A Strategic Imperative for Better Business: Designing the People - Centered Organization

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ABSTRACT:
The trendy acronym VUCA, short for volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity, is what people and organizations alike are living, breathing and navigating through every moment. Businesses are unable to see what lies around the next corner, let alone months or years down the line. The digital disruption is overturning incumbents and reshaping markets; it is redefining industries and business models; redesigning products and services; and rewriting people (customer, employee, and stakeholder) expectations and experiences. To add to the woes, prosumers, are increasingly collaborating and sharing goods and services in globally distributed networked creative commons at near zero marginal costs disrupting the working of capitalist markets.

The slogan “innovate or die,” is becoming true for many brands, but innovation and creativity do not come easy. As a result, businesses today, aspire to ‘think’ like designers and apply the design principles to address ‘ever-shifting’ problems and to excel in the workplace. Today design is about customer adoption and experience, market relevance, and meaningful results.

The article proposes using design thinking and service design, a practical and proven technique for these companies to change their trajectory and set the stage for innovation and drive growth. It does by bridging the gap between what companies know (strategy, data, analytics, insights) and do (products, services, interactions) with what they should be doing (empathy, context, content, convenience, conversations, connect, engage).

KEY WORDS: VUCA, Innovation, People-Centred Design, Service Design, Design Thinking.

INTRODUCTION:
The popular acronym VUCA, short for volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity, is what people and organizations alike are living, breathing and navigating through every moment. Businesses are unable to see what lies around the next corner, let alone months or years down the line. The digital disruption is overturning incumbents and reshaping markets; it is redefining industries and business models; redesigning products and services; and rewriting people (customer, employee, and stakeholder) expectations and experiences. To add to the woes, prosumers, are increasingly collaborating and sharing goods and services in globally distributed networked creative commons at near zero marginal costs disrupting the working of capitalist markets.
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Disrupt or be disrupted, is the mantra of successful organizations in the digital era. Despite the fact that businesses realize, to survive and sustain in today’s economy, innovation is the lifeline of success; research indicates that most innovation falls flat. The findings from a study in 2017 by Global Center For Digital Business Transformation (DBT Center), highlights that despite these dire ramifications, in about 17 percent of companies digital disruption is not seen worthy of board-level attention. Also, 40 percent still feel their leaders do not understand the threat or are responding inappropriately. Only 31 percent describe their approach to digital disruption as proactive - willing to disrupt themselves to compete.¹

For companies who have woken up from the slumber are seeking answers to these questions - How to disrupt? How to respond if you are being disrupted? How do successful disruptive organizations maximize the adoption of the fast-paced change initiatives that impact people every day?

The article proposes using a practical and proven technique for these companies to change their trajectory and set the stage for innovation and drive growth. It does by bridging the gap between what companies know (strategy, data, analytics, insights) and do (products, services, interactions) with what they should be doing (empathy, context, content, convenience, conversations, connect, engage). The bridge here is by applying design thinking and service design principles to solve complex problems to address end-user needs; companies can invoke flexible thinking and processes to build not just an evolved but an evolutionary organization. This requires organization leadership to maneuver with dexterity to bridge cultural alignment, internal capability change management, use of technology and value-centered governance. The crux is the leadership mindset establishing a sense of urgency to invest in building this bridge - the human or people understanding with opportunities to remove their lumps and bumps with real innovation and making life easier, better and safer for the customers, employees, and stakeholders.

Today, customer-obsessed businesses want to learn how to think like designers, empathize and collaborate with end-users to understand what they think, feel and behave; and apply design principles to the workplace itself. With the outstanding success rate of design-led companies (Apple, IKEA, GE, Lego, McDonalds, Lloyds Bank, Honeywell, Pepsi, Google and so on), the design has evolved beyond making objects. This explains why Accenture, Capital One, Deloitte, Facebook, IBM, and McKinsey have recently acquired design firms.

How Does Organization Mismatch Impact Problem Solving In A VUCA World: Why Innovation Fails?

“Siemens has remade half its product offerings in just the past decade to stay relevant.”²  
- Joe Kaeser, CEO

“This disruption has not been so kind to businesses operating by the rules of the old model. We don't have to watch their ads anymore. We don't believe their marketing hype anymore. We don't want to eat their junk ingredients anymore. We don't have to buy from their stores anymore. And we don't want the best of them to just be profit machines anymore. We want more, when we want it, how we want it, and at the price we want it.”³

- Idris Mootee

With the massive inflow of new products in an overcrowded marketplace, shorter lifespans of existing products, forces of commoditization, the unbelievable correlation of causes and effects across the globe, cutting through the noise to grab the attention of people, endless overhauling of ways of working - this is the essence of VUCA! In this VUCA environment (Figure 1), with traditional business models, it is getting harder for organizations to compete with the savvy customer’s demand for tailored products and services to make their personal or professional lives easier and better.

Figure 1: VUCA - The New Norma
In the book Future Shock, the author Alvin Toffler argues that the fast-paced change in the world around us disrupts our inner equilibrium, altering the very way in which we experience life. This overwhelming stress and disorientation caused by an accelerated change in a short period is called “future shock.” The same theory when extended to the leadership team and employees are forced to adapt with multitudes of changes throwing up dramatic challenges every second, and demanding response at lightning speed can explain the change fatigue and corresponding drop in performance levels. Today, organizations need to come to terms and be prepared for these shocks and help employees adapt to the new reality filled with danger and promise, as they are here to not only stay but surge in intensity.

If organization’s do a self-reflection, they would realize that the company’s No.1 enemy is itself. The tall hierarchy has made organizations - complex, complacent, conservative and less nimble to navigate the discomfort caused by change. Companies have brainwashed employees for years into uniform thinking - the customer is only an important factor in the decision-making process, seek articulated customer needs, innovation is limited to the R&D department. Often, the existing culture of these companies discourages creative thinking and innovative behaviors.

However, in the context of VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous), speed is a serious concern for incumbent organizations, facing adaptive challenges. While the leaders are “driving the bus,” disruptive startup leaders are flying past in a Prime-branded rocket ship. The inability to completely evolve to more profitable business models using new technologies to respond to new market forces including preferences, trends, and technologies are real challenges for the growth.

With a traditional thinking mindset, when asked to innovate people are lost and don’t know where to start and what to simplify first. The brainwashed employees cannot be put through a fixed-day customized cow-leading herd training program and expected to come up with brilliant ideas and fresh point of views and execute overnight. They often ask the wrong questions when launching an innovation initiative and as a result get wrong answers.

The incorrect question is: What is the budget that can be allocated for the innovation initiative? How many resources can be allocated? What is the deadline?

The correct question is: What is the problem we are trying to solve? What is the profitable business model to addresses the needs of customers using new technologies like cloud, mobile, social, analytics and platforms?

Innovation becomes a treadmill for many, and companies that do not keep up risk falling off the treadmill altogether, perhaps even dropping out of the business. Companies running to catch up cannot sustain innovation or their investments in future growth on this treadmill because it has no end and no place to rest.

Traditional companies and their boards need new thinking and skills to succeed.

Bridging the Gap: Apply Design Thinking and Service Design Principles - Increase Chance of Successful Innovations:

“We spend a lot of time designing the bridge, but not enough time thinking about the people who are crossing it.” -- Dr. Prabhjot Singh, Director of Systems Design at the Earth Institute

“Entrepreneurial business favors the open mind. It favors people whose optimism drives them to prepare for many possible futures, pretty much purely for the joy of doing so.” Richard Branson, The Virgin Group

Innovation is bound to fail in an organization, where ambiguities are treated as puzzles. Giving life to a new disruptive idea requires ruthless curiosity, the ability to sense the gap between current frustration at a system not working and a sensed potential, mapping overviews of diverse people, a commitment to persistent discovery and reframing problems: What is the unmet need that the new solution is fulfilling? Does it create meaningful value for consumers? Will customers pay for it? Which market to play? Can the organization deliver the value consistently in a financially and operationally viable way? How can this fail? How can external partners help rapidly commercialize this innovation?

This is where people-centric, design-led innovation should be the discipline of choice. These questions require leading through observation of how people, product, and systems interact; evidence gathered from research in the field; empathy-based inquiry, rapid-fire hypothesizing; explore new ideas; rapid prototyping and testing before they are brought to market.

By contrast, inexpensively imitating an existing product or offering a brand extension is much more like a puzzle. How can we make a premium product? How much more will a customer pay? What are the alternative ways to reduce the cost of a single unit? These questions also require disciplined analysis and data, but answers can
often be found through internal expertise, available data and insights, and disciplined financial analysis.

The success of a great product cannot be left to chance. Most organizations spend significant time designing tangible products, but services hardly receive any attention. But, in today’s marketplace, to succeed this needs to change, as generally services are less productive and cause more irritation and frustration to customers than products. So the heart of service design is to improve and innovate the services customers use across different touchpoints and make a positive impact on them and the employee experience necessary for delivering it. The intent is to create a new value that previously did not exist.7

Table 1: Business Thinking vs. Design Thinking Organization

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors</th>
<th>Legacy Organization Traditional Business Thinking</th>
<th>VUCA Ready Organization Design Thinking</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Goal</td>
<td>Management</td>
<td>Innovation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>Getting product to market, while reducing costs and</td>
<td>Making an MLP “Minimum Lovable Product” with exceptional service</td>
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<td></td>
<td>increasing margins</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Mindset</td>
<td>BAU - Business as usual, adopt a “present to future”</td>
<td>Hyper change as the norm. Start with the “end in mind” to disrupt and “bridge back to present.”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>orientation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>A defensive/follower posture (rule-maker/taker)</td>
<td>A ground-breaking posture (rule-breaker)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Accept established business boundaries</td>
<td>Seek to create new playing fields</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status of Customer</td>
<td>The customer is another important factor in decision making</td>
<td>Customer i.e. people is at the center of everything, their positive experience at every touchpoint matters</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Customer needs and behaviors come from market survey</td>
<td>Understand the unmet customer needs, current behaviors and the rationale behind them needs, co-create with their inputs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>Maintaining the routine</td>
<td>Driving all aspects of work and strategy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ideating Environment</td>
<td>Innovation is limited to research and development</td>
<td>Innovation is at the core of the whole organization. Environmental scanning, situational awareness is critical to anticipate disruption.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>teams and specific innovation centers</td>
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<tr>
<td>Product launches</td>
<td>Prototypes are built and launched to the market once the idea is conceived</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prototypes are built and launched to the market once the idea is conceived</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working environment</td>
<td>Working environment aims to generate new ideas and solutions by customers, employees, and stakeholders</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Working environment is designed to promote efficiency</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Products are</td>
<td>Feedback from customers is continuously fed into the prototypes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>subject to minor upgrades</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth</td>
<td>Planned growth</td>
<td>Growth based on discontinuous change and understood through scenario planning and storytelling.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Global expansion - unlimited green fields</td>
<td>Increased competition without limitless green fields</td>
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<tr>
<td>Individual Roles and</td>
<td>Fixed job roles</td>
<td>Evolving organizational roles that have yet to be defined comes with an expiry date</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Composition</td>
<td>Legacy organizational structures and practices rooted in the past.</td>
<td>Need for new organizational structures and practices. Open to experiments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The age of the knowledge worker, with similar background and experiences</td>
<td>A cross-functional workforce, with diverse profiles and experiences</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Source: Prepared by the author

If organizations try to cut corners, compromise on quality, to be the first to market and fail to deliver on service or product, they will not be able to survive for long. So companies need to be stringent and become more structured in their approach to managing innovation. By implementing design thinking and service design principles and mindset, companies can see their organizations through the lens of the customer, and stay ahead of the curve

- redesign business models
- ensure a steady stream of a product or service ideas in the pipeline.
- co-create the solutions with inputs from customers, an internal cross-functional team, and industry experts
- build an evolved and evolutionary organization, where customer experience is an organization-wide responsibility.

Building Blocks of Design - A Structure for the Business Endeavour

“Innovation - any new idea - by definition will not be accepted at first. It takes repeated attempts, endless demonstrations, and monotonous rehearsals before innovation can be accepted and internalized by an organization. This requires courageous patience. 8

- Warren Bennis

A Useful Design has that “X” Factor that Makes Products more Desirable and Services more Appealing to Customers

Though design thinking is a non-linear problem-solving approach to address the end-user needs, the design process is usually modeled as a linear sequence, as that is how people work best in the real world. In this model,
the structure of the process - made up of the core building blocks (Figure 2): notice, empathy, define, ideate, prototype, test and reflect; becomes less rigid. Making the process work has a lot more to do with the diverse capacities and perspectives of the team than it does a formalized step-by-step process. Even the team itself is not static; it depends on the team’s ability to disrupt the status quo of problem-solving based on the needs of the end-user.

Figure 2: Design Thinking Framework, Stanford d. School

The seven steps in the design thinking process created in May 2017 by d.School: Institute of Design out of Stanford University.

- **Notice**: To build a practice of awareness of the human values, identify biases and assumptions and its impact on the user and context within which the designer is empathizing. This allows for authentic user-centered design, not “you or designer” centered design.
- **Empathize**: Work to fully understand the experience of the client for whose design process is being supported. Do this through observation, interaction, empathy maps, and immersing in their experiences/story.
- **Define**: Process and synthesize the findings from the empathy work to form a client-centered view that will guide the design collaboration.
- **Ideate**: Explore a diverse variety of possible solutions through generating a diverse set, allowing one to step beyond the obvious to explore a range of ideas.
- **Prototype**: Transform the ideas into a concrete plan of action, learning and developing more empathy to explore potential outcomes.
- **Test**: Use observations and feedback to refine prototype ideas, find out more about the clients’ adaptation(s), and refine the original client-centered view.
- **Reflect**: It is an ongoing and transparent throughout the design thinking process. It allows the team the time to focus and think about their actions, emotions, insights, and impact as a designer and human.

Ideo describes innovation as the point of intersection between business, people, and technology. It is a strong reminder that an innovative mindset is as essential to viability as the three other pillars. Innovation is every organization’s call to action.

Figure 3: IDEO Framework for Innovation

The design thinking approach is a self-correcting system, where human-centric hypotheses come in, generating many ideas with inputs from a highly cross-functional team in ideation sessions, and validated solution prototype comes out with customer feedback - to be fed back into the system to trigger future ideation. Design thinking is at the core of innovation, effective strategy development, enhancing customer and employee experience and organizational change. It provides an opportunity for employees to co-create the solution with different people which includes: analysts, customers, researchers, stakeholders - to offer their viewpoints when it’s relevant to the problem. The welcome side effect is a high performing interdisciplinary team and a company culture boosting teams formed of employees, contractors, outsourced
staff, external stakeholders and most importantly customers, to raise the bar - an important aspect of keeping the company flexible and nimble.

Design thinking’s dual-problem orientation in a nutshell is commercial creativity at work. It’s top down (make money) and bottom up (create magic) approach ensures there is no compromise to the inventiveness of the idea to better consumers’ life, while building business models to bring the winning solutions to life. The logic being, the brilliant idea if realized might have been great for consumers, but owing to big, strategic, technical, operational and financial flaws it never had a shot of reaching them.

With this dual-problem orientation, design thinking balances the act and ensures there is no compromise to the inventiveness of the idea to better consumers’s life, while building the business models to bring the winning solutions to life. The logic being, the brilliant idea if realized might have been great for consumers, but owing to big, strategic, technical, operational and financial flaws it never had a shot of reaching them and going mainstream.

For organizations wanting to invest in becoming more significant in the customers’ lives and shape the long-term relationship with the customers, we propose a possibility-driven approach of design thinking. This method seeks to explore the role of design beyond just solving immediate pressing issues and undesirable events. It explores, how might this product disappear, die or evolve? It aims at creating new products or services that can change lives, by looking for possibilities to create new possible bright futures. By implementing a possibility-driven approach, design thinking could be used as an engine of possibilities — envisioning a better life.

An example of this approach is demonstrated by the ‘Philips Wake Up Light.’ The human habit to slam the snooze, again and again, disrupts their sleep and is the least restful way to kick off their morning. Rather than trying to improve the current usage of their product, Philips reframed the whole experience of waking up and made it more natural. By looking beyond the use of the alarm, Philips paid attention to how the product can contribute to the human goal of good health by providing a new refreshing way to start the day.

To sum it up, in the quest of high-impact business growth, design thinking is a philosophy, a mindset and a structured methodology for developing and fast-tracking transformational innovation.

1. **It’s The Outcome That Matters:**
   Innovation success isn’t measured in meetings; it’s measured in market. The right innovation process is one that serves this end. Having an idea without knowing how it makes money is as valueless as knowing where growth lies without having the idea to unlock it.

2. **The Dual-Problem Orientation:**
   Though human-centrity is at the core, Top Down (Make Money) + Bottom UP (Create Magic) works from day one to uncover two separate sets of problems - those of the consumer and those of the business - and to solve them concurrently rather than sequentially.

3. **Practical Parallel Insights:**
   The frustrations and unfulfilled desires hidden in the closet of the consumer are identified through observation and creative empathy. The business constraints, elements in today’s mainstream that might become obsolete, future aspiration and possibilities to make the new innovation a mainstream; are uncovered through intensive strategic, technical, financial and operational exploration. This concurrent two-pronged pursuit of ‘How Might We’ delivers distinct arrays of consumer and commercially viable insights to trigger invention.

4. **Answer At Every Crossroads To Untangle The Mess:**
   By not replacing messy upfront exploration with assumptions to get to the finishing line, the creative process is unleashed on recognizing patterns and new connections between the needs of the consumer and business, finding the sweet spots by sparking ideas out of the misunderstandings and tensions between them. To surge ahead of the many possibilities in view, the ones having the potential to be truly innovative or relevant or successful and can address the needs of both business and consumers is chosen.

5. **The Wow And The How Business Model:**
   Bringing ideas to life with creative insight, design, empathy, sensory experience, collaboration and storytelling helps to break through all hurdles and deliver the wow. The how and the story doing happens by building business models to bring the winning prototypes to the market, by critically examining the strategic, technical, operational, and financial dimensions.

   The net result is ideas that are big and doable, making transformational innovation the more impactful and reliable growth engine companies need it to be.
Building the Bridge to New Ways of Work: Setting Up The Stage For Design - Lay The Groundwork For Innovation

“All meaningful and lasting change begins on the inside.”

- Martin Luther King, Jr.

“There are no secrets to success. It is the result of preparation, hard work, and learning from failure.”

- Colin Powell, Former United States National Security Advisor

To build the bridge, organizations need to accept the fact that they are at the crossroads of two different work environments. This disconnect between the new normal and blind adherence to legacy processes and structures is generating an organization operating chasm that can and will have serious strategic implications. To shift to the new reality requires organization’s to do a deep and healthy introspection of existing comfortable and familiar work structures, processes and current engagement levels. This alignment assessment is not a one-off event but a continual organizational process. This will help in:

- Critically analyzing what needs to be fixed, what is working, what “wows.”
- The ideal current state and what could be the future state
- Clarity on where the organization stands in the industry, functionally, technically, culturally and as a thought leader

The design is both a process and a mindset. It is a deliberate set of practices to unlock new, sustainable value from change and uncertainty. It allows individuals and organizations to be more flexible and resilient in the face of constant change.

The journey to become a designer and build a contextually relevant bridge to innovate and enhance people experience starts with preparation.

Redesign the Leaders - An Operating System Upgrade to Get the Organization Design Right

“Invention is not enough. Tesla invented the electric power we use, but he struggled to get it out to people. You have to combine both things: invention and innovation focus, plus the company that can commercialize things and get them to people.”

- Larry Page, Google Co-Founder

“A true leader has the confidence to stand alone, the courage to make tough decisions, and the compassion to listen to the needs of others. He does not set out to be a leader but becomes one by the equality of his actions and the integrity of his intent.”

- Douglas MacArthur

Brain J. Robertson in his book, Holacracy: The New Management System For A Rapidly Changing World argues just like a computer’s operating system defines how the overall system is structured, how power is distributed and allocated between applications, how different processes interact and cooperate, and so on; so does the CEO in the context of an organization. The leadership lays the foundation on which the business processes (the “apps” of organization) are designed, and it outlines the human culture as well.

Despite the power of these new-paradigm ideas and techniques like design thinking, when they are applied in an organizational system that’s still conventionally structured, there is a huge obstacle to their deployment and there’s a major clash paradigm clash. At best, the novel techniques become a “bolt-on” - something that affects just one aspect of the organization and remains in continual conflict with the other systems around it. Eventually, the novel practice fails to realize its full potential, however promising.

Essentially, in the VUCA era, to govern and operate an organization, leaders need to realign, to define a set of core rules to disrupt, while preserving the character of the organization and its products or services in the context of what customers need and what is happening in the world.

- A capacity to lead: ability to sense, compassion to the needs of others, set the “rules of the game,” articulate, clarify, respond and learn; builds trust through supporting people along the journey to achieve breakthrough performance
- An ability to develop people: clarify the meaning of the work people do, match people with the right opportunities, reallocate role and authority, process for updating those roles and authorities, mentor and coach people, and build a positive influence.
- An appetite for change: the capability build a culture where people understand (needs of the context, needs of others and their own needs) and have a common vocabulary
- A mindset for innovation: a designer of the systems for the future, collaborate within and outside the organization, draw on multiple points of views and experiences, to build a people-centered /customer-centric operation.

1253
Notice- Find The Spark: Start With The Problems - Reframe Questions To Avoid Getting Disrupted

“Insanity is the doing same thing over and over again and expecting different results.”

Albert Einstein

“Most failures in industry are not that people can’t solve problems; it’s that they are not always great at identifying the right problems to solve.”

- John Kembel, Stanford d.School

Lisa Bodell, in her book Kill The Company: End the Status Quo, Start an Innovation Revolution, argues the organization applies provocative inquiry to every aspect of the business, there will be a collective ripple of unease. Teams that ask these uncomfortable questions prevent early conclusions. With a diversity of perspectives from a cross-functional team, they are poised to tackle questions both difficult and deep. This provokes new thinking and has the power to challenge long-held assumptions that create real change.

Find the spark to being the change journey. List the provocative questions and prioritize the ones that matter most. For example instead of asking “How to beat the competition?” ask “How can our competitors put us out of business?” By embracing this technique, companies can bust status-quo, and realize what an innovation opportunity looks and sounds like. The disruptive questions usually begin with “how,” “how much,” “which,” “why,” “what if,” or “if” and are specific without limiting imagination.

The table 2 below list the provocative questions that could aid in kick-starting the journey, right from the board to employees.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2: A sample list of provocative questions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>From generic questions</td>
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<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do we?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Board Member</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leadership</td>
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<td>Management (CEO)</td>
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<td>Finance</td>
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<td>Customer Experience/ Innovation/ Strategy/ Transformations/ Office</td>
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<td>Product Management</td>
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<td>Marketing</td>
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1254
How do we gain increased share of customer’s wallet?

• How can we double our sales in one year?
• With client A our opportunity funnel is large but can we fulfill this request? What does the market trend point to vis-à-vis their requirements, Are we better off focusing efforts for client B, whose requirements have a higher % success rate?
• Which are our most profitable clients by right time effort and revenue analysis?

How do we enhance back-office functions that impact customer?

• How to get the customer to view the firm’s services as an asset?
• How can we measure the effectiveness of the customer service initiatives?
• How could we make this transaction simpler or more effortless?
• How to better forecast and report time spent per activity completed based on outcome delivered?
• How can a new technology eliminate a customer’s time spent waiting for service?

How big and current is the candidate database? Is the source effective?

• How can we evaluate recruiting reach and effectiveness? Are the type of work engagements consistent with the type of people the firm is trying to (or need to) attract?
• How are the sourcing partners delivering and how to evaluate/rank them?

How to get the best from people?

• How can we create a work environment in which overwhelmed; overconnected people are empowered to do the best work of their lives?
• How can we design an organization in which ordinary people are enabled to do extraordinary things?
• How can we rethink performance management in a way that helps people unleash their imaginations and craft their life’s opus?
• How can organizations successfully build a culture of always being change-ready?

How do we enable customer technologies and integrate digital channels?

• How can we employ technologies that allow a singular enterprise-wide view of customers?
• How does investment in technology make the company easier to do business with?
• How does investment in technology coupled with innovation help organizations to stay ahead?
• How can technology help organizations speed up decision-making to respond to the ever-changing business realities?

How will my career goals get addressed?

• If you could only work on one project for the next six months to transform the function/business, what would it be and why?
• If you were CEO/Department Head for one day, which three things would you change to enable growth of our brands?
• If you could kill or change any three rules at work, what would they be, and why?
• You have just written a tell-all book about this company: Which secrets does it reveal?
• You are still telling people about your experience at [company] and how it helped you become the person you are today: What is the story you tell?, What was your legacy?, Why are you still an ambassador for [company], even though you no longer work there?

How do we effectively work with each other, keeping the organization safe and legal?

• What are the ongoing activities we need to pay attention to, and who will own each to keep the organization safe and legal?
• What expectations can we reasonably hold of others, and vice versa?
• Who is responsible for taking decisions, and within what limits?
• How can we change the response to the questions as we learn better ways of working together?

Source: Prepared by the author

Build the Guiding Design Team - Search for the Rebel as Brand Ambassadors and Facilitators

The way a team plays as a whole determines its success. You may have the greatest bunch of individual stars in the world, but if they don’t play together, the club won’t be worth a dime. 17

- Babe Ruth, The famous American baseball player

The same can be said about designing great businesses: the best businesses are the products of great teams. That said, not just any team will do. A team that will generate the most useful ideas from its key findings, and that will most thoroughly prototype and validate those ideas, is made up of a diverse group of unusual suspects (think the A-Team, not Friends). They will find diamonds in the rough where no one else has. They will challenge each other. And, by virtue of their diversity, they will bring with them a network of other people and resources that will come in handy when it’s time to get down and dirty. 18

When it comes to answering complex questions or initiatives, there will only be a handful of people willing to take a leap of faith and try something new to achieve the desired outcome. To do this, we need a rebel, who is ready to stand up and announce that the time has come to take a new approach to answering a question or solving a problem. As ambassadors, the person has the ability to carve out time and negotiate for resources for the design journey. The rebel is the one who will persist and ensure that all relevant stakeholders contribute and try something different before going back to the old way of doing things.
As a facilitator, they will conduct workshops, select the appropriate tools, establish the work teams, define the workshop objectives, provide the activity schedules, do the screenplay, be cognizant of time while ensuring participation of all stakeholders, while providing space for the team to discuss and make decisions along the way. The facilitator must have a contingent place to avoid unforeseen delays. The facilitator must also capture salient points of view, ideas, decision points and make necessary course corrections along the way.

Provide War Rooms: The Environment To Conduct Creative Design Workshops:
To get the best out of these rebels, they need to be given “war rooms” for conducting design workshops. The facilitators will use visual tools and templates to enable participants to be more structured and creative in the work they do. As the design is an interactive process and is non-linear, the team will need to refer artifacts constantly, they have developed along the journey. Sticking them on the different walls every other day and storing in shelves impacts the time taken to design and reduce overall productivity.

Takeaway - Believe In the People Power and Get Started:
Every human being is a Leonardo Da Vinci, the only problem is that he doesn't know it. His parents didn't know it, and they didn't treat him like a Leonardo, therefore he didn't become like a Leonardo. That's my basic theory.”

- Alex Pattakos

It is time organizations, start treating every employee as Leonardo, who will help deal with uncertainty using a disciplined approach to search, identify and capture value. So the next time as leaders, if you are tempted to break out that 50+ slide powerpoint or spreadsheet analysis to confront a wicked problem, wear your designer hat. Start with the point of view of the observable cross-functional team, ask few to grab their magnifying glass and blank field book to start gathering new evidence on the world’s viewpoint, create and validate opinions and execute the ones that best address the opportunities. Design is continuous and iterative, and this is the first step to kick-start the journey to expand successful innovation in your organization through design-led leadership.

The key is to think big, but be willing to start small. Some organizations may start with select critical processes or projects which are struggling to generate revenue or profits. Those going for a big-bang approach need leadership commitment to provide a dedicated budget to train employees in design thinking for strategy and innovation. Whether or not there is an appetite for design in an organization, people who are exposed to this technique will certainly develop skills that deliver better business results, however small or incremental.

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1256