Introductory Note – Design Thinking

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People often have simple problems ...
... that are poorly understood – many companies over-fulfill customer needs with unnecessarily complicated and expensive solutions
For a good project, the problem (or research gap) and the urgency of a solution should be obvious and well justified.
In a VUCA world, problems are often difficult to describe; often they are so-called “wicked problems” – and they are getting more ...

*THORNDIKE, 1933: PROBLEM = WHERE THE ACTIONS NECESSARY TO ATTAIN GOAL(S) ARE NOT OBVIOUS.*
Depending on the innovation approach, the known or unknown variable is different; in design thinking, typically, neither problem nor solution is clear.
Design thinking uses a structured, iterative process to facilitate the understanding of problems and develop promising solutions.
The starting point is to understand the situation comprehensively, without anticipating the solution.
Ethnographic observation is one of the most important methods to facilitate understanding and identify real needs ...
... and to enable a change of perspective ...
... to adopt a customer’s point of view – and thus develop customer empathy
The focus should be on the “real problem” = strongest leverage point for a positive change of the situation, for a specific “persona”
The creative part is quite conventional in design thinking; more important is the compatibility and problem-solution fit of ideas.

**Value Proposition**

- Gain creators
- Pain relievers

**Customer Profile**

- Gains
- Pains
- Customer jobs

**Fit!**
Prototyping is used to manage risks by taking action – instead of analyzing – and integrating customer feedback early on.
User observations are used to assess the suitability of prototypes – validation by testing, testing, testing ...
The result at the end of a design thinking process is not a panacea for everyone but a tailor-made solution for the specific needs of one persona.
“Almost anyone can come up with an idea. What really counts is the development into a practical product.” (Henry Ford)
Take-home messages

The number of “wicked problems” that should be addressed is increasing. Wicked problems cannot be solved with conventional waterfall planning logic.

Design thinking is a mindset and a process to arrive at better solutions in a structured way and to minimize risks.

There is no lack of good ideas, but a lack of good implementations. Few ideas are really developed from a customer’s point of view.

Design thinking does not want one-size-fits-all innovations, but tailor-made solutions for small, clearly defined groups. If successful, the approach can then be repeated.