation is not a straight line — it requires deliberate phases of opening up and narrowing down. This visual metaphor makes the Double Diamond exceptionally effective as a communication tool with executive sponsors and cross-functional stakeholders who may not be familiar with design thinking methodologies.

Key Strengths

- Clear and compelling visual representation of the innovation process
- Explicitly balances exploration with focus at each phase
- Encourages evidence-based decision making throughout
- Builds shared understanding across diverse stakeholder groups

Best Used For

- **Service Innovation:** Redesigning complex service ecosystems from end to end
- **Public Sector Projects:** Policy design, civic services, and government innovation
- **Complex Organizational Challenges:** Multi-stakeholder transformation initiatives
- **Research-Heavy Projects:** Where extensive discovery is required before defining direction

The Double Diamond is especially powerful when stakeholders disagree about the problem. Its discovery phase creates aligned understanding before any solutions are considered.

FRAMEWORK 3

Human-Centered Design (HCD)

Human-Centered Design is a philosophy and methodology that focuses on creating solutions that simultaneously align with human needs, business goals, and technical feasibility. Popularized by IDEO — one of the world's most influential design and innovation firms — HCD has shaped how organizations across every sector approach the challenge of creating meaningful products, services, and systems. IDEO's HCD toolkit, particularly its work in international development and social innovation, brought this approach to global prominence in the early 2000s.

What makes HCD distinct from other frameworks is its equal emphasis on three dimensions of successful innovation. A solution that users love but cannot be built is impractical. A solution that is technically feasible but creates no business value is unsustainable. HCD demands that all three lenses — desirability, feasibility, and viability — be kept in balance throughout the design process.

Inspiration

Understand users deeply and identify meaningful opportunities through immersive research, ethnographic observation, and empathic listening. This phase grounds all subsequent work in human reality.

Ideation

Generate, develop, and systematically refine ideas through collaborative workshops, creative exercises, and iterative concept development. Quantity of ideas leads to quality of solutions.

Implementation

Deliver, pilot, and scale solutions that have been validated with real users. This phase bridges the gap between a promising concept and a product or service that creates lasting value in the world.

The HCD Lens: Three Dimensions of Success

Desirability

What do users actually want? Does this solution address a genuine need or pain point in a way that resonates emotionally and functionally?

Feasibility

What can realistically be built with current or near-future technology, skills, and resources available to the organization?

Viability

What creates sustainable business value? Can this solution be delivered, maintained, and scaled within a sound business model?

Human-Centered Design — Strengths & Applications

IDEO's Human-Centered Design framework has proven remarkably durable because it treats empathy not as a soft skill but as a rigorous research discipline. HCD practitioners invest heavily in the Inspiration phase — conducting extensive field research, running in-depth user interviews, and immersing themselves in users' lived experiences before any ideation begins. This front-loaded investment in understanding pays dividends throughout the entire design process, reducing the risk of building solutions that solve the wrong problem.

The framework's three-lens model (desirability, feasibility, viability) has also become one of the most widely cited frameworks for evaluating innovation opportunities across industries. It provides a simple but powerful lens for prioritizing which ideas are worth developing further and which should be set aside, regardless of how creatively exciting they may be. Business leaders and product teams alike have adopted this model as a standard filter for innovation investment decisions.

Key Strengths

- Exceptionally strong empathy focus built into the methodology
- Balances user needs with business and technical realities
- Highly adaptable across sectors from healthcare to consumer products
- Proven track record in social innovation and global development contexts

Best Used For

- **Customer Experience Design:** Reimagining how customers interact with a product or service
- **Social Innovation:** Developing solutions for underserved communities and complex social challenges
- **Product Development:** Creating entirely new offerings grounded in deep user research
- **Organizational Transformation:** Redesigning internal processes to better serve both employees and customers

FRAMEWORK 4

Design Sprint

Developed at Google Ventures, the Design Sprint is a structured, time-boxed methodology designed to rapidly solve critical business problems and validate ideas with real users — all within a single week. Created by Jake Knapp and his colleagues at GV, the sprint methodology was developed out of the practical need to help portfolio companies make important product decisions quickly, without committing months of development resources to an untested direction.

The Design Sprint's central insight is that five days of focused, structured work with the right team can answer questions that would otherwise take months of analysis, debate, and development to resolve. By compressing the design process into an intense, highly facilitated week, sprints cut through organizational inertia, align stakeholders around a shared direction, and generate validated learnings at a fraction of the cost of traditional product development.

1

Day 1: Understand

Define sprint goals, map the challenge, and identify the critical question to answer

2

Day 2: Sketch

Individual solution sketching and review of competing approaches from diverse sources

3

Day 3: Decide

Critique solutions, make decisions as a team, and create a storyboard for the prototype

4

Day 4: Prototype

Build a realistic, high-enough-fidelity prototype that can be tested with real users

5

Day 5: Test

Conduct user interviews and observe reactions to validate or invalidate key assumptions

The structured daily rhythm of the Design Sprint is one of its most important features. Each day has a clear purpose and a defined set of outputs, which prevents the unfocused discussions and decision paralysis that often plague traditional product development processes. The sprint's rigid time constraints are a feature, not a limitation — they force prioritization and decisiveness.

Design Sprint — Strengths & Applications

The Design Sprint has been adopted by thousands of organizations worldwide, from early-stage startups to global enterprises, precisely because it delivers concrete, validated learnings in a timeframe that organizational leaders can appreciate. Unlike longer research or design processes, a sprint produces a tested prototype and a clear set of insights within a single week — making it easy to justify the investment and communicate the value to stakeholders who may be skeptical of design-led approaches.

The methodology is especially powerful in high-stakes, high-uncertainty situations where the cost of making the wrong decision is significant. By front-loading validation — building and testing a prototype before writing a single line of production code — sprints dramatically reduce the risk of investing months of engineering effort in a direction that users ultimately don't want or need. This risk-reduction function is perhaps the sprint's most compelling value proposition for business leaders.

Key Strengths

- Dramatically accelerates decision-making on critical questions
- Reduces development risk through early validation
- Creates strong team alignment around a shared direction
- Produces tangible, testable outputs within a single week

Best Used For

- **Product Innovation:** Validating new product concepts before committing development resources
- **Startup Environments:** Making fast, well-informed decisions with limited resources
- **Digital Products:** Testing UX concepts, new features, or onboarding flows
- **Strategic Pivots:** Quickly evaluating a new business direction or market opportunity

⚠ Design Sprints require full team commitment for five consecutive days. Partial participation significantly reduces their effectiveness — protect the time rigorously.

FRAMEWORK 5

Lean UX

Lean UX represents a powerful synthesis of three influential movements in modern product development: Design Thinking, Agile software development, and Lean startup principles. Developed and popularized by Jeff Gothelf and Josh Seiden, Lean UX was created to address a fundamental tension that many design teams face when working within Agile organizations — the need to produce high-quality user experience design while keeping pace with the rapid, iterative rhythm of Agile development sprints.

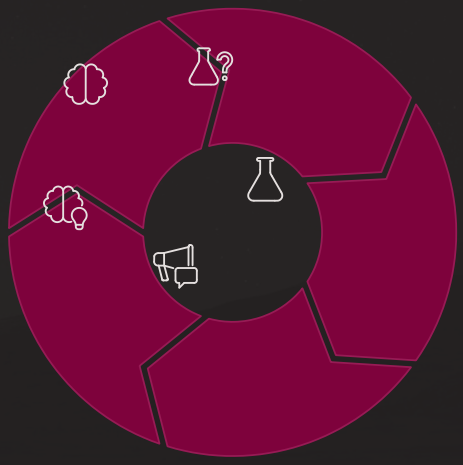
At its core, Lean UX shifts the emphasis from comprehensive design documentation to collaborative, cross-functional learning. Rather than producing detailed specification documents that are "thrown over the wall" to developers, Lean UX teams work in tight, integrated loops of assumption-making, hypothesis-testing, and insight-gathering. This approach dramatically reduces the waste associated with designing solutions that have not yet been validated with users, and it keeps the entire team — designers, developers, and product managers alike — focused on outcomes rather than outputs.

Assumptions

Articulate what the team believes to be true about users and the solution

Learning

Synthesize findings and update team understanding to inform next cycle



Hypotheses

Formulate testable statements about expected outcomes

Experiments

Design and run lightweight tests to validate or invalidate hypotheses

Feedback

Collect data and observations from real users and stakeholders

Key Principles

Build–Measure–Learn

Develop ideas rapidly, test them with real users, and incorporate learnings continuously into the next cycle. Speed of learning is the primary competitive advantage.

Collaborative Design

Every team member — regardless of role — participates in the design process. Design is too important to be siloed within a single discipline or function.

Rapid Experimentation

Frequent validation and iteration at every stage of development. The goal is to discover what works through evidence, not debate.

Lean UX — Strengths & Applications

Lean UX has become the de facto methodology for design teams embedded within Agile organizations, particularly in the technology sector. Its emphasis on outcomes over documentation, collaboration over specialization, and learning over debate makes it a natural fit for fast-moving product teams who cannot afford to wait for lengthy design cycles before beginning development. The methodology's Agile compatibility is not coincidental — it was explicitly designed to close the gap between design and development workflows that often creates friction in product organizations.

One of Lean UX's most significant contributions to design practice is its reframing of design deliverables. Traditional UX deliverables — detailed wireframes, comprehensive style guides, exhaustive specifications — can become obstacles in fast-paced Agile environments where requirements change frequently. Lean UX replaces these heavyweight artifacts with shared understanding: the entire team understands the user, the problem, and the hypothesis being tested, making formal documentation less necessary and more flexible when it does exist.

Key Strengths

- Dramatically faster learning cycles compared to traditional UX approaches
- Fully compatible with Agile and Scrum development workflows
- Reduces waste by validating ideas before full development investment
- Builds shared team ownership of design decisions

Best Used For

- **Agile Environments:** Product teams running sprints who need design to keep pace
- **Digital Products:** SaaS platforms, mobile apps, and web experiences
- **Continuous Improvement Initiatives:** Ongoing optimization of existing products and features
- **Startups & Scale-ups:** Teams that must learn and iterate faster than larger competitors

FRAMEWORK 6

Service Design Thinking

Service Design applies the core principles of Design Thinking specifically to the creation, improvement, and orchestration of services. While product-focused frameworks often concentrate on discrete artifacts and interfaces, Service Design takes a holistic, systems-level view — considering every touchpoint, process, and backstage operation that contributes to the complete customer experience. Service Design thinking recognizes that a service is not just what customers see and interact with, but the entire ecosystem of people, processes, and technology that enables those interactions.

What makes Service Design particularly powerful is its "frontstage" and "backstage" model. Frontstage elements are what customers directly experience — the website, the customer service call, the physical environment. Backstage elements are the operational processes, staff workflows, and technology systems that make the frontstage possible. Service Design integrates both perspectives, ensuring that improvements to customer experience are supported by corresponding changes in operations, rather than creating a beautiful facade over a broken process.

User Experience

The full arc of customer interactions with the service, from first awareness through ongoing engagement and eventual advocacy or exit. Every moment matters.

Service Processes

The operational workflows, staff activities, and system integrations that happen behind the scenes to deliver the service. Invisible to customers, but critical to quality.

Touchpoints

Every channel, interface, and moment of contact between users and the organization — digital, physical, and human. Each touchpoint is an opportunity to delight or disappoint.

Key Service Design Tools

Customer Journey Maps

Visual representations of the end-to-end customer experience, highlighting key moments, emotions, and pain points across every stage of the journey

Service Blueprints

Detailed operational maps that align frontstage customer actions with backstage processes, staff responsibilities, and supporting systems

Stakeholder Maps

Visual frameworks identifying all parties involved in or affected by the service, including their relationships, interests, and relative influence

Experience Maps

Broader journey visualizations that capture user behaviors, thoughts, and emotions across an entire domain of activity beyond a single service interaction

Service Design — Strengths & Applications

Service Design has become an essential methodology for industries where the customer experience is complex, multi-touchpoint, and dependent on coordinated operations. In banking, healthcare, government services, and hospitality, the gap between what customers experience and what organizations intend to deliver is often significant. Service Design provides the tools and the process to close that gap systematically, by mapping the full experience, identifying moments of failure, and redesigning both the frontstage and backstage elements that create them.

One of the most valuable outcomes of a Service Design engagement is the service blueprint — a comprehensive document that makes visible the many hidden dependencies and hand-offs that determine service quality. Organizations that have never mapped their services at this level of detail are often surprised to discover how many separate systems, teams, and processes must work in concert to deliver even a simple customer interaction. This visibility creates the foundation for meaningful, lasting improvement.

Key Strengths

- Optimizes end-to-end service delivery, not just individual touchpoints
- Dramatically improves customer satisfaction and loyalty
- Creates better alignment between customer-facing and operational teams
- Surfaces hidden process failures that are invisible to customers but felt as poor experiences

Best Used For

- **Banking & Financial Services:** Redesigning onboarding, support, and advisory journeys
- **Healthcare:** Improving patient experience from first contact through ongoing care
- **Government Services:** Making public services more accessible, efficient, and human
- **Hospitality:** Orchestrating seamless, memorable guest experiences across every interaction

FRAMEWORK 7

Jobs-to-Be-Done (JTBD)

Jobs-to-Be-Done is a powerful framework for understanding customer motivation that was popularized by Harvard Business School professor Clayton Christensen in his landmark book *The Innovator's Dilemma* and further developed in *Competing Against Luck*. JTBD shifts the focus of customer research away from demographic profiles and feature preferences toward a more fundamental question: what progress is the customer trying to make in a specific circumstance, and what are they "hiring" a product or service to accomplish?

The central metaphor of JTBD — that customers "hire" products to do jobs for them — is deceptively simple but profoundly clarifying. When you understand that a customer isn't buying a quarter-inch drill bit, but hiring it to make a quarter-inch hole, your entire perspective on what you're competing against and what value you're delivering shifts dramatically. JTBD practitioners argue that most innovation failures occur not because teams execute poorly, but because they solve the wrong job — building features and products that address symptoms rather than the underlying progress customers are seeking.

Functional Needs

The practical, task-oriented dimensions of the job the user needs to accomplish. These are the most visible and easily articulated needs — what the product or service must functionally do to be useful at all.

Emotional Needs

How users want to feel while using the product or service, and after completing the job. Emotional needs are often the decisive factor in product choice even when functional alternatives are equivalent.

Social Needs

How users want to be perceived by others as a result of their choice and use of the product or service. Social needs connect purchasing decisions to identity, status, and belonging.

> "People don't simply buy products or services; they pull them into their lives to make progress."
> — Clayton Christensen

Jobs-to-Be-Done — Strengths & Applications

JTBD has become one of the most influential frameworks in product strategy and innovation planning because it redefines the unit of analysis for competitive strategy. Companies that understand their customers' jobs — at the functional, emotional, and social levels — can identify unmet needs, anticipate disruptive competition, and make confident bets about which innovations will resonate in the market. Jobs don't change as quickly as technologies or demographics, making JTBD insights unusually durable as a foundation for long-term strategy.

The framework is particularly powerful for identifying non-obvious competitors. When you define your product by the job it does rather than the category it belongs to, you often discover that your real competition comes from unexpected sources. A business school's true competitor might not be another MBA program — it might be executive coaching, online learning platforms, or simply the opportunity cost of two years of career advancement. This expanded view of competitive dynamics is one of JTBD's most valuable strategic contributions.

Key Strengths

- Provides exceptionally deep, durable insight into customer motivation
- Strong driver of breakthrough innovation by surfacing unmet jobs
- Outcome-focused approach aligns product decisions with customer value
- Reframes competitive landscape in strategically valuable ways

Best Used For

- **Product Strategy:** Defining roadmap priorities based on customer jobs rather than feature requests
- **Customer Research:** Designing research studies that surface motivations, not just behaviors
- **Innovation Planning:** Identifying white-space opportunities where jobs are underserved
- **Competitive Analysis:** Understanding the full competitive landscape through a jobs lens

FRAMEWORK 8

Agile Design Thinking

Agile Design Thinking represents the integration of Design Thinking's human-centered problem-solving approach with Agile software development practices. While Design Thinking and Agile were developed independently, they share deep philosophical alignments — both emphasize iteration, empiricism, and user feedback as the primary drivers of quality. Agile Design Thinking formalizes the combination, creating a methodology that brings the rigor of user research and empathy-driven design into the rapid, sprint-based rhythm of modern software development teams.

The fundamental challenge that Agile Design Thinking addresses is the frequent misalignment between design and development workflows. Traditional "waterfall" design processes — where design is completed before development begins — break down in Agile environments where requirements evolve continuously. Agile Design Thinking solves this by running design activities in parallel with development, typically one sprint ahead, ensuring that developers always have validated, user-tested designs to build toward while designers continue exploring and refining the next increment.

User-Focused Development

Every sprint begins and ends with user value as the primary success criterion. Features are defined, prioritized, and evaluated based on their contribution to solving real user problems, not technical completeness or internal convenience.

Iterative Delivery

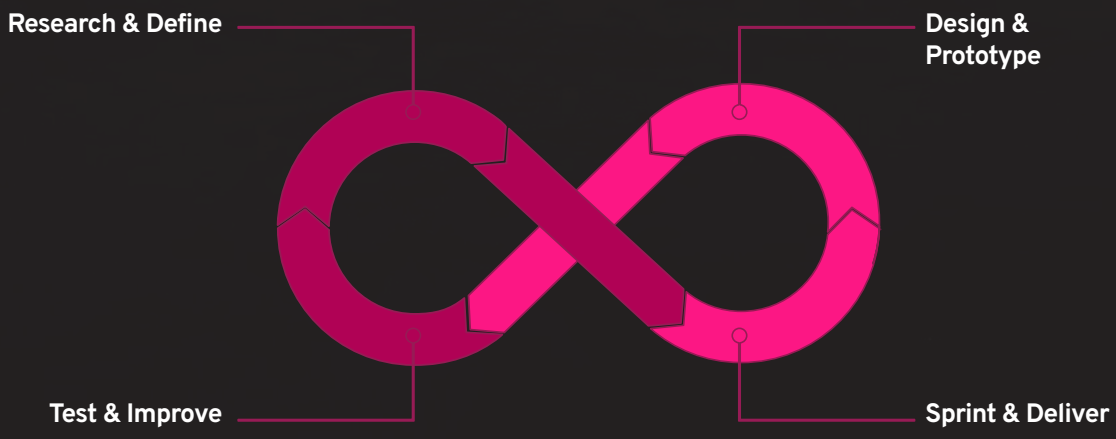
Solutions are delivered in small, testable increments rather than as large, fully-formed releases. Each increment generates real-world feedback that informs the design and development of subsequent increments.

Continuous Feedback

User research, usability testing, and analytics are embedded into the ongoing development process — not treated as one-time activities at the beginning or end of a project.

Incremental Improvement

Products improve continuously through small, validated changes rather than large, risky redesigns. This approach reduces release risk and maintains momentum over time.



Agile Design Thinking — Strengths & Applications

Agile Design Thinking has become the standard operating model for high-performing product teams at technology companies, digital agencies, and enterprise IT organizations worldwide. Its power lies in its ability to maintain the user-centeredness and creative rigor of Design Thinking while operating at the pace and cadence that modern software development demands. Teams that successfully implement Agile Design Thinking report fewer costly redesigns, better alignment between design intent and engineering execution, and stronger overall product quality.

The methodology's emphasis on continuous customer involvement is one of its most impactful differentiators from traditional development approaches. Rather than gathering requirements at the beginning of a project and testing the finished product at the end, Agile Design Thinking embeds user contact throughout the entire development lifecycle. This continuous connection to real users serves as a constant corrective signal, preventing teams from drifting away from user needs as technical complexity and organizational pressures mount over the course of a project.

Key Strengths

- Significantly faster product delivery without sacrificing design quality
- Creates strong alignment between design, product, and engineering teams
- Embeds continuous customer involvement throughout development
- Reduces costly late-stage redesigns through early and frequent validation

Best Used For

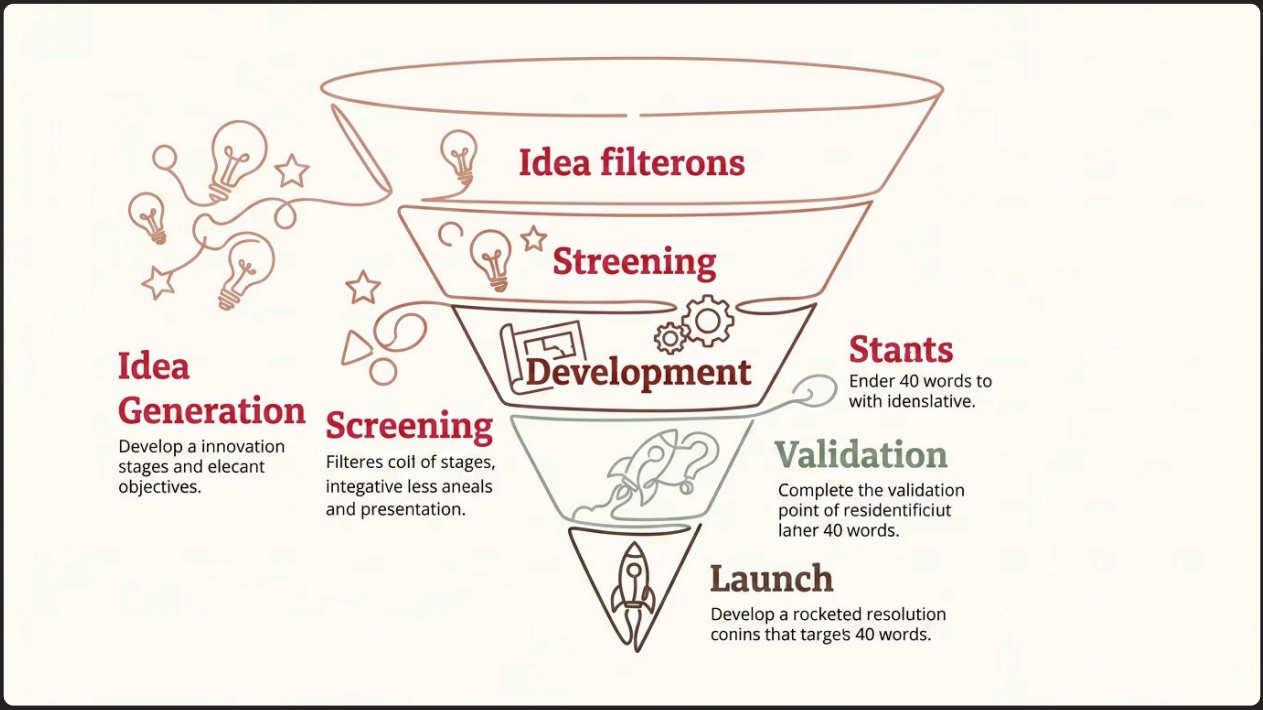
- **Software Development:** Any team building digital products using Agile or Scrum methodologies
- **Digital Transformation Initiatives:** Large organizations modernizing legacy systems and processes
- **Product Teams:** Cross-functional teams responsible for ongoing product development and improvement
- **Platform & API Products:** Complex technical products where developer and end-user needs must both be served

FRAMEWORK 9

Innovation Funnel

The Innovation Funnel is a structured framework for managing the full lifecycle of ideas — from initial concept generation through to market implementation. Unlike frameworks that focus primarily on the design or research phases of innovation, the Innovation Funnel addresses the organizational challenge of governing a portfolio of ideas simultaneously, ensuring that resources are allocated efficiently and that the most promising concepts receive the investment and attention needed to reach their potential.

The funnel metaphor captures a fundamental truth about innovation at scale: you must generate many ideas to find a few great ones. The funnel provides the organizational infrastructure for this process — creating systematic checkpoints where ideas are evaluated against consistent criteria, and where those that don't meet the bar are respectfully set aside so that resources can be concentrated on higher-potential opportunities. This governance function is especially valuable in large organizations where innovation investments must compete with operational priorities for budget and talent.



Portfolio Management

Maintain a healthy balance of incremental, adjacent, and breakthrough innovation investments across the organization's innovation pipeline

Innovation Governance

Establish consistent criteria and decision points for advancing ideas through stages, ensuring objectivity and strategic alignment

Resource Prioritization

Allocate talent, budget, and time to the ideas with the highest potential impact, rather than spreading resources too thin across too many initiatives

FRAMEWORK 10

Business Model Innovation Framework

The Business Model Innovation Framework focuses on a dimension of innovation that is often overlooked by product and design teams: the fundamental question of how value is created, delivered to customers, and captured as revenue by the organization. Developed and popularized by Alexander Osterwalder and Yves Pigneur, this framework has become one of the most widely used strategic tools in business schools, startup accelerators, and corporate innovation programs worldwide. It recognizes that in many industries, the most disruptive innovations are not product innovations at all — they are business model innovations.

The framework's most famous tool, the Business Model Canvas, provides a one-page visual representation of an entire business model, enabling teams to design, test, and iterate on business models with the same rigor and speed that Design Thinking brings to product development. By making all nine components of a business model visible simultaneously, the Canvas reveals interdependencies, highlights assumptions, and creates a shared language for strategic conversation that transcends functional silos.

Business Model Canvas — Nine Components

Customer Segments	The distinct groups of people or organizations the business serves
Value Propositions	The bundle of products and services that create value for each segment
Channels	How value propositions are communicated and delivered to customers
Customer Relationships	The types of relationships established with each customer segment
Revenue Streams	The cash each segment generates through value delivery
Key Resources	The most important assets required to make the business model work
Key Activities	The most important things the company must do to deliver value
Partnerships	The network of suppliers and partners that support the business model
Cost Structure	All costs incurred to operate the business model

Value Proposition Canvas

Customer Jobs

The tasks customers are trying to complete, the problems they're solving, and the needs they're trying to satisfy in their work and lives

Customer Pains

The negative experiences, risks, and obstacles customers face before, during, and after getting a job done

Customer Gains

The outcomes and benefits customers want to achieve — both required and desired — when completing a job

Products & Services

The specific offerings that help customers complete jobs, relieve pains, and create gains they actually value

Comparing Popular Frameworks

Each framework in this guide has been developed to address specific innovation challenges and organizational contexts. Understanding how they compare across key dimensions — primary focus, best use cases, and contextual fit — helps teams make informed choices about which methodology to apply to a given challenge. No single framework is universally superior; the best choice depends on your team's maturity, the nature of the problem, the available time and resources, and the organizational context in which you're working.

Framework	Primary Focus	Best For
Stanford d.school	User-centered innovation through empathy-led stages	General innovation, teams new to Design Thinking
Double Diamond	Alternating divergent and convergent problem exploration	Complex challenges with multiple stakeholders
Human-Centered Design	Balancing desirability, feasibility, and viability	Customer experience, social innovation
Design Sprint	Rapid five-day problem validation	Product innovation, startup decisions
Lean UX	Continuous learning and assumption testing	Agile teams, digital products
Service Design	End-to-end service experience orchestration	Service industries, healthcare, government
JTBD	Understanding customer motivation and outcomes	Product strategy, innovation planning
Agile Design Thinking	Integrating design with Agile development	Software development, digital transformation
Innovation Funnel	Portfolio management and innovation governance	Enterprise innovation, resource prioritization
Business Model Innovation	Designing how value is created and captured	Strategic innovation, startup design

ⓘ These frameworks are not mutually exclusive. Many high-performing innovation teams combine elements from multiple frameworks — for example, using JTBD for research, the Double Diamond for process structure, and Design Sprints for rapid validation.

Choosing the Right Framework

Selecting the right Design Thinking framework for your context is one of the most important decisions an innovation team can make. The wrong framework — even a good one — applied to the wrong situation can create false confidence, waste resources, and frustrate teams. The right framework, on the other hand, provides exactly the structure needed to navigate complexity, align stakeholders, and arrive at solutions that genuinely serve users and create business value. Use the decision guide below as your starting point.

Use Stanford d.school When:

- Teams are new to Design Thinking and need an accessible entry point
- User research is a critical component of the work and must be centered
- Innovation is exploratory and the problem space is relatively open

Use Double Diamond When:

- The problem itself is unclear or contested among stakeholders
- Multiple stakeholders with different perspectives must be aligned
- Extensive discovery and evidence-gathering are required before defining direction

Use Design Sprint When:

- Time is severely limited and a decision must be made quickly
- Rapid validation of a specific concept or direction is required
- The team needs a structured process to overcome decision paralysis

Use Lean UX When:

- Working within Agile teams running sprints with a continuous delivery cadence
- Continuous experimentation and assumption-testing are core to the workflow
- Reducing design-to-development handoff friction is a priority

Use Service Design When:

- Improving complex, multi-touchpoint customer experiences end to end
- Redesigning services that span multiple departments, systems, or channels
- Aligning operational processes with customer-facing experience improvements

The most sophisticated innovation teams maintain fluency across multiple frameworks, selecting and combining methodologies based on the specific demands of each challenge. Invest in building your team's framework literacy — it is one of the highest-leverage capabilities in the modern innovation toolkit.

GSDC
Global Skill Development Council

CERTIFIED DESIGN THINKING PROFESSIONAL

ABOUT GSDC CERTIFICATION

EBOOK

Extensive and exclusive Ebook created by world's experts to help you with understanding core concepts.

LEARNING MATERIALS

Get access to learning materials such as videos, ebooks, templates, and practice exams, which will help you clear the certification exam.

CREATED BY EXPERTS

GSDC certifications are created and authored by world's leading experts in the field.

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

- Gain insights into autonomous decision-making processes
- Apply knowledge using ready-to-implement templates
- Demonstrate ability to work with Agentic AI models
- Validate your skills wit

Enroll now with the code **LEARN20** To avail **20%** discount

Enroll Now

www.gsdcouncil.org