



Work Right: Building a way to work together through Service Design

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Abstract

Formalising the creative process is often wrought with good intentions and the necessity to quantify, package and sell time. When working in strategic and creative design fields, decisions are regularly made about the path to best deliver work that balances both quality and profitability. Is it fundamentally a question of standardisation? Do models that work for the production of more tangible goods work when approaching creative services? How can we develop a way to work that's systematic and messy? To bring elements of standardisation in line with what's best described as the messy parts of the creative process, we set off on an investigation into how we work. Starting with well-travelled roads in Agile and other project management methodologies, we began to incorporate broader ways of approaching work, leaning on more ethnographic and poetic approaches to gather insights into how our small studio might best deliver our services. Through interviews, mapping and group tool creation, we turned customer-centric service design methods on ourselves to create a framework of our process. Fundamentally, we used service design methods to begin answering who we are, what we're doing, how we're getting where we want to go and why any of us should care. Not all of the methods worked. Surprisingly, methods that failed provided greater insight

than the methods that worked. However, we ended up with a personalised service framework, more robust vocabulary to describe our working methods and a set of tools that resonated with us because we made them – they are still helping us redefine how we work.

Keywords: Service design methods, co-design, creative services, project delivery

Work Right

Building a way to work together through Service Design

Formalising the creative process is often wrought with good intentions and the necessity to quantify, package and sell time. When working in strategic and creative design fields, decisions are regularly made about the path to best deliver work that balances both quality and profitability. Is it fundamentally a question of standardisation? Do models that work for the production of more tangible goods work when approaching creative services? How can we develop a way to work that's systematic and messy?

In an attempt to bring elements of standardisation in line with what's best described as the messy parts of the creative process, we set off on an investigation into how we work. Starting with well-travelled roads in Agile and other project management, we began to incorporate broader ways to view our approach to work, leaning on more ethnographic and poetic approaches to gather insights into how our small studio might best function.

Through interviews, mapping and group tool creation, we turned customer-centric service design methods on ourselves to create a framework of our process. Fundamentally, we used service design methods to begin answering who we are, what we're doing, how we're getting where we want to go and why any of us should care.

Not all of it worked. The parts that didn't are probably more interesting than the parts that did. However, we ended up with a foundation, a bigger set of language and a set of tools that resonate with us because we made them – they're still helping us redefine how we work.

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1 The Problem

Keep it consistent.
Keep it fresh.

Messy can be good. We want to keep that.

Working in strategic and creative services, one of the biggest problems is mapping out the best way to consistently produce different work while getting the best out of a team in the grips of the messy part of the creative process.

Each project elicits questions that broadly fit into four main categories.

Questions like

| Where are we? | Who am I? |
|---|---|
| Where are we in the project? Where do we need to go next? | Who are we in this project? Who do we need to be? |
| What are we doing? | How are we gonna do it? |
| What are we doing right now? What will we need to do next? | How are we going to get there? What's our final goal? What steps do we need to take? |

2 Someone must have figured this out already

People have discovered some great ways to work. Trying a few, we pooled them into categories that helped us frame an approach:

Systematic Approach

Using Agile, Scrum and other project management methods, we tried systems that were intended to free us from the pain of working together.

Ethnographic Approach

We talked to each other, going into depth about how we do certain tasks and why we do them that way, what worked for us and what didn't.

Poetic Approach

We tried to move away from the systems to look for the stuff we were doing that we weren't even noticing.

None of these alone worked for us.

Enter Service Design methods to help make sense of how we work

3 Interviews

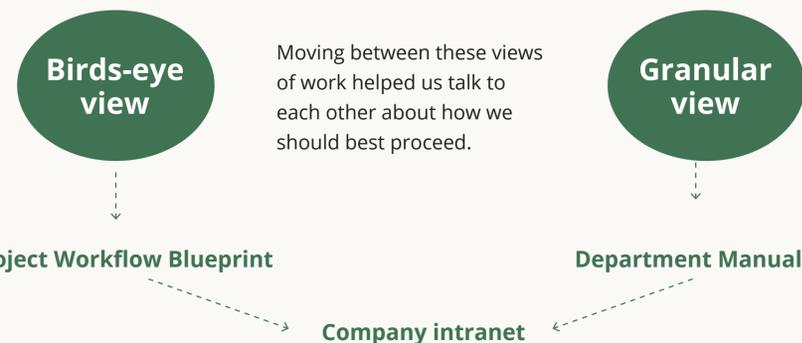
We interviewed everyone about what they do all day and how they feel about it:



Everyone had a lot to say

Mapping

Mapping our common methods in projects proved fruitful, allowing us to build approaches to making tools that would help us switch between two ways of working on projects.



Moving between these views of work helped us talk to each other about how we should best proceed.

5 Results

Working with service design methods didn't lead us to a perfect way to work, but it did give us some much needed tools that had positive effects.

A Bigger Language

Most of the problems we had in projects were more easily tackled once we named them. It isn't perfect, but now we know what to call it when that one thing happens.

A Frame of Reference

Creative work isn't prescriptive, and messy is good in a creative process. But having the most common structure for our work mapped out meant that we could know when we'd need to deviate.

The Act of Making

All of the methods for creative work and project management we tried were great, but nothing beat the conversations and act of making our own methods of working together.