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Design Thinking cheat sheet

The 5 stages of the process, an empathy map template and “How might we…?” questions – everything you need to run your first session with your team.



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the process

The 5 stages of Design Thinking

Design Thinking is a way of solving problems that starts with people and their needs. It is most often described in five stages – as in the model popularised by the Hasso Plattner Institute of Design at Stanford (d.school). The stages are not a rigid list: you often go back to them.

1 Empathise	Get to know the people you are designing for – talk, observe, put yourself in their shoes.
2 Define	Name the user's real problem, not the one that seems obvious.
3 Ideate	Come up with as many solutions as possible before you start judging them.
4 Prototype	Build a quick, cheap version of the idea – a sketch, a mock-up, a scenario.
5 Test	Try the prototype with real users and draw conclusions.

The "How might we…?" question

After the define stage, turn the problem into a question that invites solutions: **"How might we make new clients feel looked after in their first week?"** The question should be neither too broad ("How do we improve the company?") nor contain a ready-made solution ("How do we launch a chat?").

printable

Empathy map

Fill in the map after interviews or observations – as a team, based on what you actually heard and saw, not what you assume. The tool was popularised by Dave Gray (XPLANE).

Who are we designing for? .....

Says

What exactly do they say? What words and quotes came up?

Thinks

What might they think but not say out loud? What matters to them?

Does

What actions do they take? What did you observe?

Feels

What emotions do they experience? What frustrates them and what makes them happy?

Pains

What gets in their way, what are they afraid of?

Gains

What do they need, what would success look like for them?

what's next?

Ready to take the next step?

This resource is a good start. If you want to bring about change across your whole team, we can help.

Design Thinking in practice →

Hands-on workshops with Filip Makowiecki: diagnosis, work on your team's specific challenge and consultations after the training.

Idea generation →

A workshop on tools that support creativity – from brainstorming to working with genAI.

Other trainings for companies →

Feedback, delegation, team engagement, Gallup strengths and more.

Not sure where to start?

Book a free 30-minute online consultation. We'll talk about your needs and suggest the best first step.

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Book a consultation

See our offer for companies