



DTRAIN e-newsletter

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During the last months, DTRaIN partners entered the deep waters of Design Thinking, mining information and developing an informative literature package in Design Thinking that will be used in a later phase in formulating an ad hoc practical training material.

Before the start of the Design Thinking main process, the team is creating a brief document ‘**the Design Brief**’ clarifying the target user to serve, a broad statement of the problem to solve, its scope, and the questions that need to be answered to refine the understanding of the problem.

Seven thematic topics (modules) were selected to be developed, one by each DTRaIN partner. Each topic has been divided into three-four units so that 21 – 25 units have been developed in total. Each partner after desktop research presented one topic, that consisted of the basis of the Literature Review in Design Thinking. ECTE distilled all the topics presented into one document containing the whole literature in Design Thinking directly related to Learning Units and competencies a trainee should have for implementing tasks needed during the Design Thinking process.



Design Thinking: Moving from the Pre-steps to the Observation Stage

- * *What are the final users'/customers' wants and needs?*
- * *What are their expectations in relation to the product/solution/process that the DT is designing?*
- * *What challenges and pain-points do they face within this context?*

These are the questions arised in relation to the Literature Review on Design Thinking (DT), CIHEAM-MAICh was assigned to use references (articles, books, video links, etc.) to briefly present key points on the *Observation phase of Design Thinking*.

The design thinking team aims to gather all points of knowledge in order to truly understand who the end-users really are, and what their needs and expectations (empathize) are.

Setting up a methodology to “OBSERVE” the user

Having stated the research scope, it is really important to set up a research methodology to gather and interpret accurate data to conduct/set up the research to collect and analyse reliable data/information in order to fulfill our objective.

Quantitative research provides numerical data on a voluminous sample, but there is no depth, which prevents the creation of complex patterns of behaviour. Design Thinking requires an in-depth analysis of user behaviour. **Qualitative analysis** fits the form of research, considering that it is focused on face-to-face, field and in-depth research, where the user's needs, concerns and problems are identified.

Both approaches have strengths and weaknesses so they should be combined for a better outcome.

Business ethnographic research is one of the research approaches that has become very popular in DT as it provides in depth analysis of user behaviour. This research approach includes observing consumer habits and target markets using a range of techniques, in order to discover the true needs of the market and the general disposition of the product or service. It is an extremely beneficial research tool that can help an organization identify its customers' needs and satisfy market demands.

Ethnography is by its nature a time-consuming activity and requires a deep understanding of the domain, audience(s), procedures, priorities, goals and context(s) of the design problem and a highly qualified ethnographic researcher.

Platforms for Defining

To define what problem you intend to solve and how, it is useful to create personas and define roles so you can attach needs and problems to different set of users with tools like *Smapply* or *Userforge*.

Tools for Ideation

In order to find the right solutions based on the problem statement, it will be useful to create as many possible solutions as you can with the help of brainstorming and other ideation techniques. An open library with useful tools like *SesssuionLab* or an online whiteboard like *Miro* have much to offer at this phase.

Prototyping apps

Having framed the problem, generated tons of ideas and decided on the most feasible ones—your potential solutions, at this stage of the Design Thinking process you will want to build prototypes for them to identify which prototype works best as a solution to the problem. Boords and POP are really handy during this phase.

Testing Platforms

To carry out a full-scale testing and validate your complete product or service you have resulted to during the previous stages, a feedback from users would be useful. There are several online tools and testing platforms that you could use for this purpose like *UserTesting* and *HotJar*.

There are also some digital tools that could assist you during the whole process of Design Thinking. Project Management tools like *Basecamp* or Visual/Creative collaboration tools like *Mural*, will help you have an overall monitoring of your project, communicate with your team and keep everything organized.

Digital Tools for Design Thinking

Implementing Design Thinking can be a bit complex as there is a lot of exchange of ideas, planning, brainstorming and revision needed that you can easily get lost during the whole process. Thankfully, there are many digital tools and applications for all stages of the Design Thinking.

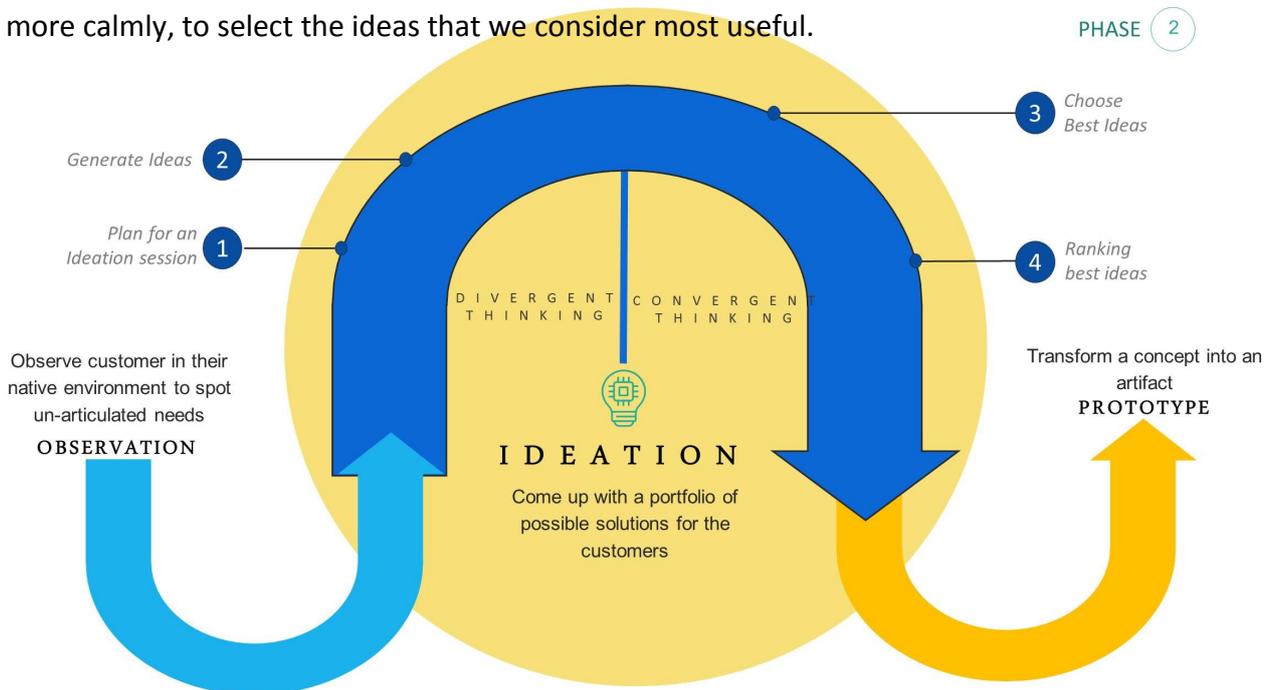


Tools to support Empathizing

To empathize with your users by collecting as much information about them as you can, there are tools like *Zoom* or *Typeform* that can help you collect useful information by directly communicating with your potential users/customers.

THE IDEATION PHASE

In the *Ideation* phase it is important to propose as many solutions as possible, no matter if trivial, imaginative or eccentric. We must think that even a bizarre idea can dare interesting suggestions to find innovative, ingenious solutions. At this stage, therefore, quantity is better than quality. We will think later, more calmly, to select the ideas that we consider most useful.



How to create new solutions with teamwork

The *Ideation* phase follows the *Observation* phase. The latter is a very practical phase, it is useful to focus attention on the problems or factors that we wish to improve in our company. The *Ideation* phase starts from these results. What is the *Ideation*? It is the phase in which we generate potential solutions to solve problems or challenges, that we have previously identified, to improve our business. In this phase we must open our horizons to find innovative and effective ideas, it is therefore a “divergent” phase. We must use our imagination to move away from the norm. What we are looking for with the *Ideation* phase are original, imaginative and innovative solutions, that will allow us to achieve better results and be more competitive in the market.

Brainstorming, in a nutshell, takes place in this way: a group of people gathers and begins to propose all the ideas that cross their minds about a topic, a problem (in our case, the issues we found in the *Observation* phase). Ideas are noted and then discussed. At this stage, all proposals have the same dignity and each idea is valid and worthy of being noted. It can be done both orally and in writing.

The **Art Gallery** is a lesser known method of brainstorming but just as effective. It is based on the visual representation of the points for the improvement of our company. These are posted on billboards on the walls of a room, as if they were works in an art gallery. Some guests are then invited (company staff as well as customers and industry experts) and we ask them to give advices on how to improve the points posted on the walls. Recommendations will be written on post-its and then organized into categories.