

The Design Thinking Recipe*

**A guide for managers of change to spice up Design Thinking!*

SELECTION

Is Design Thinking the right answer?

Not always!

Companies should try to understand whether Design Thinking is the right answer for their specific needs or if other or integrative innovation mindsets are required.

ENVIRONMENT

Does the company have the ideal preconditions for applying Design Thinking?

Spaces, timing and a positive attitude towards risk are fundamental elements for the application of Design Thinking to make its adoption effective.

AMBASSADORS

Who are the first ambassadors inside the company and what is their role?

Companies should identify internal ambassadors that see the value of the Design Thinking mindset and are ready to adopt it and transmit it to colleagues.



EXPECTATIONS

Are expectations properly and effectively managed?

Companies should declare and properly communicate the expectations around the Design Thinking adoption, managing both aspects related to innovation results and aspects related to additional side effects.

EXECUTIVES ENGAGEMENT

Are executives engaged in a meaningful way?

Companies should create the conditions to engage and involve executives in understanding Design Thinking. They are not always required to actively deliver results, but should be leading the project driven by goals and values.

ROLES & COMPETENCIES

Which are the roles and competencies needed in applying a Design Thinking path?

Companies should build an effective collaboration framework between internal employees and external experts with defined roles and responsibilities. It is important to choose the most appropriate internal resources and involve decision makers.

TIME

Is Design Thinking given formalized and valuable time?

Companies should make sure that people involved in the Design Thinking adoption feel entitled to take the proper time for the various activities. They should create the conditions to let these activities be perceived as valuable by the rest of the company.



RESULTS

Are first activities creating tangible and actionable results?

Companies should ensure that activities in place for the adoption of Design Thinking are creating tangible results that are actionable and could bring effective changes for innovation inside the organization. Furthermore it is crucial to define and agree on KPIs to measure the success of the Design Thinking path.

VOCABULARY

Are the people involved talking the same language?

Companies should make sure that Design Thinking is spoken with a common language to be more effective and better understood. This language should be used by internal and external people involved in its adoption.

STORYTELLING

Are the involved people properly communicating Design Thinking results (final and intermediate)?

Companies should create a proper storytelling framework in order to effectively communicate the various results of the Design Thinking adoption, whether they are final or intermediate. The delivery of these stories should be consciously planned in time.

The Design Thinking Recipe

The Design Thinking Recipe is a guide for managers of change who want to bring Design Thinking into companies.

Who are the managers of change?

They could be both internal people of the company, such as **innovation managers, marketing managers, HR managers or entrepreneurs** too, and external ones such as **innovation consultants**. If you feel you are a manager of change, despite your specific role you will face issues that are not necessarily related to tools, methods or process but are focused on the overall conditions to make the adoption of Design Thinking effective.

Here you will find 10 ingredients to help you deal with this brave challenge!

Where do these ingredients come from?



The contents inside this poster have been generated during the workshop entitled "**The Future of Design Thinking**" in the frame of the European project DesAlps. During the workshop participants (professionals coming from different innovation fields) were asked to imagine the **guidelines to enable Design Thinking** to be effectively adopted and so to have a prosperous future. Serena Leonardi and Silvia Toffolon, consultants of the DesAlps project, elaborated them in the following 10 ingredients.

ENVIRONMENT

To enable companies to apply the Design Thinking mindset, managers of change should make sure some conditions are put in place, in order to create the right settings for unleash its potential. Three aspects are identified as fundamental: **spaces, timing and attitude**.

Starting from spaces, the best scenario sees a group of people working in a **flexible space**, different from traditional meeting rooms, where tables and/or walls can be used by the group as active working areas, people are encouraged to take action and output material can be left from one session to the other. While working in this kind of space, timing is a huge issue: it must be well kept and designed in order to **keep the focus** of the working sessions. For this reason, having a **facilitator** that holds the different activities is definitely an enabler. Last but not least a **positive attitude** is crucial for the success of any Design Thinking project. That's why the people involved are best to be chosen among propositional ones in the company, open to change and willing to take risks. Along the journey this mindset should be reminded.

ROLES AND COMPETENCIES

Building an effective working team is a key issue for applying Design Thinking in the company. For this scope, it is important for managers of change to have a **framework** that can help companies select the right people to involve. As an example, the best groups are when an **heterogeneous population** is involved (such as different genders, roles in the company or senioritis in the company), formed by **open minded people**, willing to explore and take risk. Having **decision makers** among the team is of course a crucial point: their presence is necessary to make sure first results become real and tangible.

The working group is best to be enabled by **external consultants**, who become part of the team and can play the role of facilitators of the process. In addition companies could also involve **clients or external innovators** who could help them see their value proposition from another perspective. In this sense internal employees and externals should build an effective collaboration framework, identifying roles and responsibilities, based on the different competences.

RESULTS

Often the processes of change within companies are long ones, that can take years, and involve several people at various levels. When planning a Design Thinking path it is useful to think in terms of **modules or steps**, so that there is a general overview of the path but at the same time the company can adjust the route if necessary. These modules need to be planned with **increasing intensity**, for example starting with small and simple tasks within the company and gradually increasing in complexity. Each of these modules or steps must be associated with a concrete result, even a small one, that gives the working group and the company itself a **sense of satisfaction and progression** of the path. The results of one step will act as **fuel to move on to the next**, and so on. In this sense also creating small pilots can have a powerful impact in letting people see the value of Design Thinking.

In addition, when planning the path and steps, KPIs must also be considered in order to **evaluate the success** and ensure the working group is going in the right direction. The KPIs will have to be agreed within the company also according to expectations, keeping in mind "side effects".

SELECTION

Design Thinking cannot solve any kind of problem and is not the only innovation mindset that can be applied. The role of managers of change should be to consciously give advice of application to the company they are working for. It is indeed important to have a **framework** to diagnose the problem a company might have and consequently understand whether Design Thinking is the right answer for solving this problem. To do so, on the one hand highlighting common grounds and divergences between Design Thinking and other innovation mindsets is an enabler for decision makers in order to define the scope of the project. On the other hand producing **diagrams or process flows** to show where Design Thinking introduces itself in the company helps decision makers wisely choose according to the desired results.

EXPECTATIONS

Expectations are a very powerful tool in designing and defining a Design Thinking path within a company, also because the results of this kind of path can't always be precisely predicted. For this reason managers of change must be able to **manage and address** the expectations of both the working group and the company executives. To do this it is advisable to plan before the beginning of the path some meetings to capture **explicit and non-explicit expectations** and understand how to meet them or, if necessary, frame them better. In addition, to ensure that expectations are correctly framed, it is also necessary to emphasize the "**side-effects**" of undertaking a project through Design Thinking. "Side effects" that usually occur are for example exploiting the potential of employees, being open about company's changes, developing risk taking capabilities, being more open to colleagues, working in a more visual way and so on.

VOCABULARY

Design Thinking, like other innovation methodologies, has a number of **specific terms** (e.g. Double Diamond, Personas, ...) that become common use among employees who have embarked on a Design Thinking path, but can turn to be a **language barrier** with employees who have not taken part in the path. It is therefore useful to set and structure two different **streams of vocabulary transfer**: the first between externals and employees who participate in the path, and the second between employees who have participated and the others. The former will tend to understand and adopt the terms as the journey goes on and they will experience methods and tools, keeping an eye on the company's specific culture and shared vocabulary. For the latter it is important to **plan a proper time of transfer** from employees who have participated in the Design Thinking path to those who have not participated. If the company is very numerous, it is suggested to identify among those who do not have participated the ones for whom the vocabulary transfer is more crucial. To make the transfer more fluid it might be useful to create a kind of **glossary of terms** related to Design Thinking to be more effective and be better understood.

STORYTELLING

Design Thinking can bring meaningful innovation to companies, but without a proper storytelling they run the risk of not giving the proper value to the insights and ideas developed by any working team. Therefore managers of change should make sure that any Design Thinking outcome is enhanced by a **communication strategy** that matches general guidelines on how to effectively communicate ideas with insights on how to communicate in the specific company's context. Having a visual representation of the path and of the ideas is an enabler to let people get confident with both the methodology and the outcomes. Also **timing** plays a role in telling Design Thinking stories inside a company. Since the path can bring a high level of innovation, any working group should understand when it is the right moment to communicate the different outputs. This moment should be soon enough to let executives feel engaged and enter into the new perspective proposed, but at the same time late enough to let the working group make sense out of all insights they collect.

If you are interested in getting more information about the processes of Design Thinking, we inform you that in the locations of the partners involved in the project there are **reference points** for the activities of Design Thinking in the Alpine Space.

In addition, you can find all the **Design Thinking LABs** plus the **Design Thinking materials** and events in the virtual platform www.designthinkinglab.eu.