SERVICE DESIGN PRINCIPLES FOR WORKING WITH THE PUBLIC SECTOR

A COLLABORATIVE THINK PIECE

SNOOK™
transforming people

DMA
Connecting Strategies, Services & People

WHO ARE WE?

SNOOK™
transforming people

DMA
Connecting Strategies, Services & People

Snook are a Service Design and Social Innovation agency based in Glasgow, Scotland. Snook focus on designing services and products that work for people and supporting the implementation of design led activity inside organisations to create cultures of innovation and a capacity to design great services in-house.

In the past four years Snook have worked with an array of clients including the Scottish Government, Stirling, Glasgow and Edinburgh Councils and the NHS, developing a core understanding and experience of how to support design led activity in the public sector.

http://wearesnook.com/

Design Managers Australia (DMA) is a leader in public sector service design based in Canberra, Australia. Over the past decade DMA has made a difference to peoples' lives by working with the public sector to design services that may or may not even be noticed – for all the right reasons. DMA focuses on shifting thinking at a strategic level while designing services that focus on customers, users, stakeholders and the service deliverers themselves.

Both Principals at DMA are former public servants in the taxation and social policy fields. Their understanding in the sector is applied through their service design approach across fields as diverse as health, human services, sports, superannuation, taxation, science, water management, border protection, federal and local government.

http://designmanagers.com.au/

A CROSS CONTINENT COLLABORATION ON EMBEDDING DESIGN IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

THIS IS A THINK PIECE PRODUCED BY DESIGN MANAGERS AUSTRALIA AND SNOOK (SCOTLAND)

Both companies have worked extensively with the public sector in a variety of formats across the globe. This is a collaborative piece that depicts a synopsis of the environment from working on both the inside and outside of the public sector as consultants, public servants and product/service owners.

This piece highlights environmental-related issues, opportunities and current barriers that face embedding service design practice in the public sector.

It culminates in a series of design principles and actions that we would like to see adopted and recognised at a strategic level in government, leading towards improved circumstances for the design process, allowing designers to flourish and add value to the development of public services.

It is important to note this is not an academic work but is based on both companies' experience of practicing and building design capability with the public sector from the inside, exterior and on the edge of the organisation. This paper is supported by academic research and design theory.

"[Practitioners] frame the problem of the situation, they determine the features to which they will attend, the order they will attempt to impose on the situation, the directions in which they will try to change it. In this process, they identify both the ends to be sought and the means to be employed."

- Schön, 1983

HOW WE USE SERVICE DESIGN IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

INNOVATING BY USING A DESIGN BASED APPROACH

Both companies adopt and utilise a design-based approach to innovation and change in the public sector.

As service designers we work within the definition that we apply the conscious and creative process of crafting meaningful connections - be they tangible touchpoints and interactions, or more intangible experiences - between user, business/provider/government goals and outcomes of a positive nature. This relates to more efficient and effective service operations and ensuring value is provided to the end user.

For DMA, the value of design is within the context of working equally with both customers/end-users, stakeholders and with other disciplines such as policy development, business analysis, enterprise architecture, project management and human resources.

For Snook, the value of design is the core visual methods and modes of thinking, focusing on both operational capacity and service users at the same time. The mindset of these visual methods allow for democratic, iterative decisions to be made along any development process to ensure empathy is retained within public services for the final designed experience or affordance of a created artefact, i.e. policy.

A point of difference from other change disciplines is that design brings a creative way of thinking and methods to solve problems at a systemic level, with its primary difference being that it literally connects the outside-in – real customers, users outside of an organisation – with the inside-out (internal users, managers, processes, systems, and policies).

Design additionally provides a visual vantage point for many of the complex networks and operations to be reconfigured to make sense for the organisation or body delivering a product and the end user consuming this offer.

Design practice connects policy and strategy to implementation and sustainable delivery. Importantly, it connects policy advisors, managers and decision makers with developers, team leaders, customer representatives and users with customers, clients and citizens.

One of the key elements to the design process is that the designer facilitates it. They lead different disciplines, different mind-sets, different experiences and have the skills and techniques to bring together those to encourage divergence or convergence in order to solve or explore a problem.

DOUBLE DIAMOND APPROACH

The simplest way to articulate the convergent and divergent phases of the Design Process is the 'Double Diamond Process'[1] which is utilised by many design firms, in different guises, to explain this creative process.

Design is a process that creates ideas and delivers new products and services across different phases of a development process. It helps businesses shape their ideas so that they deliver practical, attractive and useful propositions that people want to buy and use.

In recent years, the methods and process have been explicitly adapted to the development of government policy and a recognition that the methods and mindset can provide benefit to the strategy and policy departments within the public sector.

At its heart, design is the process of translating ideas into reality. Whether it is being used to develop a new service, graphic marketing material or an innovative product, a number of key attributes underpin every design-led project.

The Double Diamond model illustrates how designers work through four key stages. First, they open up space for lots of different ideas to be discovered and shared. Then by focusing on user-needs they help identify and define priority areas to be addressed. Next, a designer will develop multiple prototype solutions based on the opportunity areas identified. Finally, they will focus on distinct objectives and manufacturing or other constraints to deliver a final solution.

Moving out with the development of new products and services, the process allows groups of people, who do not often work together to frame problems and deliver solutions and strategies to move forward in consideration of multiple viewpoints and to craft opinion and insight into tangible ideas.

The process of design applied to policy, government and public sector is where we see potential at multiple levels within the policy cycle.
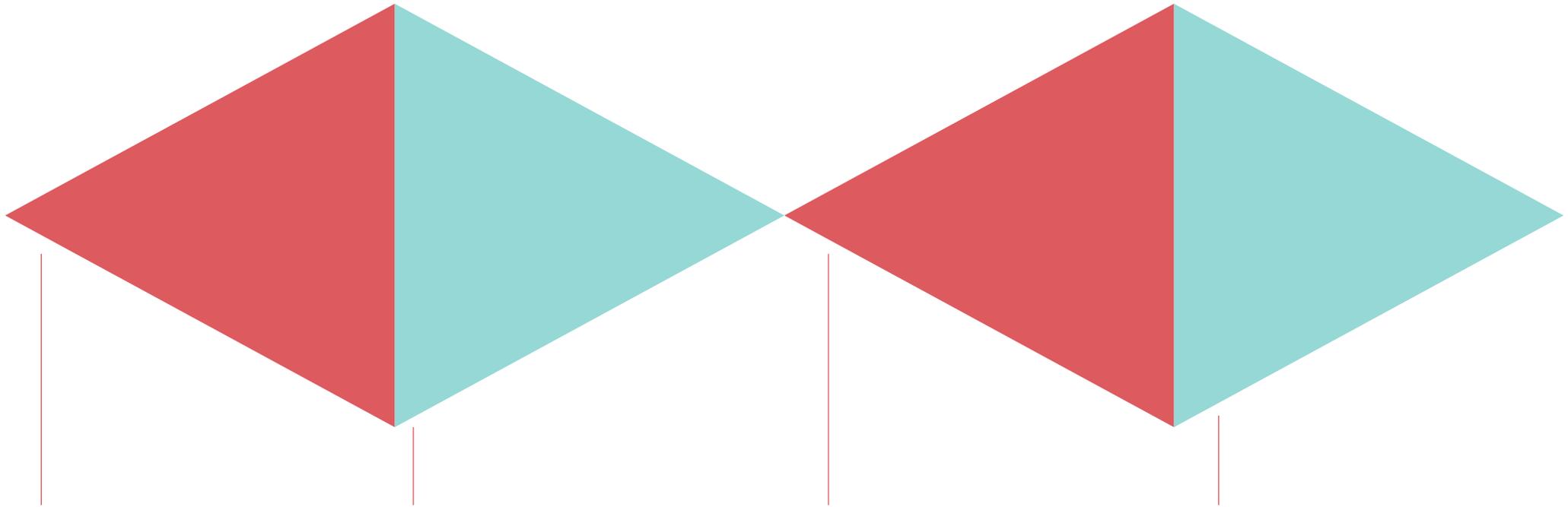
DISCOVER

The first quarter of the double diamond model marks the start of the project, all about discovering and exploring. This begins with an initial idea or inspiration, often focused on discovering and understanding needs of customers. Designers spend time with the end-users of the products and services they create and involve them in the process of designing and making. They do this to understand what it is people actually need and want, rather than making assumptions. Through this process, the design team often uncover latent as well as known needs. This ensures what is created is useful, usable and desirable.

DEFINE

The second quarter of the model represents the definition stage, in which interpretation and alignment of these needs to business objectives are achieved. The next stage of the design process acts as a filter where the review, selection and discarding of ideas takes place and where findings from the Discover stage are analysed, defined and refined as problems.

Design focuses on creating the best possible responses to real human needs so it is intrinsically a very collaborative process. The design team will collaborate with a range of people – from users and frontline staff to investors and experts – and bring together a multi- disciplinary team to identify and tackle all of the issues involved.

DEVELOP

The third quarter marks a period of development where design-led solutions are developed, iterated and tested within a business.

During the Develop stage the design team, key partners (such as engineers, developers, programmers, and marketing teams) and internal teams will refine one or more concepts that will address the problems or issues identified during the Discover and Define stages. Design development methods used here include creative techniques and methods such as brainstorming, visualisation, prototyping and testing. Through visualisation, designers synthesise often complex ideas which helps communication and understanding with users and other stakeholders.

DELIVER

The final quarter represents the delivery stage, where the resulting product or service is finalised and prepared for launch in the relevant market. Ongoing cost pressures and the expectation of high returns are forcing airports to sharpen their focus on the bottom line. Simply understanding the cost and potential for savings and revenue will help the service design case radically. The Deliver phase will focus on implementing plans that include a business model canvas enabling us to describe, challenge, invent and pivot new and existing business models. The Deliver stage of the double diamond design process is where the final concept is taken through final testing, signed-off, produced and launched.

BASIC PRINCIPLES OF A DESIGN BASED APPROACH

Over the past few years there has been a vast variety of publications released specifically about design and its relationship with the public sector and government.

There has been a call for radical and new ideas to support the cuts and changing demographics that make up society in recent years. Design, sometimes known as service, social or interaction design has presented itself as an initiator to innovation and driver of creativity to solve some of the most pressing problems facing society today.

What has become apparent in emergent case studies is that the design process and emergent skills of a new wave of 'service' or 'social' designers has paved the way for new forms of collaboration, particularly with social sciences.

We believe the core principles of Service Design to be user-centric development, visualisation, prototyping and experimentation, each questioning what you know.

This has to be built in with the fact that Service Design is mostly a relationship and system-thinking business that facilitates the exchange of knowledge between multiple disciplines and stakeholders.

User-centric development

"Putting people at the heart of what we do" is a phrase that is overused, being featured in many corporate strategies and political policies today. The design process considers users' end needs, and with its close ties to ethnographic methods, it digs deep on sometimes latent needs that a focus group may not traditionally pick up on. This principle of design is about getting up from behind the desk and interacting with the people you are making decisions for to ensure what you are creating is usable, fits the needs of the groups you are designing for and is functional and/or desirable.
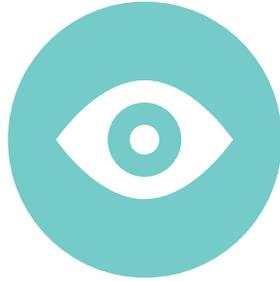
Visualisation

Design in itself is a visual methodology. Using visual methods to communicate ideas can often bring opposing groups together or bring clarity to ideas, allowing communities of people to build upon the previous idea. We have seen the effect a quick sketch can have on a group who have been debating an idea for more than 12 months to unite a vision on a concept. Similarly, for government departments, using visual techniques to highlight the connection between decision making and the products and services we use everyday has had a profound effect on how some bodies operate.

Prototyping and experimentation

Design initiates new ideas and allows us to test new processes, services and products, with the people who will use them, prior to cost and implementation. Designers can take the seed of an idea and test it with potential customers before any decisions for implementation or scaling are made. This allows safe experimentation and removes the barriers of experimentation, where failure can often be seen as a negative.

Questioning what you don't know

A design-based approach requires a sometimes purposeful naivety to ask questions about why a situation is the way it is. This can sometimes uncover opportunities in a scenario that previously everyone had accepted regardless and without challenge. It also allows for fair representation of a system to be depicted and visualised, allowing for further investigation into how relationships and value are delivered across complex scenarios.
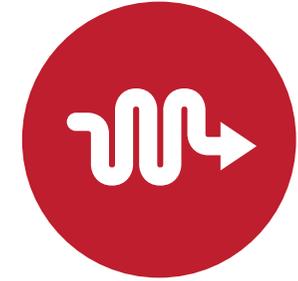
Talking in journeys

The customer journey of citizens within the public sector is complex. Our lives are made up of multiple public and private service interactions across many channels. Design, namely service design has developed its practice to consider multiple user journeys, where a service sits within the eco-system of complimentary and competitive stakeholders and how many interactions occur across a multitude of channels. Service Design considers all of this to bring together a utility that works seamlessly for customers and fits within the eco-system.

EMBEDDING IS ABOUT A RANGE OF ACTIVITIES, NOT JUST A BUSINESS MODEL

In the service design community there is an important conversation about Embedding Design. Though this can lead to quite different design business models, even DMA and Snook have very different approaches to embedding designers and design capability with clients. At a principle level the outcomes sought are the same – sustainable and meaningful change for the community.

To ensure the conversation about embedding does not become only about service design agency (and public sector organisation) business models, we take the time to define embedding at a broader level.

For the outcome of building a sustainable, meaningful and supported design culture in the public sector that results in improved outcomes for the community embedding can mean a range of things:

We work to embed a lasting and meaningful **capability and skill set** within the public sector organisations we collaborate with:

- By placing our designers with clients for the life of the project and beyond.
- By introducing and giving skills to public sector staff through deliberate methodologies, frameworks and approaches.

We work to embed space for **design thinking** within the public sector organisations we collaborate with:

- By allowing people to shift from thinking about complicated business problems, to complex design problems.
- By engaging the leadership of the organisation through design outcomes, not just the design approach.

We work to embed a **lasting environment** for design within the public sector organisations we collaborate with:

- By ensuring we leave our clients with design language and artefacts that align to their business approach.
- By showing that user-focus, iteration and prototyping are meaningful and appropriate skills for delivering public sector results.

PUBLIC SECTOR DESIGN IN ACTION | SNOOK CASE STUDY

A STORY OF USING VISUAL METHODS TO ALIGN VISION

"It's the early stage of prototyping that is valuable, simple methods like sketching an idea. Words are notoriously bad at getting everybody around an idea, if you start to draw a picture people question the elements."

- Joel Bailey, CAPITA, interview (2010)

Working with a leading education public sector body, Snook developed a digital strategy and service design for a new web resource connecting to on the ground services.

The service development had been in discussion for over 12 months having had a lack of alignment between stakeholders on what the key functions were, how data should be represented on the site and how to include content from 3rd party providers.

Snook were brought in to support the development of the service and bring clarity and alignment on how it should function and the strategy for developing the service over the following five years.

Snook facilitated a workshop using visual methods and user-centric thinking to bring to life the discussion and how the web resource should function to meet the needs of stakeholders, service users and providers.

The goal was to allow representatives from government and supporting third sector organisations to come together, focus on the people who would use the new digital resource in question and walk through journeys of what they needed to achieve at each stage of a new web resource.

The visual methods provided clarity for all stakeholders around the table who had previously disagreed when discussing the digital resource. Utilising user profiles allowed the groups to ensure empathy was maintained at the heart of the development of the digital resource. The final deliverable was packaged up into a series of visual user journeys and digital strategy to break down how the digital resource could be developed over time. The combination of user-centric storytelling to explain a complex concept and visualisation has supported stakeholders in the aligning of a vision, moving forward with its development in 2014.

MODES OF WORKING WITHIN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

A SERIES OF LEARNINGS FROM MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES

We know that design is not a panacea though it has the potential to bring services into the 21st century, improve efficiency, support the development and realisation of policy through future scenarios to tackle some of the major issues facing us in the future; including obesity, diabetes, ageing population, increasingly marginalised groups, and the environment. So if this is the case then why has design not become part of the mainstream of government and public sector development cycles and organisations?

Working within government is about working within limitations and Service Design is competing against well-established disciplines. It is still often branded "new" or "flavour of the month" – we heard it in 2004, and are still hearing it 10 years later. So how do you deal with this in terms of practice, translation, navigation and delivery?

The stage in which design is being commissioned and embedded into government is often at the later development stage after an idea has been conceived. There have been shifts towards design being commissioned at the earlier research and development stage and many academics and public commentators have highlighted the use of design skill sets in this phase. However this has still not reached a tipping point as a staple skill set to this process and therefore design being used in a perpetual beta format for agile development of services and products is failing to be achieved.

It is a long process and as we use the term 'public sector,' this spreads across a vast variety of departments and agencies and from local to big government.

As the public sector has increasingly driven a deliberate strategy of outsourcing operations to intermediaries and the public over the past 15 years, from a customer perspective much of what is required of the "customer" must not only be done by the customer, but it is a form of obeying the law.

In terms of embedding design, skill sets are still largely commissioned by the public sector from the private sector meaning that service design is seen as a separated specialism from both sides and this can make it difficult for a lasting environment to be created and design embedded.

UK AND AUSTRALIA - WHAT'S DIFFERENT?

While our two agency' experiences are similar and views about the principles required to support design in the public sector are the same, there are some key differences in this international Thinkpiece which should be noted.

In terms of the layers of Government

- Australia's three levels of government (Federal, State and Local) leads to a different dynamic in terms of the overall intent of service systems than in the UK with just two dominant levels (National and Council) after the diminishment of Regional Representation to consultative.
- Though Australia appears to have more layers (often of differing political persuasion) there is a definite structure of Policy (Federal), Service (State) and Delivery (Local).
- The UK has only two actual layers, yet has complexity at the variation of services and citizen offerings between individual Council areas.
- A large part of public services in both countries are made up of 3rd sector and charity initiatives that are funded through a variety of models from grants to government contracts. These organisations must be considered and the funding model in which they design and develop their service offerings is included in our thinking within this Thinkpiece.

In terms of funding of design work

- A significant amount of design work in the UK is driven from the heart of service delivery in Council areas. This seems to enable partnerships and ventures that are linked closely to the experience of service design and delivery on the ground.
- By far the bulk of funding for design in Australia emanates from the Federal sphere meaning there is a tendency to design large programs, often in absence from the service recipients and deliverers responsible at a local level. Policy intent, rather than service outcomes can be the driver for design in Australia.

In terms of design history

- The public sector design history in Australia is driven largely from the work within a small number of key regulatory/compliance agencies in the past 15 years. Because of this deep historical connection of design to compliance outcomes, the approach to design is often at a behavioural/systemic level – seeking to achieve outcomes such as retaining revenue or supporting the social contract based on mutual obligation.
- The UK design experience comes from a lens of solution design for complex problems presented at the service recipient (community) level. Leading to more focus on social innovation and participation for a specific product/program solution outcome.

The differences of course highlight the need and desire for a principled approach to design by Snook and DMA in the public sector. At an outcome level, design work in both countries is seeking the same quality outcomes for citizens. The different approaches offer an insight into focus and the power of design to match the specific conditions in which it is implemented.

MODES OF ENGAGEMENT

Service Design (and the wider application of this approach) for government and the public sector, from our experience, has been boxed into tangible spaces and methods of commissioning to make it easier for design to be procured. The following table is a brief overview of some of these contexts where we have been commissioned to undertake a form of Service Design. These include, but are not limited to:

Direct commission to improve innovation and creativity capacity in house

How do they work:
Sometimes described as Embedding Design, this can take several forms but ultimately is about a longer relationship with an organisation to work within on training and creating the framework and space for design to be implemented into development processes across all levels.

Opportunity:
A long term vision to invest in design as a skill set and framework for creativity and innovation in-house allows the space to let Service Design flourish in. Bringing the approach in-house can improve processes for developing products/services and empower staff to co-create the outputs of their efforts.

Barriers:
This approach needs senior level buy-in, though often this can be lost over time or handed to a member of staff with less power. Organisations are complex and often in large companies it is difficult to see results in the short term and navigate political environments. In addition to this, much of these initiatives are less about Service Design and require a diverse skill set for implementation.

Design competitions with public/private sector funding that put investment into a team

How do they work:
Championed by organisaton to invest in design, launch a problem or competition brief and 'teams' respond to call out with an often early stage idea. Teams are then funded, if successful, to develop concept.

Opportunity:
Budget available to invest in prototyping a semi-formed solution that has not had the opportunity to be tested in a real environment. Often competition consortia of judges/mentors can be useful to provide connections into public sector and government. Competitions can build the start of new social business that would never have had the chance to get off the ground.

Barriers:
When the solution is formed, difficulties arise to integrate into public sector infrastructure. Often seed funding can be a small amount and run out before product/service is at a point of monetary value. Funding cycles can take over focus on the build and development of concepts leaving an uncertain future post-competition.

Government Design Lab

How do they work:
There are many different examples of Government 'Design' tanks. They operate as think tanks but often adopt design methodologies to develop policy on new product/service concepts. They often employ civil or public servants and designers.

Opportunity:
An 'in-house' approach allows for a closer connection to policy and political cycles and needs. This means increased likelihood of implementation and the follow through within the system. Knowledge of how the system operates and how to navigate barriers from staff is invaluable to realise design efforts.

Barriers:
Longevity of the 'Design tank' can be put into turmoil if political cycles change or funding is cut. Additionally, politics can play a part in removing focus from user needs as staff working on the project may have to curtail to political or organisational ideals.

Early stage Research and Development Projects

How do they work:
Typically commissioned by a public sector client to tackle an issue, i.e. the ageing population, obesity, education in the 21st century, over a timed period.

Opportunity:
Opportunity to reframe the issue and produce alternative solutions to the current service provision. Final outputs can produce insightful research for making a case to take forward user-centric ideas, big and small. It is a perfect introduction for creating a project initiation document that aligns business and user needs.

Barriers:
Often ideas require more policy and governance development than touchpoint development alone. Low uptake on concepts if developed by outside consultants and co-creation/knowledge sharing with client organisation in a complex environment requires time. Typically low budget and difficult to create circumstances for open investigation.

Direct commission to run a design camp/jam

How do they work:
A design camp/hack/jam is normally run over 48 hours, typically at the weekend focused on a specific theme and is used to develop ideas at speed and often produce early stage prototypes.

Opportunity:
Access to a diverse range of skills and talent to produce seed ideas. Build ideas and prototypes at speed without the daily activities getting in the way. Allows for potential future options to be visualised and shared, providing shared meaning and consensus on an idea. Makes the space for creative thinking for employees to freely think differently about an issue.

Barriers:
The uptake of ideas out of these events is low and similar to early stage R+D commissions. The idea can often require more background work to implement. Similarly some of the ideas are already in existence or have not been thoroughly researched.

Project to 'redesign' a service or product

How do they work:
These are often different from one project to the next. However typically a client will want to improve a product/service, increase their customer reach or segment and improve efficiency of the service they run.

Opportunity:
The process of using Service Design to re-design or improve an existing offering can highlight unknown issues or opportunities for an organisation, adding value to their existing offering when aligned with business objectives. Ultimately, it can improve customer satisfaction and this can be evaluated to provide evidence of impact.

Barriers:
Often the implementation of the service cannot be taken forward or in the capacity it was designed in. As outside consultants, the follow through and understanding and knowledge built on the project can often be lost. If Service Design is used on the inside, it is often difficult to bring together the right levels of the system and network to collaborate on the approach, meaning Service Design inside an organisation often becomes marginalised and part of one phase of the development process.

"**"The goal of service design is to enable organisations to see themselves from a customer's point of view, and design themselves in response to that. Being on the inside of an organisation gives you a greater chance of changing things; of 'embedding' the changes so they still happen when you're not there.""**

Emily Campbell, Interview 2010

MODES OF DELIVERY

Commentators and academics (Martin, Neumeier) have written largely about the cultural barriers between design and business and the different styles of 'shop' that each operates in. These separate cultural conditions and mind sets of both 'design' and 'business' have limited a traction in the design approach being adopted in-house of governments and the public sector widely.

From our experience, and having worked within all three domains, on the edge and outside as practitioners, we have identified a series of modes in which we work and what we have learned on the following pages.

METHODS OF OPERATING A DESIGN-BASED APPROACH

It is possible to look at methods of Service Design as three main models of intervention. These can be described as:

Inside   **- Embedding Design**
Inside/Outside   **- Consulting or Skill-building**
Outside   **- Ventures**

Each model has its own benefits and difficulties. Using all three in combination makes for a balanced use and effectiveness of Service Design and traction in approach.
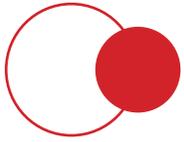
Inside/Outside
Consulting or Skill building

This is one of the most common capacities in which Service Design has been procured. Consulting can be commissioned on varying scales, from short one off projects to longer term retainers. In an effort to achieve skills transferral, many companies use a co-creative approach to include the client and stakeholders at as many stages of the project as possible.

This approach has many benefits as being an 'outsider' to the core organisation or system. This includes having oversight and an ability to remain objective with license to champion user needs over company or party politics. Commissioning experienced Service Designers (and relating disciplines) will bring added quality of approach and experience from other sectors. The added value of commissioning an organisation who can conduct the research, in-depth design and part-implementation can result in a high quality output with knowledge continued throughout the project.

Most of the difficulties relate to the issue of sustainability and design interventions, particularly the more traditional consultancy model which often fails with long term implementation. Energy can be lost for the project and the transferral of knowledge can often deteriorate over time, particularly when a project finishes. Principally, commissions are fairly short term, as is the agenda, therefore the designers do not often see the product of their work implemented. Finally, with a design intervention of this nature, it does not create the capacity for the organisation to continue to design from the inside out and respond to user data on how the service is used.

Inside
Embedding Design

The embedding design approach is still relatively new in its infancy. This approach can include creating departments and directorates with functions to interpret policy into design. It can also include bringing design capacity in-house by hiring designers on a full time role.

In addition to this, the concept of a skunk works or design lab being formed by outsiders and separated from the main operations of business can also be considered as embedding design within this context.

This inside approach tends to have a longer term perspective and can empower staff across the organisation if led well. Embedding design makes the approach part of the everyday culture, allowing for continued knowledge about products and services to be carried through development cycles, forming longer term agendas for development. Additionally, the overall resource cost is lower than hiring outsiders.

However, there is a mindset gap in terms of the design based approach that does not fully align with business modes of thinking (Neumeier). Collaboration across silos, in-house departments and wider stakeholders are often competitive between different bodies and funding opportunities reduces potential to collaborate across silos which Service Design often uncovers. In addition to this, in-house Service Designers have voiced frustration with longer time frameworks and political barriers hindering the development and implementation of their work, and in some cases a skills gap to operate at these different levels.

Outside
Ventures

Ventures and outside developments of services for social good often align with the goals and objectives of government and public services. These are companies outside of the public sector who are developing their own products.

There is a clear benefit to this approach. Outside development creates a freedom to imagine and develop concepts that can often be deemed risky by the public sector or governments. An open brief without boundaries allows for fast-paced development often using an agile approach. This pace can provide satisfaction for teams working on products.

However, the reality of scaling these ideas and integrating them with existing systems, particularly within digital software can be difficult. In addition to this, outside developments can often be too far ahead of the market for purchase and therefore unsustainable in the long term.

A clear benefit to the public sector regarding these types of projects is the ability to realise future potential and even if not sustainable as separate entities, they can educate a sector on future possibilities.

WHAT WE'VE LEARNED: BARRIERS TO A DESIGN LED APPROACH IN GOVERNMENT AND THE PUBLIC SECTOR

PROCUREMENT CAN STIFLE INNOVATION

Typically in today's procurement landscape, although there are shifts taking place, procurement calls exist largely to deliver final outcomes that have been predefined by a public body. This often means calls are weighted on cost and the process to tender can often leave designers without a full understanding of what is required for an outcome.

Consequently, after a successful piece of work, delivering a solution for handover without building in the capacity to continue to improve and learn from user behaviour and data on an ongoing basis removes the idea of perpetual beta and the ability to continuously improve from the organisations' perspective.

Finally, there is still a large focus on the 'solution' in procurement when fundamental shifts are needed in organisational change and in the case of digital development, platform standards needing introduced and business processes developed to continue to iterate on a developed and implemented service proposition.

Procurement currently focuses heavily on developing pre-defined solutions for handover
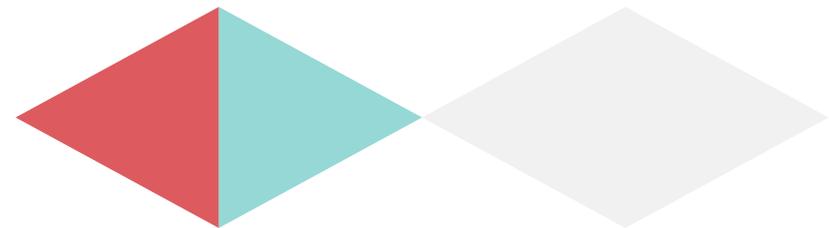
Service Design can add benefit by being procured early to identify clear briefs for future development

PUBLIC SECTOR DESIGN IN ACTION | DMA CASE STUDY

A STORY OF USING VISUAL METHODS TO ALIGN VISION

"By letting go of our view of ourselves as service deliverers in our own governmental constructs, to visually representing our integrated service offering as one government from a user perspective, we enable the beginning of a true cultural change."

David Colussi, ACT Government, 2014

The Government of the Australian Capital Territory has committed to developing a comprehensive strategy that improves access to all government services – Service ACT. The strategy will articulate how over multiple Directorates and 20,000 public servants, services will be delivered with a consistent customer experience, whilst creating tangible benefits not only for citizens but for Government in terms of reduced duplication within.

As part of the project, DMA worked with the Service ACT team to visualise the entire ACT Government Service System from a user perspective. This included:

- Research and analysis into the current ACT Government service offering and environment to ensure the reality of what is expected of Directorates at an operational and planning level is understood in the context of the strategic intent to improve access to government services.
- Articulation and visualisation of the ACT Service System model to enable Directorates to see their place within the "joined-up, one Government" environment, and use this understanding to consider their ongoing business and service planning.

The outcome of the ambitious work was a series of collaborative workshops and conversations amongst Directorates, many of whom had not collaborated previously, to understand through the visualisation, what an integrated service offer could look like and what opportunities emerge around delivering a consistent, whole of government approach to service delivery. The final Service System visualisation is now a key tool in ongoing discussions about services to the highest level of Government.

GOVERNMENT CAN LACK THE ABILITY TO BE AGILE

This is due to many entrenched factors including:

// Political Cycles
// Funding Cycles
// Organisation Size

Trying to fix the current system is a complex and long term job involving a variety of new models and processes.

We have outlined a few of the main barriers to utilising and embedding Service Design effectively within the public sector.

POLITICAL AND FUNDING CYCLES

Political cycles both with a big 'P' and small 'p' can hinder the ability for projects to get off the ground and continue over a long term period. Because political cycles are short, it is imperative within a cycle for a solution or product to be visibly delivered. If we consider this within a digital context, instead of building smart, like commentator Eric Ries discusses in the Lean Startup, where we test and then build functions as time goes on, we deliver the final product with all functions we had imagined before testing any of it.

This stifles the ability to procure and build our public sector service ecosystem in an agile fashion. Instead, we build for completion and move on to the next product.

Coupling this with short term political cycles means that development taking place on a product can be shutdown when priority or focus changes. This can lead to an apathy amongst public servants and a fear to demonstrate tangible results in a short period of time. This apathy can be extended to in-house designers and supporting consultants.

THE ORGANISATION SIZE

Organisation size and day-to-day operations can also stifle a Service Design approach. Getting the right people together between busy diaries is a job in itself and the absence of individuals in co-creative sessions can stifle innovation later in the process if their voice has not been included on the product development.

In addition to this, organisations of a large size can often work in silos and cutting across these from both an in-house and consultant perspective can be very difficult. This leads to holes in the knowledge creation of new solutions and will ultimately harm the potential of the concept as the organisation has not been fully involved from the outset or full understanding of the system and operations has not been outlined to create informed designs.

"It's difficult when the results are not immediate and not tangible, demonstrating that to people who want return on investment it is difficult."

Stuart McDonald, in interview, 2010

WORKING WITH EXISTING PUBLIC SECTOR CAPABILITIES

The simple fact is public servants are often required to come up with a solution quickly. This means working within parameters such as politics, agendas and the personality of the organisation plus the challenge of government as "inherently hierarchical, and reliant on both predictability and order," (Prof Alan Fells).

When presented with the opportunity to step back and consider things differently public servants can struggle to articulate an idea or concept without solving the problem or conversely raising a question about internal delivery.

Bridging the gap between government, business and customer needs also means bridging a gap between business processes, IT systems and internal policy. When individuals are tasked with a project or set of deliverables to develop a new offer or take forward policy it can often be done in silos either within a department or project parameters limiting the full integration across potentially supportive stakeholders in government, public and 3rd sector.

THE CITIZEN RELATIONSHIP WITH GOVERNMENT IS BASED ON TRUST, BUT TRUST GOES BOTH WAYS

From the customer perspective the importance of designing, not just developing services, comes down to some simple facts about the citizen/customer and their relationship with government.

- Government service is about participation and engagement with people – sometimes whether they are engaged or not.
- Compliance is about public perception – if people do not comply it gives them a perceived advantage over everyone else.

Because we live in a largely voluntary and free-state, citizens comply with regulatory requirements to keep government 'off their back,' because they will do the 'right thing' as long as the next person does. That means what is designed must build and retain trust through meaningful experiences delivered in a repeatable and consistent way.

"... As customers' trust in [an enterprise] deepens, their loyalty becomes stronger. They adopt a more informal relationship with the [enterprise], one that eases transactions on both sides, making them faster, better and more predictable."

Steve Diller, Nathan Shedroff and Darryl Rhea, 'Making Meaning'

Trust is important for government because things are going to change - governments inevitably change, policies change, ministers change their minds, not to mention society changing. Therefore government services must maintain a level of predictability, but that now means citizens and users must play a significant role in designing those services.

EMBEDDING DESIGN AT A LEADERSHIP LEVEL AND THROUGHOUT THE SYSTEM

The above is not to say that embedding design is simply a case of public bodies adopting a design approach and toolkit. We understand the paradox of design in government. Design must have a place at a higher level within the system of policy delivery and reasoning for procuring skills and products.

As efficiency becomes the catch-cry of the public sector, more pressure is on Executives to justify not only their own operations, but how their approach supports business outcomes. Productivity, economic and process evaluations are important but do not concentrate on the most important driver of outcomes – the transforming of service delivery.

In our Service Principles we outline a series of approaches to support this integration into the system.

PUBLIC SECTOR DESIGN IN ACTION | SNOOK CASE STUDY

A STORY OF RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT PROCUREMENT

"The Project 99 brief gave us the autonomy to undertake early investigation and to develop ideas with young people that could have been hindered by a more stringent brief. "

- Sarah Drummond, Director at Snook

Working for NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, in partnership with Young Scot and Mental Health Foundation our consortia were tasked with an open brief to research young people's attitudes and relationship with the internet, social media within the context of Mental Health and well-being.

With our partners we undertook desk research and gathered data on internet and device-use to gain a fuller picture of how the web was being used by young people. In addition we produced a map of services currently being developed and on offer to support young people with the managing of their well-being. We also included more general digital tools for health practitioners to learn about and use in their daily practice.

Snook directly worked with groups of young people in Glasgow to hand over design tools to develop solutions based on managing their (and their family and friends') mental health and well-being. The results were produced in a report available on wegot99.com

The tender for the project was open, focused on co-creation and gave the consortia the freedom to listen first to the public and work closely with health professionals to develop potential solutions currently missing in the public sphere.

This was an ideal brief for developing future solutions, and considering simultaneously, what is already in existence. The final deliverable started wider discussions over and above the final proposed products and services around policy, procurement and new forms of partnerships between private and statutory authorities on developing future solutions.

PUBLIC SECTOR DESIGN IN ACTION | DMA CASE STUDY

A STORY OF CREATING THE ENVIRONMENT INTERNALLY FOR DESIGN IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

"When people understand that we're not just trying to design a process to sit on power point presentation – we're actually trying to make it better to do things - people start to think differently."

Craig Fox, Assistant Commissioner, Australian Tax Office, 2013

For the past two years, DMA has been working in partnership with a client – the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) – on building a program of work focused on providing a service design approach to the world of complex ICT Infrastructure delivery.

In 2009, a significant organisational shift occurred with an out sourced multi- vendor environment introduced to deliver the different and increasingly complex Infrastructure platforms and services.

'Infrastructure' are the foundation services such as networks, centralised computing hardware, end-user technologies, phones and other devices. These are the very things taxpayers, businesses, intermediaries, and the staff who support them use to understand, comply, and effectively access service delivery.

The ATO has been working with DMA to develop a new way to approach infrastructure delivery to ensure it consciously supports the business of the ATO – not just an old ICT view of products from vendors. The shift from ICT vendor driven service provision to ICT as a designed service has been profound, and only possible because the use of 'space to design' has been provided by this innovative public sector organisation.

The result of creating this space (at an executive and operational level) has been the rolling-out of a series of 10-week focused design projects which have seen us collaboratively shape this huge and important business.

PRINCIPLES FOR EMBEDDING DESIGN IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

"Innovation will not occur at the flick of a switch. It requires public services to build the capacity to innovate."

David Kester

A 'HOW CAN WE CHANGE THIS ATTITUDE?'

With a design mindset, we have developed a series of principles which could support how to navigate some of these perceived barriers.
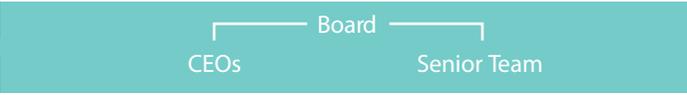
PRINCIPLE 1: APPLY DESIGN CONSCIOUSLY

- For design to make a difference, Government should strongly support a practical design and innovation agenda seeking tangible and agreed outcomes.
- Design must be seen to deliver on outcomes or risk being seen as an 'interesting rest' from 'real work.'

Ministers

Do Tank

Framing wicked problems and generating future concepts through prototypes Developing action briefs and human centred policy. Forming partnership approaches for design led approaches to developing public services.

Senior Civil Servants	Government Directorates	Strategy Unit

Annual Letters and Ministerial Briefings

— Board —
CEOs   Senior Team

Embedding Design

Internal Design Capacity Embedding Design inside local government and public bodies to use design in development processes

Organisational Directorates
Department Layers

Operations

Communication Platforms
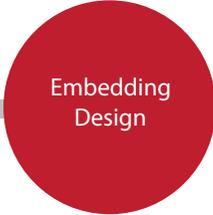
Closing feedback loops and responding to citizen feedback and data through platforms and analytics. On and offline user engagement

Frontline Staff

Citizens

Embed a space for design

Design occurs whether embedded, internal, external, brokered or a combination of all of those. Creating a safe space for it to operate is required in all instances whether that is funding to design a new idea outside of the sector or a internal design studio inside a local authority.

We have learned labels do not make things happen, and design will not make people sit up and take note. In the first instance, setting up the right conditions and building quality relationships with the right elements of the system at the right time is what makes things happen.

It is important that the system must be worked with in order to achieve the right results. We have broken down embedding a space for design into several models:

- Do - Tank
- Embedding Design (internal design capacity and framework)
- Communication Platforms

Do-tank, a strategic unit for Government

Introduce a strategic design unit that is apolitical and works alongside think tanks creating future forecasts for organisations adding service design methods and processes into the fold to influence policy.

This means:

A strategic design unit could lead organisations on:

- **Partnership approaches**
  Additionally, the role of a strategic design unit is to cut across silos and stakeholders to create the right conditions, and gather the right people to work together on solving problems and redesigning services. In addition, the unit could take the role of curating partnerships between entrepreneurs and their ventures and larger NGOs, public bodies and charities as Ruth Marvel and Owen Jarvis documented in their publication When Bees Meet Trees (2013).

- **Evaluating current service performance**
  Without the need to report in direct response to a corporate strategy and annual letter, services could be evaluated using a design lens. In collaboration with social researchers, users could be broken down to consider cross-service needs as opposed to looking through the lens of one organisation's delivery to them.

- **Co-creation catalyst**
  It can be difficult to work closely with the public. As a strategic unit, the Do-Tank could also have a physical manifestation in the form of shop fronts, pop up or digital spaces to bridge the gap between government and public services, making it more common for the public to be called upon to collaboratively develop services.

PRINCIPLE 2: RECOGNISE THAT THE PUBLIC SECTOR IS IN THE SERVICE BUSINESS

- Take a service system view across the complex public sector organisation. Organise groups for service outcome rather internal systems, processes and touchpoints.

This means:

Be more agile

Adopting an approach to agile development and continuous improvement using design as a facilitation process will support the continuing improvement of products and services at all levels of the system, particularly in the area of operations and their relationship with development directorates within local government and public bodies.

The diagram on the previous page is a simplified hybrid of mapping exercises undertaken with Scottish Government, the Australian Department for Human Services and varying public bodies in both Scotland and Australia. The same point is reiterated in every case that even when design is used to 'solve a problem' and develop a working solution, once past the implementation stage, the product and service is rarely updated.

In the event of technological developments, shift in customer behaviour patterns or simply elements beginning to fail after time has passed, there is no place for feedback in the system to be directly brought back into the design and development team.

Ideal modes of thinking for adopting an agile approach:

- Be clear and visual on how services and products are designed within the system and where information flows within the organisation.

- Build in user feedback through communication platforms from the frontline and into development processes.

- Allocate small funding for research and development in order to instigate 'briefs' rather than tenders to test what works without costly risks.

- There are numerous agile methods that can be adopted while never underestimating the value of a visual space/design studio in-house to showcase this work as it develops.

- The complexity of inter-agency cooperation should not be understated but there should be a safe space created for its use.

- Reconsider the big technical solution and work out an MVP (Minimum Viable Product) that can have features built as it develops in response to how people use it.

- The approach which is collaborative, iterative and focuses on what people actually think, do and use, means you can make decisions on opportunities for improvement. Consideration of how your strategy and set-up drives your efforts and impacts of any decisions you make will have on services, staff and customer experience, and to the way your business works.

PRINCIPLE 3: ENSURE THE PUBLIC SECTOR HAS THE CAPACITY FOR DESIGN

- Designers must earn the agency's trust as they introduce approaches which brings forward the customer and respects business position, aiming for short and sharp design processes.

This means:

Have structural processes like procurement that allow for and enable design activity to occur

Procurement currently focuses heavily on developing predefined solutions for handover but Service Design can add benefit through open briefs in procurement. For example, the first two sections of the double diamond, Discover and Define, allow the scoping and problem framing to take place for a design team to genuinely develop grounded and workable designs. This part of the process allows a team to understand the context and at first hand, the needs of people they are designing for.

As outlined in our three models, this is both a balance between embedding the skills via experienced designers but also creating the frameworks and inter-organisational development processes to allow design to be used, in coincidence with up-skilling public servants.

PRINCIPLE 4: DON'T LET SOLUTIONS OVERTAKE POLITICS AND POLICY

- There is a tendency for designers and organisations to put an emphasis on the solution or the physical outcome when what is needed is the forming of new relationships or the development of existing policy.

- Developing a concrete understanding of where design can add value and be procured or embedded is rudimentary to a good use of the skill set. This works in the favour of both the organisation and designer.

This means:

Setting up the correct conditions before bringing design into any development process or organisation. Ideally designers should not work in a vacuum but with complimentary disciplines and as part of a wider programme for the development taking place.

THE FUTURE OF SERVICE DESIGN IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

While we can't predict the future, from our experience we do see some clear areas of opportunity and potential barriers for the role service design can play moving forward.

GOVERNMENTS DESIRE CENTRALISATION OF DESIGN - AT THE MOMENT

The current popular notions of cross-departmental, centralised design capability centre-of-excellence type models in New Zealand and Australia are hard to support. We are seeing the battle over having the 'right' approach homogenising what is fundamentally a creative business discipline.

ICT WILL BE RELIED UPON MORE BUT MAYBE FOR THE WRONG REASONS

ICT or technology is increasingly referred to in terms of connecting or being a public service. ICT is at times used interchangeably with 'digital'. However the technology which enables 'connection' is labelled, it is not the same as 'personal connectedness'. ICT and technology in themselves are not a service – the service is made up of a range of capabilities in addition to ICT and there is a fantastic opportunity to truly connect the deepest parts of a complex organisation with the complex world of real life customers and their own complex lives.

BIG DATA, BIG DEPARTMENTS

The notion that big data holds a solution in its own right places too much pressure on a singular discipline and is not realistic considering the many variables can affect data on any level.

We expect public sector services will become noisier and more complex as multiple agencies, and 'not-for-profits' begin playing a role depending on need or on the legislated outcome. Services that are designed-based on big data insights must be tested, prototyped and designed with real users to understand impacts at an experience level.

MEASUREMENT

Of course, all policy and the public sector services that deliver on them should be designed in a way that seeks to generate efficient and effective outcomes. As designers, our language is intended to highlight that this should be done by engaging and collaborating with the people involved in those services; and that prototyping and iteration ensures that we progress towards better outcomes.

CONCLUSION

There are a large amount of factors contributing to the positive application of design to public services as articulated in this Think Piece.

We see a need for a deeper understanding of where and how design can be applied within the various models of developing new and re-designing public services from solution creation to the development of policy.

The application of design has been proven by leading bodies (Design Council, UK) and recognised by academics and commentators (Mulgin) to bring positive attributes to public services including a focus on people, prototyping skills, and an integration of system thinking. However, there remains a short fall in the potential of design thinking and procurement of these skills to add true value over time.

A deeper integration of design and understanding of it's application is needed to further develop public services that will serve us well now and in the future of an uncertain world.

What has been remarkable to both Snook and DMA in our conversations and collaborations on this piece, are the similarities of the challenges faced from our different vantage points. Philosophies, approaches and even the appetite to apply design approaches to the public sector problem-solving space match.

The mundane, yet critical, areas of procurement, capability, problem/scope definition, that enable service design to be practiced for innovative and sustainable outcomes, while frustrating and requiring some kind of systemic evolution, are not barriers. After all, we have both, and within our industry, seen amazing results from the application of our discipline to organisational change and improved social outcomes

Both DMA and Snook will as practitioners strive to continue with a focus on good practice in the sharing of our learnings. As reflective practitioners, it is our hope that this paper can be used for both debate and a catalyst for the development of design within the public sector.

wearesnook.com
designmanagers.com.au

RESOURCES

INTERVIEWS

Over 20 interviews were conducted as part of Sarah Drummond's research into her master's thesis 'Embedding design in the public sector' during 2009-2010, some of which have been cited within this paper.

Emily Campbell, Royal Society of Arts 2010
Joel Bailey, Capita
Stuart McDonald, Creative Front Line

PUBLICATIONS

This piece has been written taking into consideration a wide range of publications but specifically cites:

Diller Steve, Shedroff Nathan, Rhea Darryl (2006) Making Meaning: How Successful Businesses Deliver Meaningful Customer Experiences

Martin Roger. (2009) The Design of Business: Why Design Thinking is the Next Competitive Advantage

Marvel Ruth, (2013) When Bees meet Trees

Mulgin Geoff. (2014) Design in Public and Social Innovation

Neumeier Martin. (2008) The Designful company

Ries Eric. (2012) The Lean Startup

Schon A Donald. (1983) The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action. Great Britain

DIGITAL RESOURCES

https://www.designcouncil.org.uk/
http://designmanagers.com.au/
http://www.nesta.org.uk/
http://wearesnook.com/