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Service Design: An Appraisal

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Designing for the Service Industry

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Service Design: An Appraisal

by Roberto M. Saco and Alexis P. Goncalves

In this thoughtful analysis, Roberto Saco and Alexis Goncalves map the landscape of service design. They define the discipline and key players, and sketch its potential vis-à-vis growth and profitability. Saco and Goncalves elaborate on the multi-faceted realities of this work with examples from the Ritz-Carlton Hotels, Herman Miller, and Egg Banking. And they wrap things up with a discussion of key principles related to practice.



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Service science, service engineering, service design... although not interchangeable, these are all terms for an emerging discipline that attempts to join the worlds of business, design, change management, and the service economy for a multi-sided approach to the introduction and sustainability of services.

Though manufacturing has been the dominant logic in the business world for most of the twentieth century,¹ this panorama is changing quickly as the service sector becomes ever more prevalent, comprising 70 percent to 80 percent of GDP in many developed countries. And while there's an established consensus that "service is different" from manufacturing, practitioners and experts alike still insist on employing tools developed on the factory floor for use in a service culture. Service science, and more fundamentally service design, posits that we need to codify the lan-

guage and artifacts of the world of service. In fact, we may need to create an entirely new language of service. The landscape in this arena is shifting.

While the more academic *service science* seems to have currency in major American universities, *service design* owes quite a bit of its origin to both American and British design consultancies, notably IDEO, and public institutions in England and Germany, such as the UK Design Council in London and KISD in Cologne. Service design not only accepts that service is different, but also acts on this premise by employing features that include co-creation, constant reframing, multidisciplinary collaboration, capacity-building, and sus-

1. For the seminal article on dominant logic in goods and services, see Stephen L. Vargo and Robert F. Lusch, "Evolving to a New Dominant Logic in Marketing," *The Journal of Marketing*, vol. 68, no. 1 (January 2004).

taining change. A multitude of tools, many from the social sciences, are brought to bear on problems, all under the banner of design as an organizing principle and leitmotif.

For this article, we interviewed five prominent academics from the US, UK, and Germany; we also met with three consultancies from the US and UK (Engine, IBM, and Peer Insight) and looked into service design practices at three companies (Egg Banking, Herman Miller, and Ritz-Carlton). The reason for the variety of practitioners, academics, and companies was to allow us to sample the large spectrum of practices and schools of service design (for details, see Table 1).

Enter service design

That design itself is in the forefront of public discourse is unsurprising. The extent and depth of the conversation, however, seem to be taking a greater urgency. And businesses in all their diversity are paying greater attention. Trendspotters and explicators² in the field of design point to a democratization of taste and to a wider appreciation of practical beauty, coupled with enabling technologies. Virginia Postrel makes the case that our society is gleefully immersed in a binge of fashion and style, and that furthermore, this “prettification” is overall a good thing. For many

designers, engineers, and architects, though, this claim is anathema since it counters their hard-won efforts at making design a problem-solving discipline. Moreover, interaction design and affective design³ have come to the fore; the first attempting to manage interface issues and a mediated world in which technology has become an extension of the human senses; and the second bringing emotion and play into a rational design and engineering mindset.

But... just what is service design? The Service Design Network, a loose coalition of academics, practitioners, and other interested parties, emerged precisely to explore this question.⁴ Inspired by service design pioneer Birgit Mager

2. Offering different viewpoints, three books stand out from the rest: Virginia Postrel's *The Substance of Style* (NY: Harper, 2003); John Thackara's *In the Bubble: Designing in a Complex World* (Cambridge: MIT, 2005); and Bill Moggridge's *Designing Interactions* (Cambridge: MIT, 2007). This latter work features interviews with more than 40 designers.

3. The Japanese, with characteristic rigor and distinction, call this application *kansei engineering*. *Kansei* (emotion) is the opposite of *chisei* (reason, or “the rational”). Helmut Esslinger at frogdesign is a pioneer of this school of design and coined the motto: Form follows emotion. See Owen Edwards, “Form Follows Emotion,” *Forbes.com*, November 12, 1999.

4. Reference the Service Design Network manifesto at <http://www.service-design-network.org>.

Interviewees: Panel of Academics, Consultants, and Practitioners			
Name	Title	Organization	Country
Mary Jo Bitner	Academic Director, Center for Services Leadership	Arizona State University	USA
Shelley Evenson	Associate Professor and Director of Graduate Studies	Carnegie Mellon University	USA
Bill Hollins	Senior Lecturer, Westminster Business School	University of Westminster	UK
Debbie Jones	(former) Product Development Manager	Egg Banking, PLC	UK
Oliver King	Director and Co-Founder	Engine Group	UK
Birgit Mager	Service Design Director, Köln International School of Design	Cologne University of Applied Sciences	GERMANY
Paul Maglio	Senior Manager, Service Systems Research	IBM Almaden Research Center	USA
Fabienne Munch	Director Ideation Studio	Herman Miller Inc.	USA
Jeanne Rae	President and Co-Founder	Peer Insight, LLC	USA
Stephen L. Vargo	Associate Professor of Marketing	University of Hawaii	USA
Alejandra Vicenttin	Area Director of Quality and Productivity	The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company, LLC	USA

Table 1. For this article, we held 11 interviews with prominent academics from the US, UK, and Germany (Bitner, Evenson, Hollins, Mager, Vargo), as well as with consultancies from the US and UK (Engine, IBM, and Peer Insight) and three companies (Egg Banking, Herman Miller, and Ritz-Carlton). The reason for this variety of practitioners, academics, and companies was to allow us to sample the large spectrum of practices and schools of service design.

at the Köln International School of Design, the network uses the following working definition:

Service design...

- Aims to create services that are useful, useable, desirable, efficient, and effective
- Is a human-centered approach that focuses on customer experience and the quality of service encounter as the key value for success
- Is a holistic approach that considers in an integrated way strategic, system, process, and touch-point design decisions
- Is a systematic and iterative process that integrates user-oriented, team-based interdisciplinary approaches and methods in ever-learning cycles

Service design, then, is fundamentally interdisciplinary and multi-purpose. Relying on a design-

er’s sensibility, it incorporates elements and tools from several domains to attain various and, at times, competing objectives: customer satisfaction or appreciation, designer satisfaction or sense of accomplishment, problem resolution, economic and environmental sustainability, and practical beauty (“beauty that works”).

Approaches, tools, and players

One of the first tomes dealing specifically with service design was Bill Hollins’s 1991 *Total Design*. When we interviewed him, Hollins downplayed individual tools and emphasized the organizational aspects of designing for services. In his view, the key operational question is: How do we organize for services? In other words, how do we bring people into the process of creating and introducing services? Bill reminded us that service design is more a practical craft than a formal science, with its focus on hypothesis-building and experimentation. And that may explain the profusion of tools at the expense of consensual frameworks. As Stefan Moritz⁵ has amply catalogued, there is no dearth of tools for the service design practitioner (see Table 2).

These tools are drawn from social anthropology, linguistics, market research, organizational design, and all sorts of quality management approaches, such as process management, customer experience, and “voice of the customer.” The application of tools is situational and depends on the type of service design project, the resources available, and the objectives. While there are many frameworks, these have been developed for the most part independently by various consultancies or academics. And there is as yet no clear consensus for an overarching or unifying framework.

We have grouped service design players—institutions and individuals—into consultants, academics, and practitioners. The design consultancies serve as hubs or hives of service design activity as many have followed IDEO in the *product>interface>service* progression. Technology, they quickly realized, has blurred the boundary between product and service. A

Service Design Tools	
Service Design Activity	Tools (sample)
Understanding (assessing)	Benchmarking Critical incident technique Ecology map Ethnographical studies Shadowing Trend scouting
Thinking (framing)	Affinity diagram Fishbone diagram Touchpoints analysis
Generating (exploring)	Body-storming Randomizer Unfocus group
Filtering (reducing)	Heuristic evaluation Personas Pluralistic walkthrough
Explaining (rationalizing)	Experience prototyping Metaphors Social network mapping
Realizing (building)	Blueprint Role script

Table 2. Adapted from Stefan Moritz’s typology in *Service Design: Practical Access to an Evolving Field*.

5. Stefan Moritz, *Service Design: Practical Access to an Evolving Field* (Köln International School of Design, 2005). This publication is based on Moritz’s master’s dissertation at KISD.

“product” like the iPod, for instance, is part product (device), part database (iTunes), part inventory (Music Store), and all integrated service offering. Besides IDEO, several UK-based consultancies stand out—for instance, Live|Work, Engine Group, and Radarstation. IBM, through its Service Science initiative, is becoming a major influence as it pools together researchers and internal consultants for an integrated look at services. From academia, KISD in Germany and IVREA in Italy took early leads in service design. Birgit Mager and her design colleagues and students at KISD are crafting a new generation of approaches and tools. In the US, Carnegie Mellon’s Shelley Evenson serves a similar maven role by, for example, hosting the annual Emergence Conference, which brings together design students, academics, consultants, managers, and trend scouts.

Individual practitioners abound, although not many have “design” in their titles. Some practitioners may even draw blank stares should it be pointed out to them that they’re in the service design business. Many are in activities having to do with innovating for services, customer experience management, service operations, quality management, or marketing services.

The design councils in various European countries, notably the United Kingdom, serve as communities of practice for product and service design.

Relevance to business—or yet another management fad?

While the growing, yet informal, army of service designers is quietly preparing for the next revolution in services, you may rightly ask: Why should I care? Service design has been evolving for more than 10 years; it is still a young field that seems to be on the verge of blossoming. In service design, we see the melding of the customer experience and experience economy phenomena heralded by various keen observers of changing market mores.⁶ Recently, service design academics have undertaken research to address the challenges this new concept is facing. The design of intangibles and fully sensorial experiences are promising arenas being developed further. Service design practitioners, as a matter of course, have also developed other competencies,

like the integration of clients into the design process—which is especially relevant when designing services, since the clients in question are in any case already involved in production and delivery.

In our interviews with academics and practitioners, we found ample consensus that while services are central to the economy, they are not always as productive and satisfying as they should be—and, therefore, they need better design. Mary Jo Bittner, at Arizona State University’s Center for Services Leadership, is emphatic on the role of service design and innovation: “To be successful in a given marketplace, a company needs to have a strong sense of service design. And while companies realize that a lot of resources go into product and service design, we still don’t have strong disciplines in these areas.

Companies know that service design is where their growth is, their advantage is, and their future profit is.”

Shelley Evenson at Carnegie Mellon’s design school speaks to an integrated service experience and a journey of brands:

“Think of traveling to a conference in Pittsburgh. You go through a journey of brands. There has been a tremendous amount of orchestration to bring you here: airports, airlines, taxis, beverages, food, electrical power, security, and so forth. All these services are aligned to support you in some fashion. Compare your voyage to the self-sufficiency a navigator like Columbus had to have in his day.”

For those scanning the horizon, the signs are obvious. Early adopters that add service design to their mix of core competencies will have a definitive edge over the complacent and the laggards on the innovation adoption curve.

*To be successful
in a given marketplace,
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sense of service design.*

6. For example, Joseph Pine and James H. Gilmore, in their book *The Experience Economy* (Boston: HBS Press, 1999), or Lou Carbone, who recently wrote, with Leonard L. Berry, “Build Loyalty Through Experience Management” (in *Quality Progress*, September 2007).

Case studies

Many well-known brands—Apple, Samsung, Pylones, Target, Shiseido—are keen on design and have made it a centerpiece of their company culture. We now look at three very different companies with an eye to how they view service and design, and consider some of their experiences.

Ritz-Carlton Hotels

The award-winning Ritz's perspective on service is broad in nature. Service is approached as "the total guest experience" staged before, during, and after a guest stays at any of the hotel properties. In this approach, elements like design, mood, gourmet experience, and service are all well considered.

Scenography workbooks created broad corporate alignment and encouraged local creativity all at once, a wonderful formula for effective execution.

- *Design.* New Ritz hotels no longer resemble European chateaus, as was common for those built before 1997. The modern Ritz in the Georgetown area of Washington, D.C., was built on the remains of the city's former incinerator, with an unusual meeting room at the base of the old brick smoke-stack.
- *Mood.* Mozart concertos no longer set the tone 24/7 in Ritz lobbies, as was the case just two years ago. Today, you'll likely hear a soulful jazz ballad by singer Lizz Wright, or the mellow backbeat from the electronic band Thievery Corporation. Ritz hotels will change playlists according to time of day to reflect the mood, a technique used by hip boutique hotels. Ritz has also moved away from huge, overbearing floral bouquets in favor of smaller, more artistic designs, another sign the chain is striving for more low-key elegance rather than old-world opulence.
- *Gourmet experience.* The chain is closing down most of the Ritz dining rooms and replacing them with destination restaurants that often involve well-known chefs such as Gordon Ramsay or Daniel Boulud.
- *Service.* Ritz can no longer justify its rates simply by offering in-your-face service. The company has retrained its employees

to read guests' body language before addressing them. Staffers are now more spontaneous.

Experiments in service and service design

In an effort to add flexibility to their standards, Ritz executives decided they needed a scenographer—someone who, as with a play, would help them direct "scenes" for the customer, but through customized service rather than through lighting or props. The luxury chain tapped design firm IDEO, which worked with it to create a set of scenography workbooks. Creative staffers at each property brainstormed localized service scenes and outlined the key scenes using a series of photos that told an evocative story. Scenes created by the team told stories such as a warm, personalized check-in process or a big night in, in which the executive chef might send up a handwritten note, a champagne toast, and a sample from the evening's menu for guests with restaurant reservations. At San Francisco's Half Moon Bay hotel, for example, guests are now invited to an intimate wine tasting at check-in. A key intent of the scenography workbooks was to communicate the principles driving the Ritz brand experience without prescribing the solution for individual hotels. Scenography workbooks created broad corporate alignment and encouraged local creativity all at once, a wonderful formula for effective execution.

Learning and adapting

A critical lesson Ritz learned from service design is that in order to be effective in designing guest experiences, the following four principles need to be integrated into the design strategy:

- *Culture.* Create a customer-centered culture that identifies, nurtures, and reinforces service as a primary value.
- *Talent.* Use a rigorous selection process to populate the organization with superior front-line personnel and support staff. The impulse to care for and accommodate customers cannot be taught to people who are not predisposed to do so.
- *Development.* Constantly retrain employees to perpetuate organizational values and to help them attain greater mastery of products and procedures.

- *Measure and reward.* Systematically measure and reward customer-centric behavior and excellence in front-line personnel and support staff to enforce high standards and reinforce expectations.

Herman Miller

When asked about the evolving field of services, consultant Jeneanne Rae of Peer Insight pointed out, somewhat counter-intuitively, “Looking into the range of players, I believe that manufacturers are going to develop and promote more service innovation than service companies themselves.” As we look around, it seems Rae is on to something, for enlightened manufacturers certainly seem to be headed in this direction. Max De Pree, one-time CEO at Herman Miller and advocate of servant leadership, defined the first task of leaders as defining reality.⁷ He could also have said that Herman Miller has been defining design in the office furniture business for several generations. Herman Miller, then, tends to approach service from a human-centered perspective, constantly assessing the problems that people face and the objectives they seek to accomplish. By focusing on a clear and concise definition of the problem or the opportunity, Herman Miller minimizes the risk associated with designing products that do not address articulated or latent customer needs.

Experiments in service and service design

And yet Herman Miller doesn’t define itself as an office furniture company, or even a furniture company. It has set its boundaries around people and human performance. Building on the company’s historical grounding in habitats—the office, the home, educational institutions, and the healing arena—Herman Miller focuses on the performance of human beings in their habitats. Shifting the focus from furniture to habitats leads the company to new design spaces. The most recent example is Convia, a modular, programmable sub-building infrastructure system for electrical and data support that makes buildings more adaptable and changeable by the user. Convia seeks to change the way people design, build, personalize, and manage space, allowing for radically flexible habitats. Herman Miller believes that Convia has profound implications for the design and management of buildings, across multiple categories of use.

Another unique perspective about Herman Miller is that it sees itself more as an integrator than a manufacturer. In its search for solving human-centered problems around habitats, the company usually ends up exploring new materials. And because it is not vertically integrated from a manufacturing standpoint, it is able to do material explorations somewhat freely. This freedom allows designers a fairly free hand to take up new ideas and experiment with any material or process that resolves the problem in question. Examples are the Pellicle material developed jointly with DuPont specifically for the aerated seat-pan material in the Aeron chair, and the structural material that allows the Kiva screen to stand still or move freely.

Learning and adapting

Herman Miller is not your typical manufacturer. As it moves from designing furniture to shaping habitats, it refashions and reframes product design to living or service design. From Herman Miller, we garnered several lessons:

- *A culture of risk-taking.* Although Herman Miller believes that good design results from thoughtful research into the complexities of customers’ needs, exploration into materials and processes, and responding to social and economic trends, risk-taking is just as important. The company strives to maintain an appetite for risk. As it has grown larger and become responsible for more equity, the pressure to minimize risk has mounted. Getting behind promising new products and services, however, remains a risk it is happy to embrace.
- *Working with outside designers.* Herman Miller is known for having partnered with influential furniture and fabric designers and for relying on an external creative network. The company’s secret for working well with them is: 1) knowing how to put the right constraints in place so that you end up not only with a unique design statement, but also with a solution that solves

“Looking into the range of players, I believe that manufacturers are going to develop and promote more service innovation than service companies themselves.”

7. Max De Pree, *Leadership Is an Art* (New York: Dell, 1989).

real problems for customers and has commercial value; and 2) being willing to follow and give oneself over to outside designers—not to lose oneself necessarily, but to be open to follow them to surprising places.

- *Refrain from quick judgments.* After giving outside designers an outline of a perceived problem, Herman Miller allows these designers to share their insights and enables them to bring their own gifts to the search for a solution. The company monitors them on their journey without judging too quickly based on the first physical appearance or sketches produced. Instead, it teases out the essence or value of the communication, knowing this is but one iteration in the total design process.

Egg Banking, PLC

The customer is at the heart of this UK-based Internet bank's service design strategy. Between 1998 and 2004, a multitude of customer and employee programs were designed and

launched to motivate employees and refocus attention around Egg's core value proposition: the elimination of confusion, mistrust, and so-called toxic practices for banking customers. Egg was widely credited in the press for being a customer champion. Design was key to product and service development, since services were

generally web-based. Indeed, web usability was of paramount importance. Usability guidelines were put in place, including the much-heralded 3-click rule, which mandated that every customer process should be executable in just three clicks. The design team was a mix of IT and marketing employees, supplemented by the addition of the "ideas hothouse," a team of external design consultants.

Experiments in service and service design

Egg Banking has applied a wide spectrum of methodologies to the design of services, including human-computer interaction (HCI), usability design methods, qualitative research, and ethnographic customer studies, as well as more-

traditional focus groups for customer propositions and marketing communications.

Through the use of human-computer interaction (HCI), Egg has conducted several design experiments focused on providing an effective interaction between users and the website, which included the following design attributes:

- Intuitive access and logical progression to key user tasks
- Clear, yet usable, branding
- Visual elements that do not compromise usability
- Terminology that relates to the users' tasks—not marketing-speak
- Appropriate metaphors for navigating from the home page
- Simplicity when interacting and transitioning across web pages

When designing for usability, Egg considers the total customer experience (TCE), which encompasses all stages of a customer's interaction with the Egg environment: the online site, back-office systems, the delivery of the product or service on schedule, and post-sales support. The breadth of the TCE approach highlights that success in services means more than just the physical design of the website, the front end of the organization and its usability, and the price of the product/service. In reality, the entire purchase experience influences customer satisfaction and perception of value.

Learning and adapting

A critical lesson Egg Banking learned was the importance of integrating a change management strategy when designing new service concepts. Being creative was not the main challenge. It was being creative *and* profitable *and* legal *and* "launchable." The need to address service design from all these angles sometimes conflicted with the views of the consulting partners. There were instances in which differences in internal and external approaches began to surface and disagreements about the direction of the concept hampered progress. In one account, the consulting team favored more viral, futuristic concepts, while the Egg team steered toward the slightly less innovative, more imminently marketable, revenue-generating ideas. Combining two different working cultures requires considerable effort

Design was key to product and service development, since services were generally web-based.

in conflict resolution and stress management. Egg learned the hard way—that is, after the fact—that innovation and service design require the management of change and political conflict just as much as they do good ideas and expert resources.

Trends in service design

Companies such as Ritz-Carlton, Herman Miller, and Egg Banking have used service design approaches and methods to challenge conventional business wisdom and deliver a compelling, branded customer experience. But what does the future bring? The future of service design is intimately linked to the affinities it has with several related topics—service science, service innovation, and sustainability.

Service science

Scientists and researchers at IBM have now added yet another acronym to the roomy service design glossary: service science, management, and engineering (SSME). The coinage is an attempt to house all service-related research under one very large umbrella. Anchored by IBM and Oracle, and created to spur SSME understanding and growth, the service, research and innovation initiative (SRII)⁸ strives to foment research budgets in corporations, the government, and academia. The acronyms are tough, but the idea is simple. A discipline, no matter how advanced, cannot be properly labeled “science” unless it meets certain criteria for cause-and-effect predictability, refutability, and hypothesis-testing through experimentation. As our economies have become increasingly dependent on services, research has not kept up with the volume and importance of services.

This logic concludes with an admonition: *Further advances in productivity and standards of living are contingent on better and more-thorough research in services.* If we consider service design one of the SSME pillars—a notion with which designers may take issue—further collaboration and research in this arena can only help to separate the wheat from the chaff. Through evidence-based methods, SSME and service design can then reap benefits leading to better professional practice. But we shouldn’t be overly optimistic. IBM cognitive scientist and researcher

Paul Maglio cautions, “There’s this Utopian dream: different crowds talking different languages, and then someone builds an Esperanto of sorts, and before long Utopia follows because they can now all communicate.... right?”

Possibly the best we can hope for is a rudimentary service language in which different disciplines can partake, maybe awkwardly at first. As Maglio concludes, “We need to have a common language and framework that *just gets us to the point of talking.*”

Innovation in services

For innovation gurus like Jeneanne Rae, the term *service innovation* should be reserved for a certain type of initiative—one that can produce a viable new business model, as opposed to a new service or service system that executes the current business model effectively. For Rae, successful service innovations must create a new business model that:

- Throws off enough free cash flow to justify the expense
- Meets internal hurdles and performance targets
- Occurs fast enough to stay ahead of competition
- Occurs often enough to keep the brand relevant

Take one of Citigroup’s businesses as an example of a strategy geared toward developing new business models. In 2000, under the name i2i (which stands for idea to implementation), the bank embarked on a journey to drive organic growth through innovation and service design. In 2005, Citi Global Consumer Bank appointed an executive vice president for growth ventures and innovation with the mission of building a venture capital model with a portfolio of small, ethnographically derived and metric-proven innovation concepts. Interestingly, Citi’s venture capital model was designed to tolerate the same levels of risk as were current in Silicon Valley. Failure was

Scientists and researchers at IBM have now added yet another acronym to the roomy service design glossary: service science, management, and engineering (SSME).

8. See <http://www.thesrii.org>.

expected to some degree in order to produce disruptive innovation. While Citigroup has continued to experience governance difficulties, its innovation practice garners kudos from a wide audience. Citi's innovation program is considered to be at the forefront of contactless credit, debit, and alternative modes of payments, including mobile payments and P2P money transfers. It is the only financial services firm to be listed in the recent *BusinessWeek*/Boston Consulting Group World's 50 Most Innovative Companies.

To be effective, service innovation systems must first identify, then deconstruct and reconstruct business models. Service design, together with strategic resources and value networks, is one of the critical capabilities required to do the job effectively.

Sustainability and transformation design

Economic, social, and ecological sustainability are becoming increasingly intertwined, primarily because the lag factor between an economic decision and its environmental outcome has diminished. People in various communities around the world are asking themselves if growth is the only metaphor to describe their aspirations for the economy. How about, instead, economic and social deepening?⁹ Concerns over product lifecycles, all the way through to disposability, have been with us for a while. But how should we consider *service* lifecycles? In 2001, the UK Design Council formed RED—essentially a research and development team—to explore, debate, and research the impact of design on social issues.¹⁰ RED projects ranged from preventing ill health, managing chronic illness, reducing home energy consumption, and revitalizing democracy to improving learning in schools. In 2005, RED Director Hilary Cottam was named UK Designer of the Year by the London Design Museum—quite an honor for someone who “designs” prisons, schools, and healthcare systems. RED calls its approach transformation design, but it looks like, feels like, and sounds like service design applied to social systems. Our conversation with Engine Group's Oliver King led us to the consideration that a particular energy feeds design work for services. King refers to a sense of mission: “First and foremost, there's an imperative

to dematerialize the world; there's too much stuff to consume, to store, to get rid of. Moreover, designers have an obligation to help people navigate a complex world.” According to Oliver, over time the designer's role has transitioned from draughtsman to choreographer, and away from the very tangible to the highly conceptual. He defines a designer as someone who makes something better for someone else.

Strategies for practice

Can we then draw any overarching lessons or strategies from these practitioners, companies, and tendencies? From the review of both interviews and case studies, we believe that the emerging practice of service design is quite complex and dynamic, and demands, among other things, multidisciplinary teamwork, prototyping as a vehicle for dialogue, open design architecture, and negotiation between functional and emotional benefits. We offer these caveats in the form of the following lessons for service design practitioners:

- *Multidisciplinary teamwork.* To make a significant impact, service design practitioners must look at entire ecosystems rather than at isolated problems. The complexity of doing so requires a holistic view that unites practitioners across disciplines. The multidisciplinary approach means that the designer as “lone ranger” may not have a privileged place in a contemporary service design world.
- *Prototyping as a vehicle for dialogue.* Instead of protecting the design from interference in certain phases of the design process, prototypes should be transparent to all actors during the design process. In service design, the prototype is more a glass box than a black box. Practitioners should make prototypes available to discussion and dialogue, both internally in relation to teamwork and externally in relation to clients.

9. For the fully developed argument, see Bill McKibben's *Deep Economy: The Wealth of Communities and the Durable Future* (New York: Times Books, 2007).

10. In 2007, RED's activities were absorbed by the UK Design Council. Several RED practitioners, led by Hilary Cottam, have formed their own independent service design firm, Participle.

- *Open design architecture.* The fact that the service is delivered via touch-points that evolve in time makes it important for practitioners to develop open-ended solutions that allow for gradual improvements and change. For practitioners to be successful, designed solutions need to be highly adaptable over time.
- *Integration between functional and emotional benefits.* In order to design a compelling service, it is important to design both functional and emotional benefits across different touch-points, and to relate the design to the company's brand and service. This implies that practitioners need to understand brand strategy and have an in-depth knowledge of key touch-points when designing services.

We have endeavored to map out the service design landscape—and we caution that conditions are still not entirely clear. But while we currently have a fine overland mist, bright patches of blue loom promisingly on the horizon. Setting aside the weather report, we should be mindful of one additional consideration. The label *service design* is somewhat unfortunate. Inadvertently, we have all conspired to fuse together two twenty-first-century meta-narratives—*services* and *design*—into a heady mélange of skepticism and hope. And yet consider: Has it ever been any different for the new, the emergent, and the truly transformative?

Suggested Reading (for more recent titles, see footnotes)

Hollins, G., and B. Hollins. *Total Design: Managing the Design Process in the Service Sector* (Philadelphia: Trans Atlantic Publications, 1991).

Shostack, Lynn. "How to Design a Service." *European Journal of Marketing*, vol. 161 (1982). ■

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