

PREVIEW (Selected Excerpts)

EXPERIENCING DESIGN

THE
INNOVATOR'S
JOURNEY

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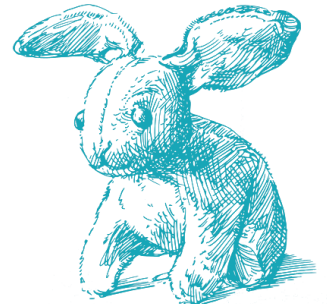
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CHAPTER 1

HOW DESIGN SHAPES US AS WE SHAPE DESIGNS

“Real isn’t how you are made,” said the Skin Horse. “It’s a thing that happens to you. . . . It doesn’t happen all at once. You become. It takes a long time. That’s why it doesn’t happen often to people who break easily, or have sharp edges, or who have to be carefully kept. Generally, by the time you are Real, most of your hair has been loved off, and your eyes drop out and you get loose in the joints and very shabby. But these things don’t matter at all, because once you are Real you can’t be ugly, except to people who don’t understand.”¹

— MARGERY WILLIAMS BIANCO, THE VELVETEEN RABBIT



We want to start this book with a radical premise: that the transformational power of design thinking (DT, as we lovingly refer to it) lies not in what it encourages us to *do*, but in who it encourages us to *become*. Like our childhood friend, the Velveteen Rabbit, DT gives us a chance to become more *real*—to get in touch with our authentic human selves, to restore some of the wonder and creativity that we had as children, but have lost. Being a design thinker doesn't rely on whether you went to design school or not, or have innovation in your job title. The path is there for all of us, if we are willing to make the journey. We become design thinkers by *experiencing* design.

But like any journey to becoming anything that really matters, you need to prepare to get some hair rubbed off. It is a journey of jubilant highs and frustrating lows. People who break easily—who lack the confidence and courage to be vulnerable and to dream about what is possible; who have sharp edges and think they already know everything they need to know; who have to be carefully kept because they want to be in charge and in control—they may not make it. We wrote this book for those who want to *try*. We wrote this book because, after 10 years of dedicated research on the subject, we know that the payoffs to DT done well—to ourselves, our families, our communities and our organizations—are also very real. DT makes us better innovators and better human

beings, in a world that desperately needs more of both of those.

But the path there is not nearly as obvious as it might seem.

In daylong hackathons and workshops, DT can seem easy. But our research demonstrates that doing it well is *not* easy. Practiced at a superficial level, even great design tools like ethnography and prototyping don't go deep enough to create the shifts in mindset and skillset that achieving DT's most significant impacts requires. Novice design thinkers may *do* DT activities, but do not experience the shifts that reveal new and deeper levels of who they themselves *are*. It is the *becoming*, not the *behaving*, that is key to achieving transformational results. *Becoming* involves changing how we see the world and the rules we use to navigate it. It requires challenging beliefs about ourselves (and others) and letting go of some deep-seated fears. Fully leveraging DT's possibilities requires moving beyond performing the activities it prescribes; it demands that we experience it fully. More so than any other approach to innovation, DT experiences create the space for us to get in touch with our more authentic selves.

You are probably wondering what authenticity has to do with innovation. A lot, it turns out. Many of the barriers to creating powerful new futures are *personal*. Sure—the cultures and processes of organizations can foster them or get in the way. But organizations only change when the people within them change.

In explaining the challenges to building learning organizations, Fred Kofman and Peter Senge explain: “Creating organizations skilled at learning requires fundamental shifts in how we think and act as individuals, as well as organizations.”² All change relies on personal transformation, Edward Deming, the central

AUTHENTICITY

The idea of authenticity has preoccupied philosophers and psychologists for many years. For German philosopher Martin Heidegger, it involves accessing what he called the “withheld”—our higher and better self that lies awaiting emergence. There are preconditions for summoning our withheld. One is *voice*—the ability to express ourselves in ways consistent with our inner thoughts and feelings. *Active engagement* is another. The recognition of the *power of emotions* to our sense of self is a third. Heidegger stresses that the withheld cannot be summoned—it can only be *invited* into a space prepared to welcome it. Finding our authentic self is a developmental process—one of continually *becoming*. Influential developmental psychologists like Fromm, Erickson, and Rogers have all stressed the power of authenticity and the enhanced psychological benefits of acting in ways that are true to oneself, with Abraham Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, and its apex of self-actualization, perhaps the best known. These theories provide useful insights into what the process of becoming entails and what it takes to encourage its exploration. When Heidegger’s invitation to bring what we normally withhold into a conversation is accepted, the results are transformational—for us, for our customers, for our organizations and, quite possibly, for our world.

figure in the Quality movement, observed. We need to *be* someone new to create something new.

Maybe we’ve been looking for innovation in all the wrong places. Or we have just been overlooking some of the right ones. We have looked outside of ourselves to external forces—technology, customers, other industries—all valid and important, but what have we missed by largely ignoring the creator and focusing on only what they create? How might we tap into the wellspring of innovation within the innovator and unlock the creative potential in each of us? Accomplishing this involves helping them find their higher, better self—the self who has the courage to ask “what if anything were possible?”, who doesn’t run from any prospect of failure, who can detach their ego from their idea, and who can listen to others through the perspective of what others want to say rather than what I want to hear.

How can DT help us do that? By first shaping the experience of those who use it, before it shapes what they design for others. But success on this journey relies on much more than helping innovators to better understand their customer’s journey—it requires an awareness of what is going on behind the scenes in their own personal journey.

We live, we are told, in the “age of experience.” Experience is not just about how we *think*, it is immersive in a way that centers on what we *perceive* and *feel*. It is intensely personal and subjective. But *whose* experience matters? Most discussions of DT focus on

the experience of the customers we are designing for. But where does the inspiration and facility for creating those new customer experiences come from? It comes from changes in the innovator as a person. Their experiences—of empathy, of meaning, of collaborative co-creation, of transitioning from *knower* to *learner*—set the stage for DT to work its magic.

Decades of research on adult learning are very clear on one point—we learn about what *matters* to us. We learn because we care. DT’s human-centered focus engages us by giving us experiences that matter, that impact us at a deep personal level. By connecting us with a more authentic version of ourselves, it motivates us to change. Change happens when we combine new knowledge with *will*. Many innovation methodologies bring new knowledge—few engage body, mind and spirit to forge will like DT does.

Not to get too existential, but who is that self that we are connecting to? Who are we beyond a kind of Freudian sense of ego and id? Psychologist Jerome Bruner argued that “the self is not a *thing*, but a point of view that unifies the flow of experience into a coherent narrative.” So we are a story we tell ourselves. That story, that point of view, creates a personal stance that innovators carry with them into the process. “It is the personal stance that travels with the researcher through the process of engaging with the problem, thinking it through, reaching confident conclusions and making these accessible to an audience,” argues designer João Ferreira.³ Of course, each of us is the lead actor in our story—we occupy its center.

Within this story of us, we are part of a broader collective experience; our story lies at the nexus of a web of relationships. “De-centering” us from our own story is perhaps DT’s most significant first step in challenging us to become someone new. We are part of the world, not the center of it. “You’re not stuck in traffic,” designer Kevin Slavin argues. “You are traffic.”⁴ Without providing these kind of de-centering ex-periences for the innovator, DT projects are likely to generate mostly mundane ideas and lackluster results instead of powerful outcomes.

THE WORLD ORBITING US

Faculty gathered to hear one of our colleagues present his research strategy. In his presentation, he offered a summarizing image: he and his research topic were at its center in a large circle. A variety of other faculty and their research surrounded him in smaller circles. After a moment of stunned silence, the rest of the room erupted into laughter. It was affectionate laughter—he was a great guy and we all respected his work. But really? Talk about ego on display! The funniest part of the story was that he was totally baffled as to why we were laughing. Finally, a kindly colleague said, “Bill, the rest of us just never realized that we were orbiting around you.” But our real problem (that remained unspoken) with Bill’s image was not that his model was wrong—we were all carrying around the same model in our heads—it was just that we each thought that our name belonged in the center of the circle, not Bill’s.



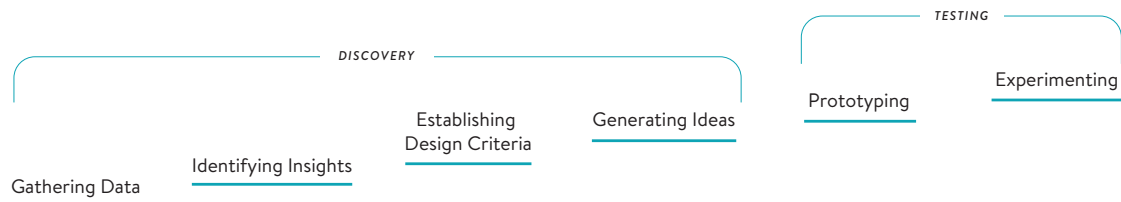
HOW DT'S SOCIAL TECHNOLOGY WORKS

How does DT make new ways of thinking and behaving feel safe, while helping innovators to find their more authentic selves on the way to improving organizational outcomes? It starts by giving innovators a specific and familiar set of activities to perform—gathering data, identifying insights, establishing design criteria, generating ideas, and prototyping and testing those ideas.

Behind the scenes, these seemingly simple DT activities set the stage for an innovator's personal transformation by initiating a sequence of personal experiences that they *feel*. These experiences, triggered by DT activities, ultimately change the innovators themselves—not just what they produce.

We do not necessarily learn from our experiences. We can wander through them in our habitual mindsets and stay exactly who we started out as. Most assume that an innovator's journey through the DT activities is fairly straightforward and linear, a set of steps that they do to reach a set of outcomes that are driven by user needs and tested for market viability. But when innovators dig below the “doing” to fully experience DT, their journey is much more introspective and involved. To change us, to produce deep learning, our experiences must be what pioneering educator John Dewey called “educative”: they must progress in a structured way that combines *action* and *reflection*. In DT, data gathering forces an educative experience of **Immersion** in users' lives that shifts innovators' frames of reference and engages their emotions, helping them see and care about new possibilities while paving the way for more effective teamwork. Developing insights offers a **Sensemaking** experience that transforms voluminous data points into new knowledge and builds enthusiasm and emotional commitment. Specifying

DESIGN THINKING LOOKS LIKE A SET OF ACTIVITIES THAT INNOVATORS DO

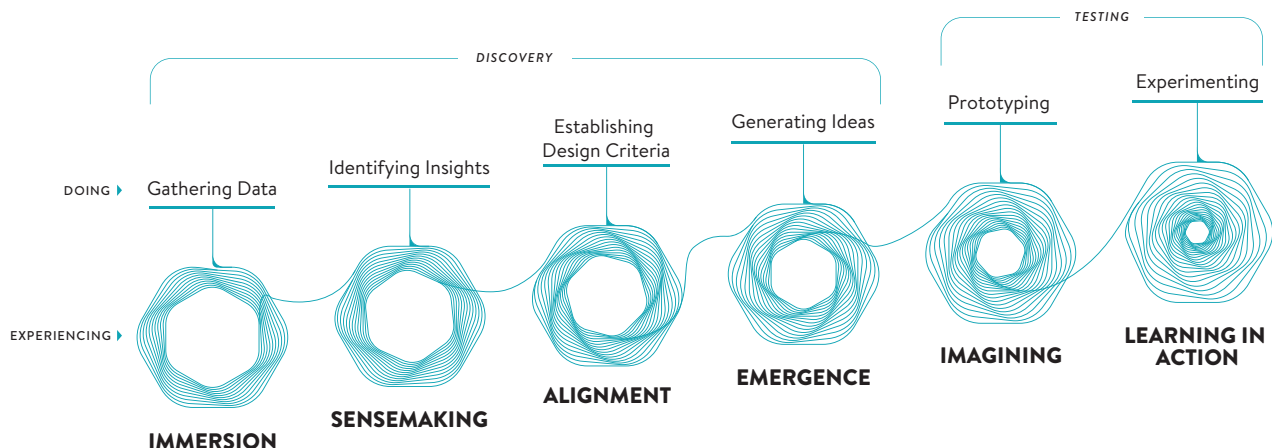


design criteria drives an **Alignment** experience, with other stakeholders, around what really matters in future designs, whatever they turn out to be. Generating ideas collaboratively offers opportunities for an experience of **Emergence** in which higher-order solutions are jointly developed. Creating prototypes stimulates an experience of **Imagining** as innovators work to make ideas feel real to both teams and stakeholders. Designing and conducting experiments leads to an experience of **Learning in Action** that guides innovators through the tough journey from knower to learner.

DT's social technology pushes innovators to question their assumptions, shift their mindsets and discover new skillsets, taking them closer to becoming their most authentic selves—curious, aware of their biases, open to creativity and wonder. The experiences

of each phase are connected, flowing into one another; as innovators venture to each next step of “doing,” they journey further into their own potential. The experiences are powerful because they are educative—they are sequenced in such a way that their effects are *cumulative* as the journey progresses. They insist on both action and reflection. As a result, they trigger fundamental shifts in mindsets as well as skillsets. Their human-centeredness creates a space for Heidegger’s invitation to us to explore our better selves. In doing so, who innovators *are* changes—they *become* more empathetic, confident, collaborative, and comfortable with learning in action. This is the culmination of DT’s social technology: an innovator’s personal transformation through the process of doing-experiencing-becoming.

“DOING” DRIVES EXPERIENCES THAT DRIVE PERSONAL TRANSFORMATION



As we studied more deeply what this model of doing-experiencing-becoming looked like in practice, we stumbled across a guiding philosophy from the world of occupational therapy (OT): doing-being-becoming. Investigating further with the help of a seasoned OT therapist (thank you, K!), the parallels to the progression in DT became evident. The focus of OT work, we learned, is not just addressing a patient's disability, it is also about restoring the loss of identity that can so often accompany it. Carefully planned activities (**doing**) help the patient regain a sense of self-efficacy and who they are (**being**), and this reconnects them with the larger world, helping them to find themselves in a new future (**becoming**). A multifunctional team of specialists—medical caregivers, psychologists, and therapists—work together to implement an assessment and treatment plan, taking into consideration the elements of task, environment, and person that shape and impact the patient. Activities must contain a “just right” challenge—not too hard and not too easy. Getting this wrong may cause the patient to disconnect from the process.

This got us thinking about the losses involved in the partial selves we bring to our professional lives in organizations: the loss of the creative, fearless children we once were and the multifaceted emotional humans that we still are (that we now show only to our families and friends). We realized that this process, from the world of OT, of restoring a lost self was right on target as we looked at an innovator's journey. What so many of us have lost—and what DT

can help us to find—goes so much deeper than just creative confidence. Perhaps it can help to recapture even that sense of wonder, as one innovator we spoke with hoped for:

As we grow older and supposedly “wiser” we tend to forget the childlike wonder and imagination that we all had when we were younger. We squash that with logic, analysis and all forms of “correctness.” It pays to stop and ask myself the question “what if anything were possible?” to rekindle that ability—and something incredible just might happen.

This book explores, for each phase of experience, how DT done well invites innovators to bring their more authentic self into the innovation conversation. In Chapter 2, we focus at the organizational level,

DOING-BEING-BECOMING IN OT

TIM'S STORY

Tim suffered from schizophrenia and lacked the basic life skills he needed to care for himself. Working with his occupational therapist, he decided to tackle cooking skills and selected the activity of preparing a “Sunday roast” as a good place to start—the activity was not too complicated, posed few safety hazards, and had symbolic value as a culturally cherished family ritual. Making the roast (doing) built Tim's sense of self-efficacy (being) and connected him to the traditions of a larger world (becoming). Succeeding at this prepared Tim to move on to his next set of challenges with heightened confidence.

reviewing new research that looks at *why* DT works and helps us to accomplish our organizational innovation wish list. With that understanding of outcomes as a backdrop, we get personal. In Chapters 3 through 9, we turn to the innovator's own journey and unpack the kinds of changes in mindsets and skillsets that each phase unlocks, examining the new behaviors that the transition from novice to competency

involves. Chapters 3 through 6 (Part 2) look at the Discovery phases occurring during DT's "fuzzy front end." Chapters 7 through 9 (Part 3) examine the challenging back-end processes involved in Testing.

Part 4 looks at the ways in which this personal journey to **becoming** is experienced by different personalities. All innovators do not share the same journey: people with different needs and preferences follow

GEOFF AND GEORGE

Geoff and George are old friends who have been with us since we published our first book on innovation over 10 years ago. Each is an archetype—a blend of multiple people we interviewed during our research. They capture for us two very different approaches to innovation and growth. George, a successful manager, finds himself struggling with the uncertainty inevitable in innovating. George is a perfectionist who worries a lot about making mistakes and lives his life trying to avoid them. Because moving into uncertainty leads logically to more mistakes, George avoids that too—and with this comes the avoidance of many new experiences. In contrast, Geoff expects to make mistakes. For him, success is all about learning. Because learning only occurs when we step away from the familiar, Geoff is accepting of the uncertainty that inevitably accompanies new experiences.

These differences in mindset drive alternative responses to moving innovation forward. Geoff has a deep and personal interest in his customers as people, rather than as demographic or marketing categories, and focuses on improving their lives,

not just selling them products. This empathy, when combined with his broad repertoire of experiences, helps Geoff to see opportunities that others miss. As he moves an idea forward, Geoff never puts all his eggs in one basket; instead he adopts a portfolio-based, experimental approach. In contrast, though George also cares about his customers, his focus is more on selling them his products, rather than understanding their lives and the unmet needs. George bets on a much more traditional analytic approach, trying to find—and then "prove" conclusively with data—that he has found the one right answer.

George's approach, though successful in a stable world, is fatally flawed when the environment becomes uncertain and hard to predict, whereas Geoff intuitively has the mindset and skillset to succeed. But we need the Georges of the world—they bring valuable skills to contribute to any innovation conversation, especially in testing. The good news—Geoff's natural inclinations map directly onto design tools that we can teach to George.

different paths. Doing design deeply rather than superficially is never easy, but navigating particular phases is easier for some people than for others. Many of our readers will already be familiar with the idea of the different innovation journeys as experienced by two characters we have called “Geoff” and “George.”

Geoff and George were archetypes that we created to illustrate differences in the mindsets and experiences of the managers with whom we worked. As our research has progressed, we have been able to identify more precisely how deeper differences in personality shape diverse DT learning journeys. In Part 4, you’ll meet four different profiles that we’ve developed based on our experiences teaching DT to thousands of people. Understanding the different paths that these four take is critical for innovators working in diverse teams and for leaders and facilitators interested in better supporting individuals in their learning process.

Finally, in Part 5, we focus on helping you assess and accelerate progress in your own DT learning journey, as well as that of your organization.



CHAPTER 3

IMMERSION

SANJAY

As the design team began data gathering on the needs of recently arrived refugees, Sanjay struggled with the process. His teammates seemed obsessed with the “plight” of the refugees, focusing on how hard they had it. But Sanjay wasn’t so sure, for reasons he explained: “My father was a refugee as a child. His family lost everything and he had to rebuild his life from scratch.” His dad had built a great life for his family. Seeing the structured support local refugees were already getting, Sanjay was skeptical that their needs were not already being met as he talked with social service workers. Then he met Kwame, a boy from the Congo. “Meeting Kwame,” he explained, “was pivotal. Until that point I was convinced that the lives refugees were leading in the US are somewhat comfortable (in comparison to what was standard for me back home). Kwame helped us understand the journeys refugees undertake to get here. His clothes were frayed. His shoes had holes in them. He failed his first English test because he didn’t know the meaning of the word ‘celery.’ He applied for jobs for his parents and accompanied them to interviews. We went on to have similar eye-opening experiences with other refugees. My skepticism disappeared.” ■

The experience of Immersion changes Sanjay. Though his team feels otherwise, his early “expert” interviews with local social workers and refugee agencies seem to confirm his suspicions that things are not all that bad for local refugees. This data, interpreted through Sanjay’s own personal experiences, sets up a comparison between the local refugees’ experience and the objectively worse ones his own father once faced, leaving him unsure that a serious problem exists. Then he spends time with a boy with holes in his shoes, forging an emotional connection. He develops empathy for Kwame, and for the other refugees he later meets, shifting his perspective dramatically from egocentric and detached to empathetic and engaged. This is the Immersion experience at work. It is more than a set of activities that Sanjay performs. In the process of *doing* ethnographic data gathering, he has an *experience* that is personal and human centered. This experience changes *him*—not just what he knows, but also what he feels and believes. It puts him in touch with his more authentic self and connects him to others around him, not just Kwame.

Though ethnography might be viewed as just an alternative approach to data gathering that focuses on obtaining qualitative rather than quantitative data, its impact, when done well, goes much deeper than that: it triggers a level of personal engagement, both cognitive and emotional, that is entirely different than conducting a survey or even doing an “expert” interview. When design is done well, data gathering initiates more than a deepened understanding of the problem

and the needs of the people being designed for; it also creates an experience of Immersion that shifts how the innovator sees and interacts with the world.

In this chapter, we will examine the profound personal impact that results from innovators’ willingness to immerse themselves in the experience of others, and the power of awakening to the realization that others are unique individuals with unique (and valid) needs and behaviors that may differ from one’s own. Immersion sets the stage for the entire sequence of DT experiences that come later. Nowhere is the difference between *doing* and *becoming* more visible than in Immersion. A few ethnographic interviews conducted for detached data-gathering purposes does not empathy make!

IMMERSION ACTIVITIES¹⁴

- Conducting research using design tools like ethnographic observation and interviewing
- Preparing conversation guides
- Exploring the job to be done of those you are designing for
- Creating journey maps
- Using projective tools (like collage) to explore unarticulated needs
- Mirroring or shadowing users
- Asking users to prepare diaries or photo journals
- Capturing key takeaways to share

WHAT DOES AN INNOVATOR’S MINDSET SHIFT
LOOK LIKE DURING IMMERSION?

As innovators experience Immersion, they move from *unconsciously* seeing only through the lens of their own perspective to *consciously* seeking to better understand, value, and adopt the perspective of others. Let’s explore what we mean by that.

IMMERSION MOVES INNOVATORS ...

FROM A MINDSET THAT IS ...

Egocentric

Certain about the accuracy of one’s own perspective

Detached and distant

Impatient; anxious to problem solve and generate solutions

Accepting of the obvious and conventional definition of the problem; treating it as a given

TO A MINDSET THAT IS ...

Empathetic

Aware of personal biases

Curious and personally engaged

Willing to invest time to understand current reality before developing solutions

Critical of the obvious definition; treating it as a hypothesis

THE SCIENCE BEHIND IT

The development of empathy is a primary driver of these shifts in mindset during Immersion. Psychiatrist Dr. Mark Goulston¹⁵ argues that immersion in others' problems, from the perspectives of those having them, changes people. He describes how his own listening changed as he worked with suicidal patients: "Now I always try to hear them from their *inside out* rather than from my intellectual understanding in. I think this enables my patients to feel better understood and, consequently, less alone."

Empathy is a complex phenomenon. Researchers who study it distinguish between *affective* empathy, an emotional connection that carries with it the ability to feel *with* another, and *cognitive* empathy, the mental processing associated with perspective taking and understanding another's thoughts, beliefs, or intentions. Both have a critical role to play in DT processes. We need a balance between affective and cognitive empathy. Too much or too little of either can be problematic: cognitive empathy without an affective component can merely make us better manipulators; affective empathy without perspective taking leads us to gravitate to others like us rather than to those who are different.

MIRROR NEURONS AT WORK. Some scientists believe that empathy is innate, and is explained in part by the presence of mirror neurons. Mirror neurons are responsible for activating the same neural pathways

in our brain when we observe or mentally "see" an activity as when we actually perform that activity (we will come back to this later as one of the reasons why visualization is so powerful). Extending this logic, we can feel *with* others experiencing pain, for instance, without us having to actually experience it ourselves. According to scholars Pier Francesco Ferrari and Giacomo Rizzolatti, mirror neurons make it possible for us to understand the actions and intentions of others.¹⁶ They are the biological root of empathy. Because all humans are born with mirror neurons, we all have the capacity to understand others' actions and intentions, they argue. Other scientists ascribe less import to mirror neurons, arguing that the development of empathy is much more a function of nurture (culture, socialization, and learning experiences) than of nature.

THE BIOLOGICAL CIRCUITRY OF FEAR CAN DECREASE OUR WILLINGNESS TO ENGAGE WITH OTHERS. Even if we believe we *are* wired to engage and intuit others' thoughts and feelings, this is not enough to spur action. Our biological circuitry of fear can interfere with Immersion's ability to develop empathy. Fear resides in a deep brain lobe—the amygdala. Part of the limbic system that controls our emotional responses, the amygdala has played a crucial role in human survival since time immemorial. It holds our fight-or-flight instinct, which has protected us from dangerous animals and predators. But the limbic system can also short-circuit the rational executive-functioning portion of our brain, the neocortex,

responsible for higher-order brain function and cognition. So what once saved us may be diminishing our ability to engage with others. We have to help the neocortex combat the strong biological circuitry of the amygdala so that we reject the fear that accompanies engagement.

CULTIVATING CURIOSITY IS KEY TO LEARNING.

Research by psychologist Paul Silvia shows how curiosity plays a critical role in triggering engagement instead of avoidance, by helping us overcome feelings of uncertainty and anxiety.¹⁷ Indulging our curiosity creates a virtuous cycle, motivating learning that, in turn, motivates interest. His research suggests that the sweet spot to maximize motivation and learning is simultaneously complex *and* understandable. By counterbalancing the instinctive anxiety and uncertainty that rule our choice to engage, the sweet spot provides the motivation to immerse ourselves in new things, places, or experiences.

OUR BIASES BLIND US. It is not only our brain's wiring and evolutionary impulses that inhibit our capacity to understand the needs of others—flaws in human decision-making processes also play a major role. In Chapter 2, we discussed the various types of biases that hinder our ability to make good decisions. During data-gathering activities, Category 1 biases are especially problematic. The egocentric empathy bias, in which we consistently overestimate the similarity between what we value and what others value, is a

particularly powerful proclivity that works against impactful immersion. Researchers Van Boven, Dunning, and Loewenstein¹⁸ note that “a venerable tradition in social psychology has documented people’s tendency to project their own thoughts, preferences, and behaviors onto other people.” Similarly, Nickerson¹⁹ describes the power of selective perception and the “pervasive human tendency to selectively perceive, encode and retain information that is congruent with one’s own desires.”

WHAT MAKES IMMERSION SO HARD?

At a personal level, even beyond our brain circuitry and biases, innovators find the Immersion experience difficult for many reasons:

STEPPING INTO THE UNKNOWN IS INTIMIDATING. People who prefer structure, clarity, and specificity find the ambiguity of this early stage of the DT process unnerving. They like to start with a well-defined problem that has visible solutions *before* they try to solve it. As one innovator told us:

To me, seeking for the unknowns while not knowing what you’re looking for is one of the most challenging things in DT.

Stepping into open-ended exploration can be unsettling. A colleague who works with MBA students noted that his students generally displayed a lot of



THE PROMISE AND PERIL OF MAPS

It had been a long day on the hiking trails of Yosemite National Park, but the Mariposa Grove of giant sequoias still waited. So I (Jeanne) retrieved a map of the Grove at the visitor center and set off to find the trees it indicated: the “Grizzly Giant” (thought to be, at 1,700 years old, the oldest in the Grove), the “Loving Couple” (two trees joined in an interesting way at the base), and so on. These were named by Galen Clark, the original protector of the Grove in the mid-1800s, as a way to make visitors care about the trees and protect them from timbering interests. I was disappointed when the famed Grove turned out to be no more impressive than these few individual trees. Giving my map to another tourist who didn’t have one, I headed back, deciding to take an alternative route to the parking lot. Though the path was well marked at the trailhead, 20 yards in, I was all alone and lost. I slowed my pace and began to look around at the forest surrounding me. It was amazing! There were giant sequoias everywhere, their majesty undeniable. I was awed. It really *was* a grove, I realized. How had I missed it before? My devotion to the map had not served me well. Had I not given it up, I would have found every tree it indicated, but missed seeing the grove itself. The map had given me confidence and a mission, but also created a myopia that kept me from being fully present and blinded me to what I was really looking for. Focused on it, I almost literally “missed the forest for the trees.”

confidence, yet they found exploring strangers’ decision processes intimidating: “Often students seem to feel that they could run any major corporation the day after graduation, but find talking to a shopper in a supermarket terrifying.” People crave maps to help them navigate the unknown. But a map can also create a detachment and goal orientation that can actively impede actually *seeing* what is going on around us.

Mapmaking is a tricky business—we need maps that guide rather than blind us. We need the structure of DT’s methodology and tools paired with the freedom to explore without constraint.

WE LISTEN TO JUDGE RATHER THAN TO UNDERSTAND. Many people treat their beliefs as truths; when faced with something that looks contrary, they reject it immediately. Creativity breakthroughs often require keeping alive sets of tensions: between what we believe and what others believe, between possibilities and constraints, between allowing our conversations to diverge or forcing convergence. Innovators have to be willing to listen to the unfamiliar and treat what they believe to be true as a hypothesis. As one innovator explained:

I experienced the paradox of the path to becoming creative. . . . Different frames of reference can drive creativity. . . . Moving forward, I will not be too fast to reject things that look contrary but will spend time to look at them and try them out.

IT IS CHALLENGING TO BE FULLY PRESENT AND NOT LISTEN THROUGH THE SOLUTIONS WE ALREADY HAVE IN MIND. Human beings are natural problem solvers. We are anxious to solve, so we immediately begin hypothesizing answers and then listen to our interviewees through the lens of the solutions we are already imagining. One innovator offered:

I automatically start thinking of solutions based off my experience. It's hard for my brain to imagine seeing something from someone else's perspective. I used to be a UX designer in my past life and was so surprised to see people confused by our designs—it was so obvious to me.

Immersion requires listening openly and being fully present to the experience of another, not listening selectively through our own preconceptions. When innovators experience this, it can be truly inspiring to them. As one told us:

Ethnographic research has been my favorite part of the design thinking process. At that point, the world is your oyster, and there's a genuine sense of wonder about where the conversation is going to go. . . . There's magic in probing and asking open-ended questions without a clear agenda. It is so much more freeing to not have a pre-determined solution in mind and to be able to genuinely and curiously learn more.

So we need to put our theories aside. As Sherlock Holmes famously noted, “It is a capital mistake to theorize before one has data. Insensibly one begins to twist facts to suit theories, instead of theories to suit facts.”²⁰

WE'VE BEEN TAUGHT THAT “REAL” DATA HAS NUMBERS AND THAT THE PURPOSE OF DATA GATHERING IS PROOF. For many of us, quantitative data inspires confidence that our findings are “accurate.” We have been trained to value “hard data” as the best (and often only) input into decision-making. Qualitative ethnographic research makes no such promise of accuracy, so we are reluctant to take that path. But this perspective fails to appreciate that data has many uses—and also limitations. In the front end of DT, we gather data to *inspire* better ideas, not to test or “prove” they are worth pursuing. How do you “prove” a future that does not yet exist? We can't expect to use data from the past to successfully predict the future if we are trying to change it. In such an endeavor, sample sizes and statistical significance are irrelevant. Our quest is to figure out what the future *should* look like. This is why some designers look for “extreme” users to help them figure out where the future may already be happening and learn from it. To paraphrase a quote attributed to William Gibson, the noted science fiction author, “The future is already here—it is just not very evenly distributed.”

OUR BACKGROUND AND EXPERTISE INTERFERE WITH SEEING SOMETHING FROM SOMEONE ELSE'S PERSPECTIVE.

It is often difficult to understand another person's thinking, feelings, and motivations. "Experts" (engineers, professors, physicians, lawyers, and the like) are trained to view problems through the lens of their profession's worldview, which makes it challenging to understand the perspective of non-experts like students, patients, and clients. The more different from us people are, the harder it is to see the world through their eyes. As explained by a leader of a team dedicated to rethinking strategy at a large children's hospital serving low-income families:

The people that I work with are often very physically uncomfortable with our customers. I've taken some people from hospitals along for interviews (in homes) where they're made physically uncomfortable by the socioeconomic conditions, by this new environment.

British psychologist John Bowlby, working in the 1940s, showed that infants' strong attachments to their mothers protected them from strangers, but also limited their comfort in interactions with people they did not know. We are wired to attach to our own groups.

Then, there are the people we dislike. The bad news about Immersion is that you don't just get to develop a deep understanding for the people you like. You have to extend to all the benefit of accepting them as rational human beings making a set of choices that make

sense to them. In order to influence them toward a different set of choices tomorrow, you have to understand why they are making their choices today. The reluctance to do this can show up as excluding them from research conversations or discrediting their point of view. One innovator we talked to refused to engage with contract employees who potentially held an important outside perspective because of his own deeply held knowledge bias. He said: "Contract people just don't know. They don't have the knowledge, the background, the history, they just don't know. That introduces mistakes."

Given all of the challenges to achieving Immersion, you may question if it is really worth all this trouble. Not surprising, the answer is an unqualified *absolutely!*

WHY DOES IMMERSION MATTER SO MUCH?

IMMERSION SETS THE STAGE. Immersion is the foundation for every one of the significant outcomes we talked about in Chapter 2. Empathy is essential—the mindset it triggers kick-starts the entire experience journey of an innovator. Using ethnographic tools to immerse practitioners in the day-to-day lives of those for whom they are designing provides a direct sensory experience. Walking a patient to the lab is a very different experience than examining a process map. Not only does it unearth human-centered data and deeper insights, the emotional connection provides the cornerstone for DT done well. At one

of our research sites, the team leader explained why involvement with the personal stories of those they served was so critical to helping staff move from a profession-centered “place of judgment” to a “place of possibilities”:

Rather than “this is how the system works and how they should be using it,” we want to help staff shift their lens—get them out of their expert hat and into a beginner’s mindset that is willing to look at the problem differently.

At one university medical center, a doctor described the critical impact of clinicians realizing, after journey mapping patients’ experiences, that the care they were currently providing was not what they thought:

We can think all kinds of things about how we believe the system is working, but then seeing the reality of how it was really working, it was shocking to see how far from our intentions reality had come. Patients needed someone to be present for them. Despite a flurry of activity, nothing was changing for them. We needed to feel their blockages and struggles.

Behind every problem definition lies a set of unarticulated assumptions, beliefs, and experiences that lead each person to define the problem a certain way. Unless these are surfaced early in the process and challenged, mindsets do not shift and opportunities

to ask a more powerful question are lost. Immersion softens our boundaries and challenges our way of thinking to create space for alternative perspectives. This drives the problem reframing that is critical to better solutions. One innovator shared her insights:

I found that I unintentionally limited my perception to find solutions only for the activity itself and blinded myself to other parts of the experience. This awakening moment let me see the unseen parts of myself and see the unseen parts of the user’s experience. I feel like I now see the other part of the iceberg under the water.

IMMERSION ENCOURAGES US TO LISTEN MORE OPENLY TO ALTERNATIVE VIEWS.

The ability to see new and more creative opportunities often rests on this kind of reframing of the problem in ways that tap into the diversity of perspectives available. The boundaries of a solution space are a function of the cumulative repertoires of team members—but only if they can tap into the richness of each member’s contribution. Tapping into the power of the collective is core to why DT works. It relaxes our conviction about the “rightness” of our own view, and the “wrongness” of those who think differently, as it did with Sanjay. In this difference, great potential lies. Getting people with different perspectives into the conversation expands the problem space. Immersion invites us all to confront our perspectives and biases, as well as those of others.

THE POWER OF MIRRORING

One especially memorable story from our research takes place in an institute serving adults with Asperger's Syndrome. A young designer visited one of the residents, Pete, at home. She observed him doing destructive things—picking at a leather sofa, ripping a magazine, and creating indents in a wall by rubbing against it. She wondered how she could design solutions that would prevent such behavior in the future. On her second visit to Pete's house, she took a more empathetic approach, and decided to mirror Pete's behavior. She discovered, to her surprise, the sensory enjoyment that came from ripping paper, flipping a magazine, picking at the leather on a couch, or holding an ear against a wall. Unable to ask Pete directly what he liked about doing these things, she experienced them for herself. On her first visit to his home, she had used her own frame of reference and labeled Pete's acts as negative and destructive. On her second visit, she began to truly empathize with Pete—the paper, sofa, and wall revealed vital clues that helped her understand the things Pete liked to do. She explained: "I thought empathy was innate, but now realize that it can grow and evolve. For this to happen it requires a perceptual shift in thinking that is open to different ways of being in the world."²¹

IMMERSION SETS UP THE SHIFT TO A HYPOTHESIS-DRIVEN MENTALITY. For most innovators, DT provides their first introduction to being hypothesis driven, and Immersion brings home the complexity of meeting the needs of human beings who do not see the world as we do. Few of us are raised with a hypothesis-driven mentality. Instead, we have been taught that

there is a single "right" answer and that we can find it and prove it analytically, in advance of action. In contrast, hypothesis-driven thinkers believe that there are many possible answers, and that finding out which ones are superior is only possible through experimentation in action. Both ways of thinking have merit—both perform well, but under different circumstances. When the ability to predict based on existing data is good and the problem is clear and agreed upon, analytic methods are usually quicker and more efficient. This is the world of "tame" problems. In a complex and uncertain world, however, where extrapolating from the past is problematic, where elements interact in hard-to-predict ways, or when there is no clear agreement even on what the problem actually is, hypothesis-driven models carry the day. Persistent problems are often complex or "wicked" (in designer speak). This is the land where innovation lives. Hypothesis-driven approaches marry generative and analytical research. Many of us have been taught that we can be creative (entirely intuitive) or data driven (guided by numbers on a spreadsheet). Hypothesis-driven approaches demonstrate that, in a complex world, we need to be both—success in any innovative endeavor relies upon it.

IMMERSION CULTIVATES OUR CURIOSITY AND TEACHES US TO ASK GOOD QUESTIONS. This helps us discover needs that people can't tell us they have. Immersion creates the conditions for innovators to observe new perspectives, new relationships, and new needs that stakeholders cannot articulate clearly.

As Silvia observed, this combination of being complex (the human being part) and understandable (through the structure of DT tools) hits the sweet spot for motivating curiosity and learning. As observers, we are able to empathize with the needs of our stakeholders but still retain a critical distance that helps us to intuit latent needs, even ones that our stakeholders cannot access on their own. This can drive new questions that lead to the identification of profoundly new insights that may even flip the problem on its head.

IMMERSION HOLDS US IN TODAY'S REALITIES.

As we talked about in Chapter 1, action-oriented people want to see results. They want to jump to the future and talk about *solutions*. This is a big problem if we are trying to innovate. We need to slow innovators down from jumping too early into envisioning a new future. The only clues we have about the optimal desired futures live in the present and the data we collect today. So that's where we have to start, because we cannot get to a new future without understanding the truth about the current reality of stakeholders' lives. Design's role is to help people envision new possibilities within the context of the current reality and identify what the gap looks like between the present and a desired future, so that we can think creatively about how to close it. As one innovator told us:

Based on the problems we were hearing it was easy for me to jump to solutions. Many of those problems held throughout the project and we

WHAT MAKES A GOOD QUESTION

Questions really matter in DT—they matter when we gather data, they matter when we brainstorm and they matter when we test. The questions we ask determine the boundaries of the what we will see. If you get the questions wrong, the answers don't matter much. Formulating great questions is an art—but early on our advice is to keep them open-ended and exploratory. Despite the ambiguity all around, the right questions will guide anxious explorers to the answer. As Rainer Maria Rilke beautifully put it: “Try and try to love the questions themselves . . . Live the questions . . . you will gradually, without even noticing it, live your way into the answer.”²²



ended up addressing them with our solutions, but the reasons some of those things were problems is different from what I would have thought, and the solutions we came up with were wildly different from what I could ever have developed in those early weeks.

WHAT DO THE MVCs COMING OUT OF IMMERSION LOOK LIKE?

Individual innovators may start in different places as they enter the Immersion journey (more on this in Part 4), but we want them to arrive at the same destination, with a design mindset. But how do we detect this mindset in practice? As innovators experience Immersion, specific competencies develop that are

reflected in their behavior. How do we know when we, or our team, have reached what we called MVCs in Chapter 2—the level at which DT’s full impacts are maximized? In Immersion, we are looking for signals that the design thinker has moved beyond the activity of *doing* ethnographic research (while still listening through their usual egocentric and solution-focused mindset) to a DT mindset that listens openly and empathetically.

Here are some of the questions we suggest that you ask yourself:

AM I...

- ☒ Listening to understand rather than to test?
- ☒ Aware of my own biases and blinders?
- ☒ Asking good questions?
- ☒ Developing an emotional engagement and empathetic bond with those for whom I am designing?
- ☒ Fully present in the moment to the lived experience of my colleagues and those for whom I am designing?
- ☒ Searching for areas of opportunity rather than solutions?
- ☒ Probing deeply for unarticulated needs and beliefs?

HOW DO WE BETTER GUIDE AND SUPPORT OUR OWN SHIFT AND THAT OF OTHERS?

STAY DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN THE PROBLEM.

Einstein suggested that spending 95% of the time thinking about the problem and only 5% thinking about its solution produces smarter innovation. But with today’s “can-do” emphasis on speed coupled with our general impatience, innovators often feel pressured to run with the most obvious early solution and devote their energy to “selling” that. Instead, immerse yourself in the problem/opportunity as seen from the perspective of your key stakeholders. Don’t delegate away all of your Discovery work. Though there is an important role for experts and mentors, insist that you and your staff be part of the team that does the work—otherwise others have the experience of Immersion, not you. Listening to someone else tell stories about your stakeholders, regardless of how compelling they are, is a weak substitute for the kind of direct involvement that forces your team to make eye contact with people stuck in the problem you’re attempting to solve. *Becoming* is fueled by direct engagement.

FOCUS ON BEING FULLY PRESENT. This sounds a bit “new age” and abstract, but the truth is that we are rarely fully present to another. Instead, we are in our own heads, listening half-heartedly through our own filters. Ethnography offers the opportunity to step

out of our own heads and into someone else's. Don't squander that chance and fritter it away by being only partly attentive.

LET GO OF “GETTING IT RIGHT.” We can never know whether the observations we are making are “accurate.” That is an uncomfortable position—but worries and self-doubt are usually unproductive. One innovator, looking back on the experience, told us:

It's been a hell of a journey. I find some disappointment in how much self-doubt I have. I know that a lot of it is about hesitation around the process, but I know that the question “Am I doing this right?” is as much about the process as it is about my own competency. I should stop doing that, it's stupid.

An important part of letting go also relates to the need to control—controlling the interview, controlling the choice of solutions, and wanting to get our own way. Letting go of all of these is particularly important. One innovator described it this way:

Maybe the reason I struggle with this mode of thinking in particular is that as a designer, we lack control. From beginning to end, we are required to listen and not speak. We can interpret observations and slowly shape them into criteria and potential solutions, but there aren't really any ‘end’ decisions made until someone else makes

them for us. For all the swift decision-making skills I have been taught, this is one space where we have to delay the gratification of knowing whether we've made a good decision or not.

Anxiety blocks fully experiencing. So we like to give our students a tongue-in-cheek list of what they *should* and *should not* worry about. In the early phases of their DT work, it looks like this:

USEFUL THINGS TO WORRY ABOUT

- Do we have the right interviewees?
- Are we getting the depth we need to uncover fresh insights? Are we probing enough?
- Is our debrief approach capturing the richness of what we learn?
- Is our team working well together?

USELESS THINGS TO WORRY ABOUT

- Will we be able to find a great solution?
- Will our ideas be too boring? Not original enough?
- Are we exploring too broadly?
- Are we doing the process right?
- Does our data make sense? Can we make sense of it?

BRING STRUCTURE AND FORETHOUGHT TO DATA GATHERING AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT.

As you and your team begin to dig into *who* you need to talk to, *what* questions to ask, *which* tools to use, and *how* the team will divide responsibilities, the questions of who team members will study and where to find them require specific answers. Forethought and input here can make a significant difference in setting ourselves up for success and reducing the anxiety that can be a barrier to accepting Immersion. We advocate thinking through available tools: for understanding the user experience, we always recommend job-to-be-done and journey mapping. For complex value chain situations, we recommend utilizing a value chain mapping tool. Sometimes we find a “power alignment map” helpful. Set novices up for success by assigning the right research roles to the right team members. For instance, a faculty member would be a poor choice for interviewing students. It is difficult for authority figures to solicit honest responses from interviewees, despite how hard they try. Interviews work best when conducted by peers or outsiders who are not threatening or representative of the chain of command. We also find that methods for structuring aspects of the research, like debriefing key takeaways from each interview to share with other team members, lend themselves to the creation and use of templates—things we have been taught to decry as bureaucratic but that actually free learners to explore with less anxiety.

KEEP PUSHING DEEPER. Asking leading questions or accepting superficial answers will stall development of the deep understanding that Immersion seeks and stymie innovation success right out of the gate. Again, many of us are uncomfortable with classic ethnographic techniques like allowing lengthy silences after asking a probing question or repeating the same question to encourage an interviewee to share deeper thoughts with us. There is a steep experience curve to this work. Have patience with yourself and your teammates as you work on improving. Keep probing! To support this, we suggest having novices interview in pairs to allow one of them to concentrate solely on listening and probing while the other monitors the interview guide and takes notes.

DIVE INTO ACTION! In the past, we have eased cautious and timid team members into Immersion with seemingly easier research tools like secondary desk research in order not to overwhelm them with new experiences. This approach has had the opposite of our intended outcome. That kind of research doesn’t produce the exhilaration and eye-opening depth of observations that interviews produce and can actually demotivate and accelerate novices’ desire to move on. Instead, ease yourself and cautious team members into interviewing by practicing interviews with colleagues or watching videos on how to conduct empathy interviews—then push yourself out the door!

SLOW DOWN TO MOVE FASTER. In many organizations—and even personally—we have been programmed to worship at the altar of “efficiency.” Much of DT can look highly inefficient to an outside observer. We must, however, understand that real efficiency happens when we speedily *implement* a scalable, risk-tested new concept, not how fast we generate the idea itself. The additional investment we make in the Immersion experience pays huge dividends later in the process. As one innovator commented:

Immersing myself in the user experience and allowing myself to wallow in a problem was really helpful. I have a hard time with things I deem inefficient, and I’ve written off wallowing as ineffective in the past. Now, I have an appreciation for slowing down to go fast.

MAINTAIN POSITIVE MOMENTUM (OR PIVOT TO REGAIN MOMENTUM). There is a fine line between too much time for the Immersion phase and not enough. If you don’t give yourself enough time, your research will feel superficial and clumsy and so will your Immersion experience. If you allow too much time, the process will slow down, learnings will be lost, and momentum will stall. The key is in the balance.

WHAT’S NEXT?

In our experience, those new to the Immersion experience rarely think that they have done “enough” data gathering and feel ready to move on. This is the nature of any creative process. When asked how he knew when his designing was “done,” iconic architect Frank Gehry answered “when I run out of money or time.” A real strength of the DT process is to move us along to the next phase, even when we don’t feel ready to go.

So on we go—knowing that we will never be done and that we will be circling back to do more research (next time with prototyped solutions) later in the process. A successful experience of Immersion sets the stage for an innovator to move on to **Sensemaking**, the phase to which we now turn.

HOW JOURNEYS DIFFER

In Parts 2 and 3 of this book, we explored how different experiences at each phase of the DT process potentially transformed our innovators, moving them beyond merely *doing* to *becoming*. This metamorphosis is not easy—we examined the obstacles to achieving the mindset shifts and the minimum viable competencies (MVCs) essential at each phase. In this section, we want to complicate the story we’ve told so far (sorry, readers!) and move beyond the general guidance we offered in those chapters, because different folks require different strokes. (Apologies if Sly and the Family Stone was before your time.)

Our research shows clearly that gaining DT expertise is not one-size-fits-all—our personal preferences play a large role in how each phase is experienced. Take the task of ethnography—connecting with a relative stranger and speaking intimately with them may be exhilarating for some and terrifying for others. Innovators’ personalities shape how they approach different phases of DT, creating different starting points and challenges to mindset shifts in each phase.

DiSC ASSESSMENT

Before we introduce the personas, you may wonder how we determined these four distinct characters. Our process involved hundreds of MBA students and professionals in DT experiences completing the DiSC assessment. For over a decade, we have used the DiSC, a reliable and valid leadership-profile tool frequently used in the business world, in our research on innovation and growth. It has consistently shown statistically significant relationships between DiSC types and the experience (and even success) of the managers and MBAs that we studied. Each of our personas associates with a DiSC behavior type, a “gut feeling” when faced with ambiguity, risk, and change. When we share information on their DiSC type, their responses tend to be amazement at the accuracy of its description of their preferences (Aha!) and enlightenment into how and why they—and their teammates—act as they do.

If successful, we hope that design thinkers leave each phase of the process having reached a similar design mindset—but our experience tells us that they start from very different places. Sound daunting? No worries—we are here to help!

We have studied the different paths of four distinct personas: Driver, Influencer, Analyst, and Supporter.

MEET THE PERSONAS



DRIVERS have a preference for action and are comfortable moving forward in the face of uncertainty. They have no problem becoming the leader (even if self-proclaimed). On the downside, they are often impatient, both with the process and with their teammates, and may be seen as domineering—it's their way or the highway. They also tend to ignore disconfirming data.



INFLUENCERS are people people. They are persuasive and good at marshalling support for new ideas. They thrive on consensus—perhaps a bit too much—and may be reluctant to act without it. Analyzing DT's mass of qualitative data can seem overwhelming.



ANALYSTS are conscientious. They revel in data analysis, and can come across as skeptics. Often perfectionists, they find it uncomfortable to act without complete information.

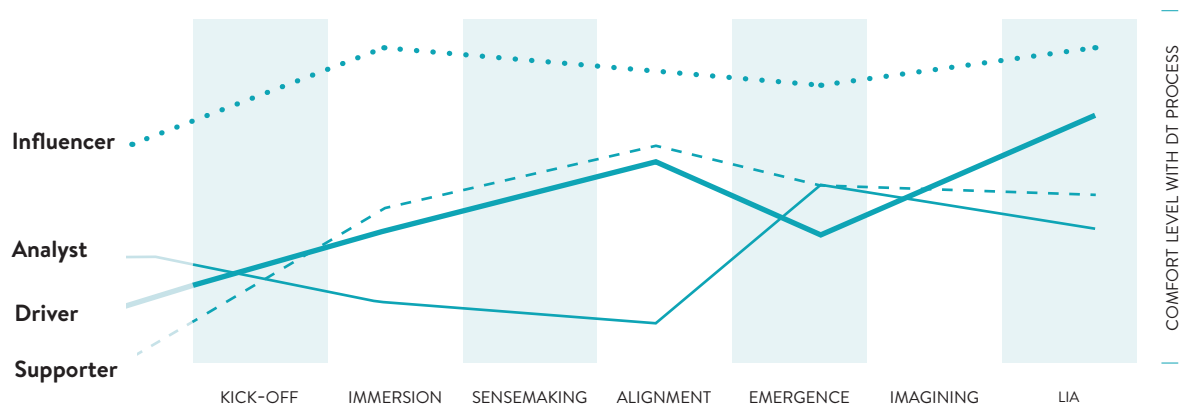


SUPPORTERS are the nurturers. Steady and agreeable, they are great team players. But they are conflict avoidant and sometimes wedded to the status quo.

Over the past several years, we have tracked learners in our classes in real time, asking them to share how they felt during each phase of the DT process, using a scale from 1 (Feeling lost) to 10 (Feeling fantastic). We have also administered the DiSC (usually at the end of class so as not to influence students during the course). When we look across all this accumulated data, at their comfort levels week by week, it reveals no single innovation journey. Depending upon their personality profile, people's journeys were very different. But within a profile, they were usually quite similar. The graph on the opposite page shows what our accumulated research data suggests about what the journey of each profile looks like.

It is important to keep in mind that these four personas are “pure” types—most of us have some blend of them. But even at a quick glance, you can see profound differences. Influencers (our *people people*) start and stay high, engaged, and enthusiastic throughout. All other personas enter the process with varying levels of discomfort (but for different reasons). For Supporters and Drivers, this evaporates pretty quickly as they get on board. Not so for Analysts, who may struggle mightily throughout DT's front-end of Discovery, then rally (even soar) as Testing takes over.

ONE JOURNEY. MULTIPLE EXPERIENCES.



When you combine a mix of these personalities on a team (which we hope you will do), the real fun starts! Using these different preference profiles as our base, Part 4 will explore in depth what each persona feels, needs, and brings to the table. Each will experience peaks and valleys. Each one struggles and thrives, but in different phases. No one holds steady throughout. Acknowledging their differences and honoring their preferences, identifying who might struggle at each stage and leveraging those who thrive, is critical to moving both innovators and their teams forward and maximizing the impact of DT—because another finding from our research is that the more diversity of DiSC types a team has, the higher it performs. Having all four types on a team may not make the shared experience as comfortable, but it will, we know, produce better results—if we can tap into that power of diversity.

In Chapters 10 through 13, we get up close and personal with each of the personas, exploring in more depth the story behind this data—what each one thinks, says, feels, and does—as we track their individual DT journeys. We will examine in depth, by phase, the path of each of the four personas as they advance from *doing* to *becoming*. We will also offer tips on how to support each innovator persona as they go through their DT journey, alert learners on what to look out for in their own behaviors and reactions and suggest what leaders can do to help each type get past their struggles and experience DT to the fullest. Our goal is to provide insights to help individual innovators, their teams, and their leaders overcome the specific mental and behavioral traps that impede mindset change and competency development.

Throughout these chapters, we strive to communicate with different audiences. For innovators, we want

CHAPTER 10

THE DRIVER



DEAR ANA,

How well do you think design thinking will serve this project? Because I'll be blunt—I think it is a big waste of time. I agree that talking to donors is important, but it's always been my job to talk to them—what else are we hoping to learn? I don't understand why we need to drag this out over weeks when we could have conversations and move forward with some ideas (I already have a few) by next week. We've had two working sessions and the team still doesn't think we have properly “scoped” the problem. I know I'm not the most patient person, but the inefficiency is killing me. Can we speed up the pace?

— DIANA



It only makes sense that the Driver is the first persona we mention. Drivers are competitive, figurative “captains” who are driven by achievement and recognition. Comfortable acting in the face of uncertainty, their focus is on the end result, not the process, so sitting in the problem space collecting and analyzing data deflates them. They tend to be very direct, much to the discomfort of their teammates, and only trust others who are straightforward as well. In fact, if they had their way, they would work alone, or with subordinates to whom they could delegate tasks toward a specific goal set by them.



What they **FEEL**

Drivers approach DT apprehensively, with lower comfort levels. They question the need for such thorough investigation, likely already have solutions in mind, and somewhat dread the “team” aspect and fear that the pace will likely be slow because of it.



What they **SEE**

They see a way forward (note: their way) and are ready to act—now! This sense of urgency is often motivating to others, but in the early stages of design, where patience and a spirit of inquiry are required, they find it hard to contain their frustration.



What they **HEAR**

Drivers tend to hear themselves before they hear outside influences. The loudest sound they hear is their own internal clock ticking loudly, which never really quiets down—they have concerns about the pacing of the team throughout the entire project.



What they **SAY**

“I can have difficulties sticking with the pace of the team and need to be more patient when people require additional time to make a decision.”

“I think a few of us were pretty adamant about doing that topic. . . . It was hard for me and others to divorce from our original idea.”

THE DESTINATION

In this book, we have explored the many ways DT enriches the experience of innovators, helping them improve their abilities to:

- Understand latent biases that hinder innovation
- Collaborate more productively and more intentionally with others
- Empathize with the pain points of those for whom they are designing
- Make sense of large amounts of qualitative data
- Mitigate risks while also becoming more comfortable with risk
- Imagine a future so vividly it inspires others
- Recognize their own journey with DT and the ways it differs from that of others

In Part 4, we looked at the role innovators' personal preferences play in how each phase is experienced. Our four personas—Driver, Influencer, Supporter and Analyst—each face different challenges as the process unfolds. Acknowledging and supporting their

unique journeys spurs more successful collaboration across diverse groups of people. By understanding the different personas in your group, you can better enable individual engagement and team dynamics in real time, tailoring your own actions based on the differing needs of the different personas. Knowing team members' limitations and constraints also helps guide the selection of “just right” challenges—shying away from those that may be too far out of a novice innovator's repertoire that would interfere with their learning progress.

Having done all this, we finally reach the destination this book is all about—You! How do you put all of the information we have shared on experiencing design into practice? Getting you off to a good start is Chapter 14, which focuses on how to assess and accelerate your own personal progress in the journey of DT. Whether you are looking for ways to plot your own course or helping another colleague with their growth, you will benefit from the Personal Development Plan (PDP) in Chapter 14. If you want to influence the broader

journey to DT competence in your organization, you will benefit from the organizational focus of Chapter 15. Each chapter contains a diagnostic tool that will help you to identify developmental needs. Each also offers a case illustrating the development process in action, and a set of suggestions for next steps.

Before we dive into your personal development planning with the PDP, we want to acknowledge that at this point, you might feel daunted by the amount of work it takes to become a design thinker. Take a deep breath. The subtitle of this book is *The Innovator's Journey*. All journeys have to start somewhere. Your ultimate destination may look distant—but it's not as far away as you think. So enjoy the ride. Albert Einstein may have said it best: "Life is like a bicycle. To keep your balance, you must keep moving."

So, ever onward . . .

AMAN AND THE MVC 360

What does the MVC 360 look like in practice?
Let’s look at how Aman, our Analyst from Part 4, works with the tool as he approaches the Immersion phase.

Aman is starting the DT process with a multidisciplinary project team at work. He is apprehensive because he is typically not a “people” person and feels overwhelmed with the level of involvement DT requires. Additionally, he has no experience with qualitative research, enjoying his work with his perfectly synchronized spreadsheets. However, Ana, his supervisor, has encouraged him to participate in the experience as part of a PDP, and Aman feels like it seems a safe space to explore new knowledge, skills, and abilities.

Prior to embarking on their DT journey, Aman and his teammates filled out a self-assessment on all of the MVCs across the six experience phases of the DT process. Let’s look at the process as he steps into his first phase. Entering Immersion, Aman examines his self-assessment on the **MVC 360: Immersion** (Figure A).

It worries Aman that none of these MVCs feel comfortable to him. However, when he meets with Ana, his supervisor, prior to the start of interviews, he chooses two MVCs to focus on and reflects on where he feels he is currently operating and where he would like to be (Figure B).

A

Immersion

I am aware of my own biases and blinders.

1 <i>not at all</i>	2 <i>not often</i>	3 <i>sometimes</i>	4 <i>frequently</i>	5 <i>all the time</i>
------------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	------------------------	--------------------------

I listen to understand rather than to test.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

I search for areas of opportunities, not solutions.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

I develop an emotional engagement and empathetic bond with those for whom I design.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

I probe deeply for unarticulated needs and beliefs.

1	2	3	4	5
---	---	---	---	---

I am fully present in the moment to the lived experience of my colleagues and those for whom I design.

1	2	3	4	5
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I ask good questions.

1	2	3	4	5
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Pre-Assessment Total

13

USE CASE: FLOWERPOWER AND THE ORGANIZATIONAL OUTCOMES TOOL

As Head of Design Strategy at FlowerPower (FP), a leading wholesaler of fresh flowers, Lucy had worked hard over the past five years to infuse DT in all areas of the organization. Working closely with colleagues in FP Human Resources, together they had offered training, mentoring, and personal development plans for interested employees throughout the firm. At present, they had a core group of over 150 “Design Catalysts” deployed across all departments, from Finance to Communications. As she prepared her organizational development plan for the coming year, Lucy wondered what new steps her group should take to deepen DT competency at FP and help the Catalysts succeed. She also realized that in order to maximize buy-in and senior leadership support to expand DT’s reach, she needed to demonstrate its impact on organizational performance and the subsequent return on investment that DT was actually producing. As she began to compile data for the next annual report, Lucy decided this would be a good time to step back and assess progress to date.

She decided to administer the DT Organizational Assessment survey organization-wide to those involved in the effort, as well as to those they reported to. She reached out to her Catalysts with a request that they complete the survey—answering as honestly as possible to what extent they had personally: (1) used the key elements listed in Part 1 in their work and (2) observed any of the design outcomes listed in Part 2. She also requested that they furnish the name and email of managers, not directly involved in the efforts, who sponsored the DT work they had done, who would also have a view of the outcomes. Promising strict confidentiality, and with a minimum of five surveys completed per department,

the effort had achieved about a 70% response rate, so she felt good about the data she had collected as she rolled up her sleeves to begin her assessment.

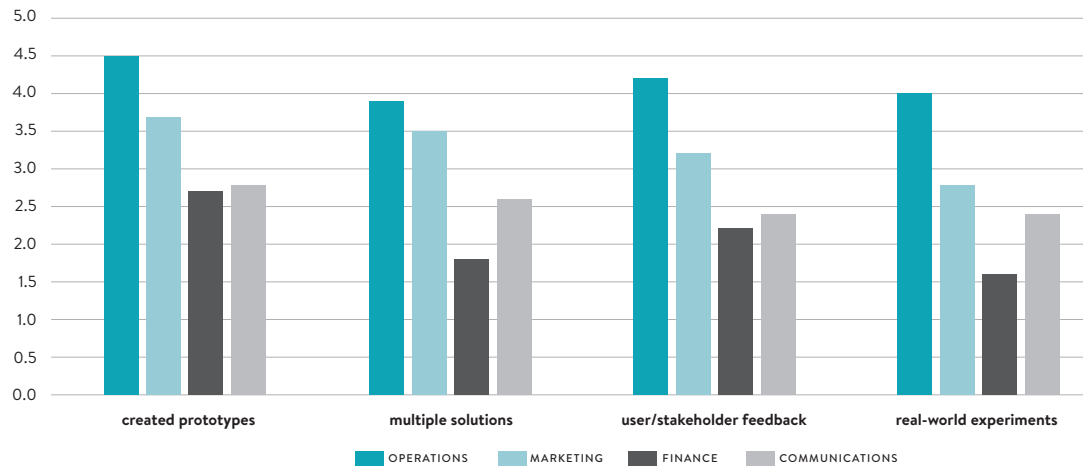
Results and Reflections

First, Lucy focused on practice use. Looking at the usage of particular design practices across the organization, at an aggregate level, she was pleased to see that most of them were being very actively used, suggesting to her that the training focusing on DT as an end-to-end process was taking hold. She did note, however, that some testing practices at DT’s back end were not used as frequently as front-end practices. Lucy also observed that those managers not directly involved with DT projects reported lower practice usage than the Catalysts themselves, making her wonder if she had some educational outreach work to do helping the Catalysts to better engage their sponsors at critical points during the DT process.

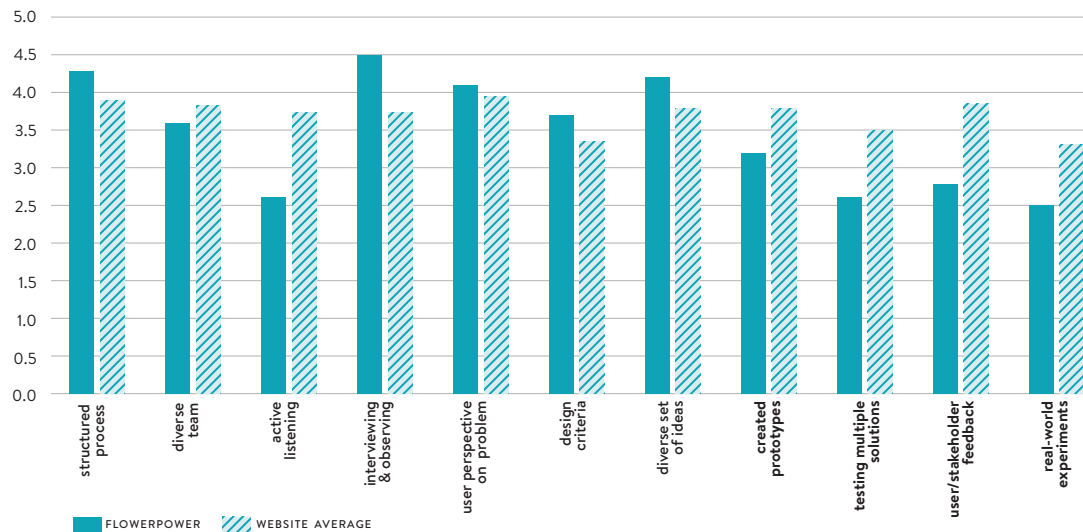
Next, she compared design practice averages across departments. When broken down this way, the inconsistencies widened in range.

She noted that some areas were real stars—they seemed to have gone beyond thinking of DT as a series of projects, and had begun to embed these practices into their day-to-day work lives. But there was more variety in usage than she expected. Marketing, for instance, seemed to favor DT’s front-end ethnographic tools, using these considerably more frequently than the testing tools like prototyping and real-world experimentation. Operations, on the other hand, almost alone among the departments, was using experimentation heavily.

TESTING PRACTICE AVERAGES ACROSS DEPARTMENTS



COMPARISON OF FLOWERPOWER PRACTICE AVERAGES WITH WEBSITE AVERAGE



Finally, she compared the Catalysts' frequency of usage for selected tools with the latest averages she found on the website *experiencingdesign.org*. These were based on data from over 1000 people actively using DT. She was pleased to see that, for most of the activities, they were at or above these averages.

In some cases, like the use of ethnographic interviewing and observation, and the creation of a diverse set of ideas, they truly shone. As she had expected, the data confirmed her fears that experimentation was being underutilized at FP.

Next, Lucy turned to look at the data on outcomes. She was pleased that, on most of their innovation priorities, they were seeing solid results. She was especially pleased that responses showed that important psychological benefits were being experienced at the individual level and that people were reporting

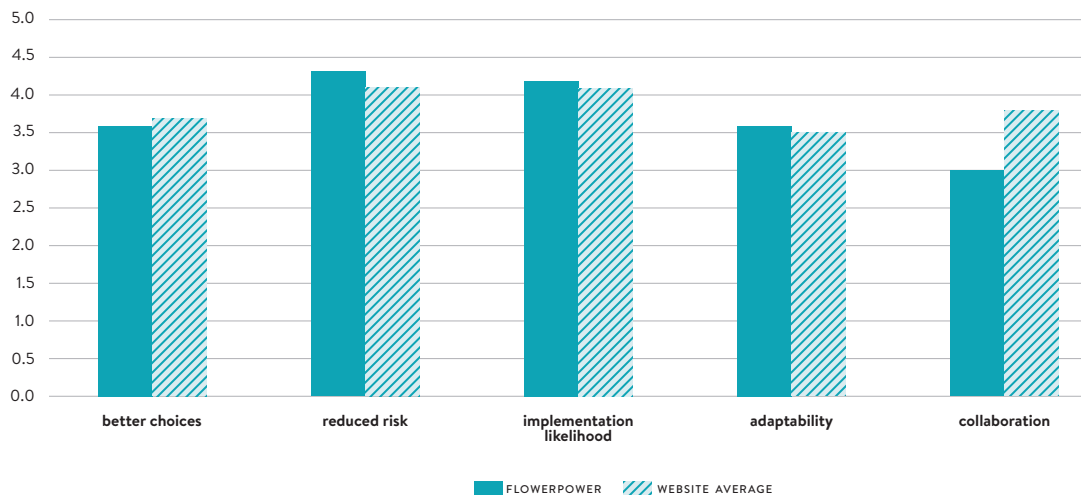
feeling more security, creative confidence and openness to risk taking. The one exception, she noted, was in the area of collaboration.

Digging deeper, she saw that while collaboration among teams was thriving, on the network side, it lagged. Catalysts were not seeing much in the way of expanded access to new resources or the pooling of resources for greater impact. Lucy believed that, in a resource-strapped environment, it was important for DT to deliver on these outcomes. This lag was apparent in comparison to other organizations as well.

Development Planning

As a next step in her planning process, Lucy identified the key areas that she felt organizational efforts should focus on: (1) improved use of testing practices and (2) achieving better

COMPARISON OF FLOWERPOWER OUTCOME AVERAGES WITH OTHER ORGANIZATIONS



outcomes around network collaboration. She pulled together a group of Catalysts from all across FP for a special session to identify the underlying drivers of the deficiency in these areas and brainstorm possible solutions.

As they examined testing, some expected pain points surfaced as people reported being uncomfortable with the specifics of designing experiments. But other reasons surprised her. Marketing reported hesitation with gathering feedback from customers in real-world experiments because the team did not want to send a mixed message about what products and services were available. What if customers liked a new service that FP testing concluded should be discontinued? Finance worried that testing new practices might come across as disorganized to their internal customers, reducing the department's credibility. In brainstorming solutions, multiple ideas were generated:

- Offering a new workshop focused specifically on the design and execution of experiments.
- Creating some department-to-department partner groups to support each other. For instance, Operations might share their strategies for successful testing and work with other departments who struggled there. Marketing could do the same with ethnographic research.
- Identifying both internal and external clients with whom the department in question had good rapport and who would understand and value partnering in experiments.

On the network side, Catalysts from numerous departments described how curtailed travel budgets had made it difficult to go on the road to meet with important constituencies. Lack of time also seemed an issue—others reported that it was only after a dispute of some kind arose that attention was paid to serious conversation with stakeholder groups. This made it difficult to build trust. To address these issues, potential solutions were brainstormed. These included:

- Inviting stakeholders to come to FP to get to know them and their needs and perspectives, rather than FP traveling to them.
- Developing a proactive strategy that identified key partners and supported working with them in advance of troubles arising.
- Setting aside some additional travel funds that allowed relationship building with particularly strategic members of their networks at conferences and industry trade shows.

Lucy settled down to pull together both a report to senior leadership on the ROI of FP's investment in DT to date and a plan for further organizational development. She felt that she now had the depth of understanding that she needed to paint a reasonably accurate picture of current reality, offer clear and concrete options for moving forward, and lay out a strategy for achieving their developmental goals. She felt good about the Catalyst team they had assembled and her colleagues' commitment to working together to take FP to a whole new level of DT usage and benefits.