

For more information contact:  
Kate Wolters  
E: [kate.wolters@added-value.com](mailto:kate.wolters@added-value.com)  
T: +27 21 431 4611



## How Design Thinking Can Enrich Marketing & Business Innovation

Innovation is key to competitiveness in the global economy. But, too often this so-called “innovation” is just a rearrangement of an existing offer (a “renovation”), or it fails altogether.

7 out of 10 senior executives name innovation as their top priority for growth (BCG)

96% of all new projects fail to meet or beat targets for ROI (Doblin Group)

The answer to this massive wasted investment may come from the world of design. Designers and design tools can advance innovation solutions from mystery, exploration to experimentation. However, their tools are largely insulated within the design community. Integrating design’s best tools into our marketing, research and business innovation expertise could help deliver those illusive, disruptive ideas that we perpetually search for.

### What is Design Thinking?

Design Thinking:

- Provides organisations with a deeper understanding of their consumers as individuals: through a human-centred approach delivered through intimate, almost nano-scale ethnography (user journeys and touch points),
- Increases the volume, breadth and relevancy of ideas along with quality of exploration: creating strict constraints (problem definition), zooming out to examine the problem as part of its surrounding ecosystem, then exploring beyond the stated problem toward disruptive new solutions,
- Fosters an expert culture of tireless, iterative prototyping that makes ideas ‘real’ and accelerates the speed at which they develop.

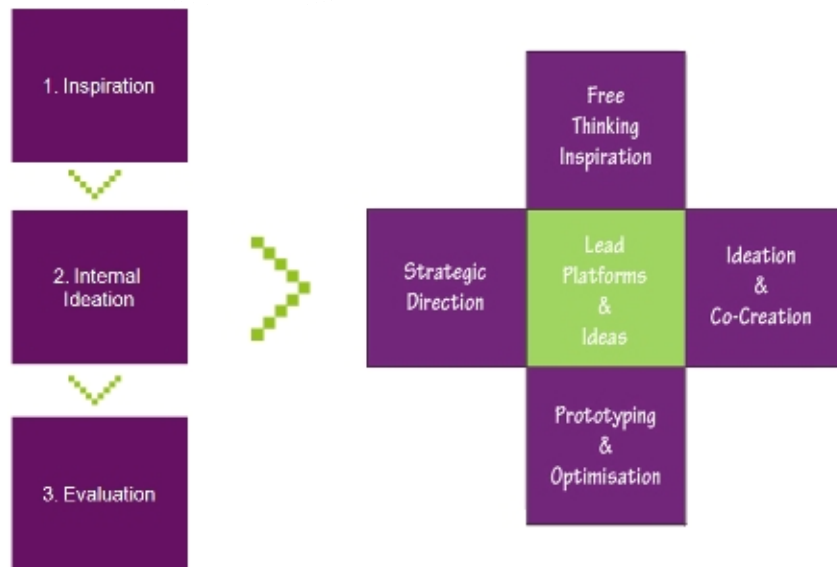
A definition of Design Thinking could therefore be ‘the application of industrial design tools and a human centered approach, by a multi-disciplinary team of hybrid individuals, to a given innovation problem.’

### Why do we need it?

Creativity cannot be ‘turned on’ for short designated periods. It doesn’t work within an overly constraining linear process. Each project and innovation team is different and requires flexibility and the freedom to learn as the project organically evolves. A design empowered innovation process embraces dynamism and is centered around the ideas, with each surrounding activity managed in a responsive, bespoke manner.

The key elements are:

- Strategic Direction to identify the strategic innovation opportunity and build the business case,
- Free Thinking Inspiration to understand change, imagine the future, anticipate desires,
- Ideation & Co-creation to unleash creativity, generate and co-create big ideas, and
- Prototyping & Optimisation to kill the weakest ideas and enhance the strongest.



In practice, this means:

### **Understanding Context: Zooming Out AND In**

Once the objective of a project has been properly framed, people's natural tendency is to roll up their sleeves and 'leap in'. Design empowered innovation starts off by leaping out. What does the existing and future ecosystem consist of? Who are the different types of users directly or indirectly affected by our products/services (i.e. restricted users, haters, customisers and adjacent users)? Who are our immediate and cross category competitors? How is the surrounding context evolving?

### **Observation AND a future-focused insight program**

Observation provides innovation with real meaning and utility. But, observation alone has a tendency to solve today's problems rather than tomorrow's. Complement observation with expert input, trend analysis, cultural insight and leading-edge consumer interaction. This balance is essential in creating disruptive innovation that resonates culturally and personally today, but stays relevant for tomorrow.

### **Convergent left brain AND divergent right brain expertise**

Design thinking initiatives have stumbled by attempting to embed creative and analytical abilities simultaneously. Design empowered innovation mobilises chaotic, free creativity at specific moments in the innovation journey. It also implements convergent, analytical activities; but never at the same time. This frees creative minds to reach their true potential, while supported by a robust business-thinking innovation framework.

### **Marketers AND unlikely partners**

Design empowered innovation is discipline-agnostic. Cross-functional teams, within the organisation and beyond, provide perspectives that balance and complement each other, driving disruptive innovation.

### **Prototyping AND consumer concept optimisation**

Traditionally, at the front end of innovation, design agencies have provided prototyping expertise, making ideas real early on, for clients to decide between multiple solutions.

Insight agencies, on the other hand, have provided an understanding of consumers' reactions to abstract concepts through qualitative and – later – quantitative testing.

A design empowered innovation approach uses both, exploiting traditional qualitative and quantitative consumer testing expertise but with innovation prototypes. By making solutions real for consumers through models, theatrics, film, emotional stimulus, the insights gained are richer and more valuable. This also takes the risk out of innovations by understanding their merits more deeply, prior to investment in any launch activities.

Organisations can stimulate more disruptive thinking by combining the best of design thinking with existing skills in insight and marketing strategy. And with a design thinking led approach, those organizations can improve creative delivery and increase innovation success rates.

*Presented at the Esomar Congress 2011 by Ben Wood, Director, Mark Whiting, Director, and David Stocks, Project Manager. For more information click [here](#). Read [this](#) and other articles on Added Value's blog, [Source](#).*

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Added Value offers brand development and marketing insight services to blue-chip companies across all industry sectors. Everything they do starts with insight and ends with action, in pursuit of healthy brand growth for their clients.

With a footprint that now extends across 23 offices in 14 countries, drawing on the expertise within its global network, Added Value Group fuses brand marketing, consumer insight, innovation, and communications optimisation to help solve clients' marketing problems.

Added Value Group is part of Kantar Group, the information, insight and consultancy arm of WPP, a world leader in communications services.

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