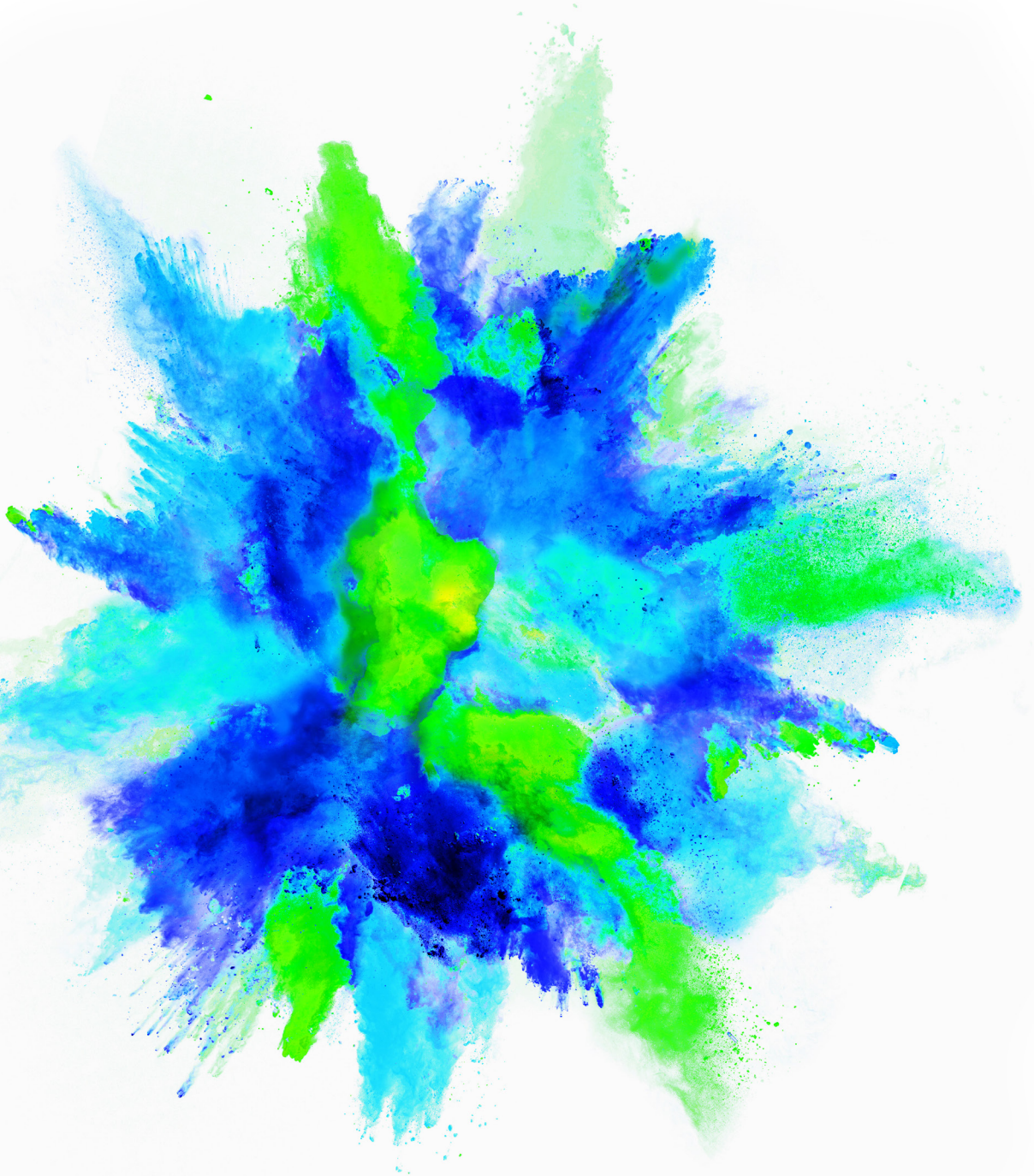


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**Reimagine and craft the
employee experience:**
Design thinking in action

Reimagine and craft the employee experience: Design thinking in action

The business imperative

Your organization is responding to major business and workforce disruptions, driving changes to the way your enterprise runs and intensifying the need to focus on the customer experience to drive growth. As a leader in HR, you understand the critical linkage between the employee experience, your company's business strategy, and customer service. But, how to forge it effectively?

The answer may lie in applying design thinking to reimagine and craft the employee experience to help generate higher engagement, satisfaction, and strategic alignment to drive brand differentiation, customer service excellence, and growth.

While the term “employee experience” has gained traction, in this context “employee” must really consider the end-to-end workforce that includes candidates, employees, contingent workers, and alumni.

Why is this so important? Because studies have documented a clear statistical relationship between increases in frontline engagement, increases in customer service, and revenue growth.¹ So whether your team is focused on strategy, process transformation, or implementing new technology, applying design thinking to reimagine and craft the employee experience is key to driving sustainable business performance.

Design for the moments that matter

Bersin by Deloitte, Deloitte Consulting LLP, developed **The Simply Irresistible Organization™** model defining the end-to-end, irresistible employee experience. We have since married this model with a tested, customer-centric experience approach that brings together engagement, experience, and results. In this perspective, we explore several examples of ways that HR professionals can apply design thinking to imagine, design, and deliver an experience that delights the workforce at the “moments that matter” across their interactions with the organization.

Deloitte’s employee experience framework



Meaningful work	Supportive management	Positive Work environment	Growth opportunity	Trust in leadership
Autonomy	Clear and transparent goals	Flexible work environment	Training and support on the job	Mission and purpose
Selection to fit	Coaching	Humanistic workplace	Facilitated talent mobility	Continuous investment in people
Small, empowered teams	Investment in development of managers	Culture of recognition	Self-directed, dynamic learning	Transparency and honesty
Time for slack	Agile performance management	Fair, inclusive, diverse work environment	High-impact learning culture	Inspiration
Collaboration and connection				

Source: Deloitte Consulting LLP

Shifting from process thinking to experience thinking

Design thinking places the “customer” in the center of the design and has been instrumental in creating the kinds of easy, digital experiences that people expect in their daily lives for everything from ordering products to paying bills to connecting with friends on social media. Just as numerous consumer-facing processes and interactions have been retooled and simplified to provide a more satisfying customer experience, HR can begin to shift its approaches as well. The idea is to move from a process-driven mindset to a mindset that always begins with the experience for the HR customer—who could be a candidate, employee, contingent worker, or even alumni. So, for example, instead of thinking in process

terms, “What do we need new-hires to do on their first day?” HR thinks in experience terms: “What do we want a new employee’s first day to be like?”

HR leaders are rapidly adopting this experience-oriented approach and applying it to truly rethink how HR work happens. Design thinking helps focus on the needs of customers when shaping an experience that’s easy, intuitive, and enables customers to achieve their goals. It also helps define HR through the lens of the workforce’s “journey” across processes to shape the desired impression and feeling among the workforce, ultimately helping to create experiences that are meaningful and able to make the biggest impact at the moments that truly matter for the individual. So, it’s

not only thinking about an employee’s first day but also the total onboarding experience, and all of the ongoing interactions between that employee and HR throughout his or her career and even as a retiree or alum.

Deloitte’s Global Human Capital Trends 2017² report revealed that nearly 80 percent of executives rated employee experience very important (42 percent) or important (38 percent), but only 22 percent reported that their companies were excellent at building a differentiated employee experience.

Three key principles: empathize, envision, experiment

While design thinking has many definitions and various possible paths to implementation, three principles stand out as fundamental to effectively engaging the workforce as customers:

01. Empathize: Understand the workforce and the problems they face. The foundation of this principle is the ability to empathize with segments of your workforce. Empathy is what allows us to share the experiences and feelings of others, creating opportunities for engagement. Design thinkers develop personas (representations of the qualities and characteristics of typical customers) drawn from the breadth and diversity of their workforce population. Journey maps based on these personas document experiences at every step of an activity to identify the moments that matter most and to provide clarity on the problems that need solving.

02. Envision: Generate a variety of options and shape them into potential solutions. This principle involves imagining the widest possible range of options through various techniques, rather than attempting to define and evaluate a single “best” idea. Generating a variety of options moves stakeholders beyond the initial, obvious solutions. Doing so also increases the potential for innovation, especially when performed as part of a team. The ideas with the most potential can then be prioritized and shaped into models ready for testing.

03. Experiment: Test potential solutions with real customers, and refine them with data and feedback. Testing in a real context while collecting both qualitative and quantitative data enables additional empathy with customers, more precise definitions of the problems, and continuous refinement of solutions. This step creates an opportunity for experimentation in HR while effectively managing the associated risks.

There are many examples of how HR can apply design thinking to reimagine and craft the experience to drive sustainable business performance. Let’s look at a few: overall employee experience strategy, HR process transformation, HCM technology selection, HCM app development and HR Operational Services.

Design thinking in action Design thinking meets employee experience strategy

In our first example, design thinking is applied to an employee experience strategy, an “outside-in” effort to understand the unique needs of each customer group HR serves and design differentiated interactions to satisfy those needs. High-impact HR organizations create experience strategies to understand who their HR customers are, what they need, and the specific HR experiences that matter most to them. The goal is to look beyond developing processes and focus on designing tailored experiences for each customer group, starting with the moments that matter most. Then, simple, intuitive HR processes and technologies are developed to support those moments and the overall experience.

Customer experience strategies are meant to continually evolve. They can use models, prototypes, and multiple voices to design, test, and refine solutions to keep up with the needs of customers. And they tend to incorporate learning gained from iterating customer experience solutions quickly, revising ideas early and often. These same principles apply to crafting the employee experience, where “employee” can mean the full range of customers for HR: candidates, full time employees, leaders, contingent workers, and alumni.

A financial institution created an employee experience strategy as part of an overall HR transformation to increase customer service and simplify HR processes. The design team observed and interviewed HR employees and HR customers to identify priority workforce segments (personas) and the experiences that mattered most to them.

Questions like the following were especially effective:

- Describe your typical day at work?
- What excites you about your job?
- What are the things that distract you and are pet peeves for you at work?
- When is a time you felt most empowered to do your job?

Based on its research, the team identified the following customer personas:

- Manager...delivering frontline impact on the company’s success
- High Potential...key to the future
- New Hire...the company’s most important investment
- Executive...evaluating success

Next the team created journey maps that revealed the moments that mattered most to each of the customer personas. This effort defined a set of initiatives to quickly build, test, and iterate to begin to achieve the customer experience vision.

Where is the financial institution now? Continuing on its transformation journey and reporting both a positive impact on the areas the employee experience strategy targeted— from brand differentiation to customer service excellence—and a return on investment through process efficiency.

Deloitte’s Global Human Capital Trends 2016³ research reveals that, typically, the more importance an organization places on design thinking and the more ready it is to embrace it, the faster the organization grows. According to the data, companies growing by 10 percent or more per year are more than twice as likely to report they are ready to incorporate design thinking compared to their counterparts that are experiencing stagnant growth.

Design thinking meets HR process transformation

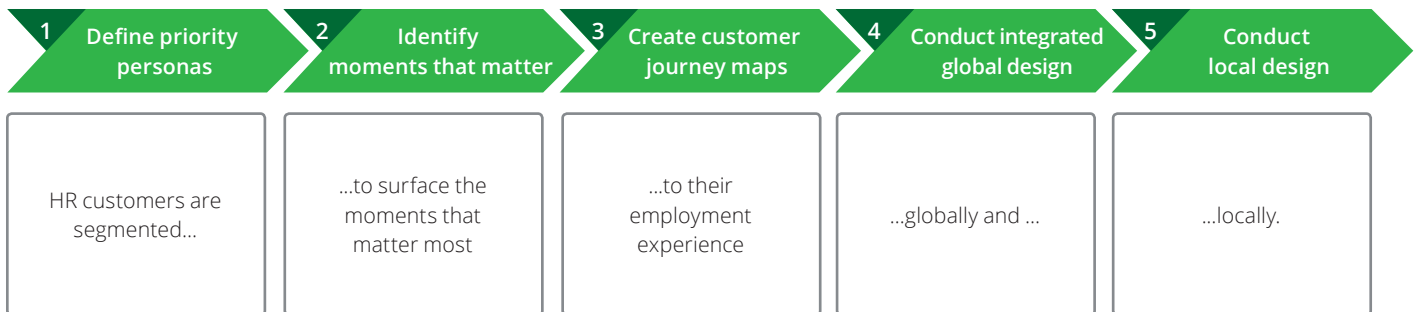
In our next example, the disruptions impacting an organization’s business and workforce inspired it to transform its current HR structure, technology, and associated processes by moving to the cloud. Rather than designing purely to support the move, the company is taking advantage of the opportunity to meaningfully enhance the experience for HR customers, putting the customer moments that matter front and center as it designs for the future.

The first, strategy phase of the transformation involved defining customer personas (e.g., a manager, a new recruit, an experienced hire, etc.), identifying the moments that matter to those customers, and creating journey maps of their employment experience. Now the company is using a **Hybrid Agile** methodology that employs models, prototypes, and multiple voices to design, test, and refine solutions. Tactically, this includes:

- Leveraging “fit for purpose” strategic design decisions to formulate the desired experience
- Inserting moments that matter into end-to-end process maps to further enrich the employee experience
- Conducting process design workshops, where each process is reviewed from the lens of the personas to validate that it delivers what matters most to that particular workforce segment
- Conducting focus groups and voice-of-the-customer surveys to test the experience early on in the design
- Building checks on the experience into user acceptance testing by asking, “Is the process delivering the desired sentiment expressed in the persona?”
- Incorporating learning gained from quickly iterating customer experience solutions, revising ideas early and often

The typical validation process no longer jumps from demo to impact assessment to closure. Instead, customer experience-driven steps are deliberately added to validate the new process through personas before the process is confirmed.

By embarking on an HR transformation with a keen focus on customer experience, the company is setting itself up to improve the quality of HR interactions, increase process efficiencies, and drive increased workforce engagement and productivity—all in one shot, for a truly value-added solution.



Source: Deloitte Consulting LLP

Design thinking meets Human Capital Management (HCM) tech selection

In our next example, an organization bucked the traditional software selection approach of issuing RFPs, down-selecting to a short list of vendors, and then conducting vendor demonstrations to ultimately select and contract for one or more technologies. Instead, the company applied design thinking to focus on the unique requirements that heavily influenced the employee experience and shaped the moments that matter most. The result was an HCM technology selection better aligned to business and workforce needs. The design thinking process involved the following steps.

Step 1: Look and listen to defined workforce personas. By identifying the distinctive personas that fit the organization’s vision and customer experience principles, customer needs became front and center. For example, relevant personas included “Susie,” a department supervisor who is worried about productivity and developing and retaining the talent that reports to her.

Step 2: Understand and synthesize workforce needs. By conducting voice-of-the-customer interviews and listening to customer stories, the moments that matter and desired emotional responses for each persona became clear. For example, Susie feels that above all else, her team matters. Her story reveals that she is looking for a technology solution that delivers a simple yet robust compensation modeling and performance management experience that will enable her to reward her top performers and be on high alert for retention issues. The selection team translated Susie’s story into compensation planning and performance management journey maps depicting the sentiment Susie feels as she experiences the moments that matter most to her.

Step 3: Generate and prioritize ideas. The selection team carved out the technology-enabled moments that matter from the journey maps and converted them into scenarios to facilitate an apples-to-apples assessment of how users will experience the competing technology solutions. To

address Susie’s priorities, competing technology vendors demonstrated how their respective solutions’ annual planning process enables business unit or group level what-if modeling for annual compensation increases. Competing suppliers further demonstrated the flexibility of their talent matrix capabilities, including the ability to view multiple attributes such as skills, critical position, and retention risks.

Step 4: Prototype, test, and refine. While full-blown prototyping and testing was deferred until implementation, the company had the competing vendors confirm their solution was fit for purpose by visualizing how they would configure their solutions in the context of business process-based moments that matter.

By completing this exercise, the company was able to take aim at unnecessary workplace complexity by putting the employee experience and moments that matter first. It also helped to support strong user adoption of the new technology because it was selected with customers’ specific needs in mind.

Department supervisor

"Nothing can stand in the way of my team"

Susie
Age 44
Department Supervisor
Manager

Susie has been managing her department at Megacorp for 7 years. She started as a junior accountant and worked her way up to a management role, building collaborative teams and constantly outperforming in her company, both as an employee and a manager.

She would like to be a partner someday, and feels that every aspect of her day matters in realizing this goal.

Motivations

- Advancement
- Control
- Transparency

"Nothing can stand in the way of my team."

Personality

- High Tech vs Low tech: High Tech
- Independent vs Dependent: Independent
- Trusting vs Skeptical: Skeptical

Goals

- Make partner one day.
- Get employees working at maximum efficiency so she doesn't have to work harder.
- Have a good relationship with her colleagues at all levels.

Frustrations

- Not knowing what her employees need
- Having to rely on others outside her department and they don't come through in a timely manner.
- Listening to employees' frustrations and complaints.
- Employees who can't get their work done.

Source: Deloitte Consulting LLP

Design thinking meets HCM app development

In business, the customer is king. Companies go out of their way to try to give customers the best experience possible, whether in a store, on the Internet, or through an app. The employee experience, however, is often very different. Employees increasingly expect to interact with their employers via their mobile devices, and they may think it's strange when there isn't a mobile app for recording their time, submitting expenses, or accessing HR.

In our next example, design thinking is applied to create a prototype for a new HR app. The app is designed to be a single destination for HR services that connects employees to what matters most to them—from pay stubs to performance management, and even a self-service help desk so employees and managers can clearly see their options and take action.

Step 1: Vision. The vision for the app is to improve employee engagement and satisfaction by taking the digital workplace platform one step further, allowing employees to cut the cord and complete HR activities when they aren't at their desks. The team's approach involved defining and designing a prototype over an 8-week timeline that included three "design sprints"—a time-constrained, five-phase process that uses design thinking to help reduce the risk when bringing a new product, service, or feature to the market. At the end of the 8 weeks, the team delivered a

prototype that defined, demonstrated, and acted as the basis for building out the new mobile solution.

Step 2: Look and listen to defined workforce personas. With the vision in place, the design team turned to the workforce personas that had already been defined, representing different HR customers. These included a new graduate (Madisyn), an experienced hire (Jason), a line manager involved in the recruitment of new talent (Carol), and an HR Ops service rep (Pete). The personas include descriptions of each of their behaviors, patterns, attitude, goals, skills, and environment, with the goal of designing the app to meet the needs of typical users.

Step 3: Understand and synthesize workforce needs. Voice-of-the-customer interviews and customer stories gave insight into the moments that mattered most for each of the customer personas. New-hires Madisyn and Jason shared the events, both positive and negative, that shaped their recent onboarding experience. Carol, a line manager, told the story of how she worked her way up to management and how her success had been the result of recruiting top talent. Carol shared that the first 90 days were critical to the successful transition of new hires into the company. Pete, the HR Ops service rep, spoke to the importance of bringing a human touch to the recruiting experience by engaging recruits with each interaction via ongoing communication regarding their application status and next steps.

Step 4: Generate and prioritize ideas. The team identified HR service domains and ranked problem areas that HR customers face across the domains. The team felt the top three focus areas for the mobile app should be onboarding, leaves of absence, and performance management, as all three had a preponderance of problems to solve and an opportunity to shape the customer experience as part of the app's broader customer-centric design.

Step 5: Prototype, test, and refine. During Design Sprint 1, the team reviewed process flows, wireframes (electronic sketches of screen layouts), and a prototype of the solution. The solution delivered an onboarding experience that integrated pre-hire, Day 1, and activities during the first 90 days on the job.

Design Sprint 2 integrated leaves of absence and performance management wireframes to the mobile solution. The team also got an early glimpse into the higher-fidelity onboarding solution. After more testing and more refinements, at the end of the 8 weeks the team delivered a prototype for the mobile solution that could be both vision and model for building the actual app.

Design thinking meets HR Operational Services

In our final example, decreasing employee satisfaction combined with a reduced ability to provide meaningful insight to the business, pushed an organization to leave its cost-focused HR Shared Services model behind and design an experience-focused HR Operational Services organization. A shift that required applying an outside-in perspective that placed the employee experience at the center of every design decision.

The result is an HR Operational Services organization that:

- Integrated the employee experience for transactional and service needs with chatbots and natural language processing with case management, content management and easy-to-use mobile and web portals
- Embraced design thinking to discover new ways to simplify work and improve productivity, performance and engagement
- Focused on the employee experience holistically, considering all the contributors to workforce satisfaction and engagement in the design of its products and services

Deloitte's Global Human Capital Trends 2016³ report revealed that there are more than 7 billion mobile devices in the world,⁴ and more than 40 percent of all Internet traffic is driven by these devices. Yet HR teams are often behind in deploying mobile-ready solutions. Fewer than 20 percent of companies deploy their HR and employee productivity solutions on mobile apps today.⁵

- Invested strategically in new technology to breakdown organizational silos, enhance productivity, drive adoption and deliver a differentiated employee experience
- Moved beyond traditional shared services metrics and embraced open feedback systems to capture net promoter scores⁶ to measure HR customer satisfaction
- Searched continuously for opportunities to improve and scale new services to address the desired experience of a multi-generational workforce

Many opportunities for meaningful improvement

These are just a few examples of ways HR can apply design thinking to reimagine and craft the employee experience to help generate higher engagement, satisfaction, and strategic alignment to drive brand differentiation, customer service excellence, and growth. The process can be applied to any number of HR processes, and doesn't have to involve a digital solution. However the \$14+ billion marketplace for HR software and platforms is reinventing itself.⁷ This shift from cloud to mobile is disruptive—an all-mobile HR platform is now possible. Design thinking can help align your organization in the same direction to create a more satisfying HR experience for your people.

We would love to hear your story about how you applied design thinking in your organization.

Notes

¹ Medallia Institute, "You Say You Want a Revolution: Build a Customer-Centric Culture"

² [Rewriting the rules for the digital age](#), Global Human Capital Trends 2017, Deloitte Consulting LLP

³ [The New Organization: Different by design](#), Global Human Capital Trends 2016, Deloitte Consulting LLP,

⁴ Jason Dorrier, "There are 7 billion mobile devices on earth, almost one for each person," Singularity Hub, Singularity University, February 18, 2014, <http://singularityhub.com/2014/02/18/there-are-7-billion-mobile-devices-on-earth-almost-one-for-each-person>.

⁵ [Digital HR: Revolution, not evolution](#), Deloitte University Press, February 29, 2016.

⁶ Wikipedia, "NetPromoter," https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Net_Promoter. NetPromoter asks a simple question: "on a scale of zero to ten, how likely is it you would recommend this company as a place to work?" Using this question, organizations can sort employees into promoters, passives, and detractors, similar to the identical question used widely with external customers.

⁷ Josh Bersin, "The HR software market reinvents itself," Josh Bersin blog, July 19, 2016.

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