

Welcome to holistic program benchmarking. Join the Global Movement Study.

[Learn More](#)



creative

SO

SPONSORED CONTENT: Design Thinking in a Digital Age

15 JUL 2019 By Kader Sakkaria – VP, Strategic Development, Cartus



In the social sciences, there is a concept known as a “wicked problem.” In this case, “wicked” is neither a moral judgment nor a colorful bit of regional vernacular, but rather an indication of how resistant a problem is to resolution.

At their largest and most intractable, wicked problems range from global poverty to climate change to infectious disease. However, they also scale in the opposite direction, with such diverse industries as consumer packaged goods, streaming media, and, yes, relocation, all devoted to solving their own microcosmic versions of wicked problems. One characteristic shared by all wicked problems regardless of size is their lack of “right” answers. A solution may be helpful or unhelpful, result in positive gains or negative ones, but there is no definitive formula or criterion for success.

With no easily defined endgame for these types of problems, how does one go about solving them? Unlike mathematics, chess, or logic puzzles, rigid “algorithmic reasoning” is insufficient to the task. One must apply a human-centered, *solution-focused* methodology involving empathy, inference, and rapid prototyping. In other words, you have to think like a designer.

I Saw Design, and It Opened Up My Eyes

The beauty of design thinking is that it is the best path for making headway on both the thorniest issues facing humankind today as well as much narrower questions being tackled in the private sector.

To quote Jane Fulton Suri, Partner Emeritus and Executive Design Director at the global design firm IDEO, “Design research both inspires imagination and informs intuition through a variety of methods with related intents: to expose patterns underlying the rich reality of people’s behaviors and experiences, to explore reactions to probes and prototypes, and to shed light on the unknown through iterative hypothesis and experiment.”

For example, in order to design the next great children’s toy, mobile app, or business-to-business service, designers need to answer the same two questions:

1. How do I build the right *thing*?
2. How do I build the thing *right*?

Building the Right Thing

It’s not enough to *think* you know what your next product or service should be. To make sure you’re not wasting precious time and resources, designers follow a systematic process to:

Uncover the user needs and wants

- Define the real problem you want to solve for
- Align on the best way to solve by collaborating with all stakeholders
- Prioritize ideas that will be truly innovative (impact vs. feasibility)
- Get buy-in faster by creating and validating as soon as possible

One key step in this process is the creation of *personas* and their *user journeys*, which serve as the designer's North Star for every decision made about what ends up in the final product. If a tool or feature doesn't directly solve one of the key problems we have identified for Persona X, it must be deprioritized or abandoned in favor of one that does.

“

“Design research both inspires imagination and informs intuition through a variety of methods with related intents: to expose patterns underlying the rich reality of people's behaviors and experiences, to explore reactions to probes and prototypes, and to shed light on the unknown through iterative hypothesis and experiment.”

~ *Jane Fulton Suri, Partner Emeritus and Executive Design Director, IDEO*

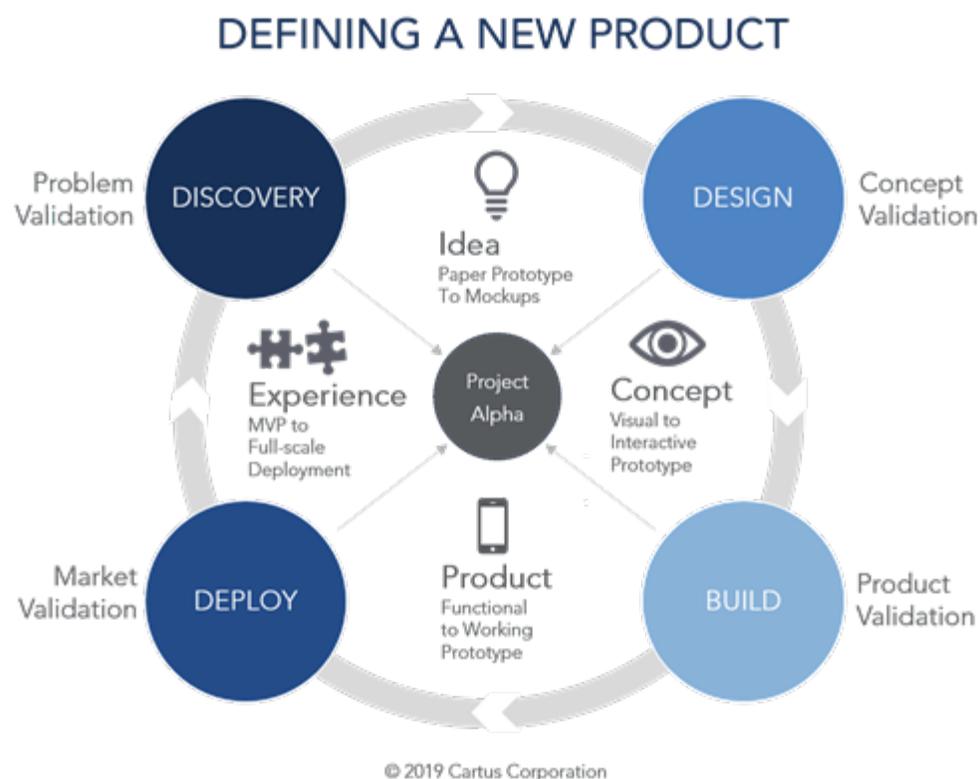
Building the Thing Right

Of course, establishing *what* to design is only half the battle. (Some would argue it's much less than half.) Now you have to build the thing—taking it from concept

to prototype to product in a way that not only solves the original problem but also optimizes for accelerated adoption by taking into account look and feel, branding, usability, scalability, and even ADA compliance.

This is where the design team passes the baton to the Agile build team, which engages in a series of “sprints” (often on a two-week cadence) with the goal of producing useable code not only at the end of every sprint, but by the end of every *day*. The goal is to reach a state known as MVP, or minimally viable product. An MVP may not have every feature you originally conceived—in fact, it's guaranteed not to—but it *will* have a sufficiently mature and stable build that early adopters can begin realizing genuine value from. These beta testers, in turn, provide invaluable feedback to the design team, who adopt and adapt it for the build team to incorporate into subsequent iterations of the product. The goal is to create a virtuous cycle of improvement to transform the MVP to MMP (minimally marketable product) with MRF (minimally releasable features). Think of it as an “alphabet soup feedback loop”!

Once you've reached MMP + MRF, you're ready to release your masterpiece to the world. Or perhaps we should call it a “masterpiece-in-progress.” After all, one of the key traits of design thinking is the fact that products only get better with time and use—each iteration producing additional utility to the end user by enhancing or expanding upon the original solution.



Just the Beginning

From the perspective of someone who is both new to a company and to the entire industry, there's never a more exciting time to join an organization than at the beginning of its technological transformation. With a core legacy team that has been reinforced and re-inspired by new talent and new leadership, Cartus is in the midst of building not just one but *multiple* industry-redefining technology products using the principles of design thinking, human-centric approach, solution-focused development, and Agile methodology—all of which we are executing with a "Product Mindset."

But don't worry: that's an essay for another day ...

For more information: Visit www.cartus.com

Connect with Cartus: [Blog](#) | [LinkedIn](#) | [Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#) | [YouTube](#)