Glossary of Design Thinking Jargon

Put the Right Words in Your Mouth

I have never played Meeting Bingo—the game you can play secretly during a meeting when you're bored. It's played like bingo, but instead of keeping track of B-5 and O-70, you keep track of jargon and business-speak like "parking lot this issue" and "sustainable practices." We've all been in meetings like that, and they validate my belief that jargon should be banned from any gathering of two or more professionals.

Since the likelihood of that happening is slim to none, I want to arm you with the definitions of the most common design thinking jargon so that you can talk the talk with the best of them.

Common Design Thinking Terminology

Co-creation: the development of creating a product, service, or process by more than one stakeholder group; *see also* Collaborative

Collaborative: two or more stakeholder groups combine inputs, ideas, and insights to create a product, service, or process; *see also* Co-creation

Context: the circumstances in which an idea, event, or decision exists and which can influence the outcome

Culture of Collaboration: purposefully designed business culture that values collaboration across teams, departments, and business sectors

Customer Engagement: the act of connecting a customer to a brand, business, or other customer with the purpose of provoking conversation and feedback

Customer Experience: whether online or in person, the experience a customer has when interacting with your brand, business, and employees

Deep Design: design with the purpose of appealing not only to the conscious mind but also to the subconscious

Design Strategy: the process of applying design thinking principles to business strategy, incorporating research and holistic thinking; the intersection of design and strategic planning

Digital Storytelling: sharing via digital media a business's compelling, meaningful story intended to build a connection with target audiences; *see also* Storytelling

Empathy: understanding another's feelings, thoughts, or attitudes; a requirement for developing communications, experiences, and interactions with target audiences

Experience Design: the process of applying design thinking principles to create a meaningful experience for customers, employees, or other pertinent stakeholders

Feedback Loop: a system through which customers, employees, and other pertinent stakeholders can share insights, opinions, thoughts, and criticisms directly to a business; a process through which information flows forward as well as feeds back on itself

Futurists: consultants, organizational leaders, strategists, and others who use design thinking, systems thinking, and other interdisciplinary approaches to anticipate economic, social, and political changes that could affect business

Getting Traction: making progress toward strategic business objectives

Human Capital: the collection of skills, abilities, expertise, and creativity among a business's employees and senior leadership that can be leveraged to produce economic value

Ideation: the fourth step in the design thinking process; the act of generating ideas in a rapid manner without regard for constraints; brainstorming

Ideograph: *also* Ideogram; a symbol or picture used to represent an idea, concept, or thing in place of a word, or when there isn't a word to use accurately in the symbol's place

Integrated Thinking: an approach to thinking that balances multiple constraints and evaluates the potential effect of those constraints as the balance shifts

Intrapreneur: being or behaving like an entrepreneur from within an organization

Iterate: to repeat a process or action, making modifications along the way, with the purpose of reaching a desired outcome

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs): a defined and specific metric by which performance is measured; also called benchmarks or milestones

Mind Map: a nonlinear diagram used to visually outline information; often centered on a word or short phrase that represents a concept, challenge, or opportunity; associated words, ideas, and concepts are then added around the center

Prototype: a sample, model, or work-in-progress of a product, service, or process used for testing viability and gathering stakeholder input

Radical Innovation: innovation on such a grand or unpredicted scale that it disrupts an entire industry; often driven by an idea instead of customer need

Roadmap: an outline that often uses visuals to depict how a business will proceed from a starting point to reach a defined objective

Scenario Planning: a flexible means of strategic planning that accommodates two or more "if-then" situations that allows a business to anticipate and prepare for varying versions of the future

Social Entrepreneur: an individual who takes an entrepreneurial approach to developing scalable solutions to social problems

Social Innovation: the act of using innovation processes to help solve social challenges; can also refer to specific innovations that have a social purpose, for example, microcredit

Stakeholders: groups that have some degree of interest in the general operations, successes, and failures of a business, such as customers, employees, and so on

Storytelling: sharing a business's key messages and story in a predominantly narrative format intended to build emotional connections between the business and stakeholders

User-Centered Design: an approach to design that considers the needs and wants of the end users of a product or service at each stage of the process; multistage problem solving that requires designers to anticipate the desires of end users and test their assumptions

User-Centered Research: research to determine the needs and wants of the end users of a product or service with the purpose of designing it to more accurately meet those needs and wants; may include research to test the ability of an existing product or service to meet those needs and wants

User Experience (UX): refers to the quality of the interaction between a person and a piece of technology or software, with particular attention paid to ease of use and efficiency; the outcome of user-centered research and design

Visual Thinking: a means of communicating thoughts and ideas through symbols and imagery; often used during brainstorming or ideation sessions; also called graphic recording, visual notes, or sketch notes

Web Analytics: measuring, collecting, analyzing, and reporting data collected from the Internet, most often in conjunction with website usage, for the purposes of improving performance and the user experience