

# Co-design: More than sticky notes & goodwill

By Mel Edwards and Justin Barrie, Design Managers Australia (DMA)

**D**MA is a Canberra-based service design agency working with private, public, community and volunteer organisations.

The following piece, based on a recent presentation to the ACT Youth Affairs Conference 2013, is intended to demystify the 'buzzword'.

## What is co-design?

Co-design is the process of deliberately engaging users of the system, including both those who receive and deliver services, being led by process experts (such as Designers), to actively understand, explore and ultimately change a system together.

Co-Design is effectively collaboration through a design process. It sits within a continuum of engagement:

- **Communicate:** Informing the public and deliverers of service about what is going to happen
- **Consult:** Engaging with multiple people to indirectly influence outcomes
- **Coordinate:** The bringing together of different and multiple working elements for consolidation towards a shared outcome
- **Collaboration through Co-Design:** Multiple people working together in a mutually beneficial and well-defined relationship to achieve a common goal

What is key about co-design is that it is about designing with people; the right people.

## Co-design principles

- It's about moving from a current state to a better state
- It's a conscious process to ultimately make something to effect change
- It's about building up ideas through synthesis and analysis
- It's collaborative and inter-disciplinary
- Has techniques that are intended to engage and humanise the problem-solving activity.

## Key co-design tools & techniques

Co-design is a rich process, but we want to highlight two techniques and two artefacts that anyone involved should either be involved in the creation of, receive, or have access to.

### Technique: Research

Design research utilises a variety of techniques—such as interviews, indirect observation, background research—to explore directly with users their experience for the purpose of understanding what people think

(motivations, perceptions, expectations), do (activities, interactions, relationships), use (products, services, messages). The result is a deep understanding from a human perspective of what it is like to interact within a service, policy, process or social/service system.

### Technique: Prototyping

Prototyping is about visually and tangibly putting together a working model of a concept in order to quickly test out various aspects of a design, illustrate ideas or features, and gather early feedback. This includes simple sketches and visual representations of working models all the way to mocked-up service components such as websites, apps, or physical environments.

### Artefact: Customer experience map

A map is the representation of the service journey of a customer. It shows their perspective from the beginning, middle and end as they engage a service to achieve their goal, showing the range of tangible and quantitative interactions, triggers and touch points, as well as the intangible and qualitative motivations, frustrations and meanings.

### Artefact: User typologies

Typologies are evidence-based descriptions (not fictional personas) of the expectations, behaviours and motivations of types of people who will be using a service:

- Who they are (in relation to the service)
- How they operate (within the system)
- What they expect
- What frustrates them.

The techniques and artefacts of a co-design process can be used by teams involved to:

- Understand the experiences of users
- Communicate to others experiences, barriers and opportunities
- Assess impacts and risks of change and make evidence-based decisions
- Understand the 'end-to-end' big picture.

We hope that this guide offers some assistance in understanding both what you can expect in a co-design process and what may be expected of you.



[www.designmanagers.com.au](http://www.designmanagers.com.au)