Case Study: The Good Kitchen (Det Gode Køkken)—Applying Design Thinking and Service-Dominant Logic

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The Danes, like people in most developed countries, recognized that the aging of their population created new demands and many challenges. In 2007, one of these challenges was providing the more than 125,000 senior citizens with daily meals who relied on government subsidies for food. Danish municipalities delivered affordable meals to people who suffered from a reduced ability to function, due to illness, age, or other conditions. Many of the seniors had nutritional challenges and a poor quality of life because they simply did not eat enough. It was estimated that 60% of Denmark's seniors in assisted living facilities or residential care units had *poor* nutrition and 20% were *malnourished*. The results were both health problems and low quality of life for the elderly and a greater economic burden on the government. The problem only looked to intensify as the number of senior citizens was growing and future generations of seniors expected greater choice and better service.

Therefore, a local design agency was hired to design a new meal service for the Municipality of Holstebro. Everyone, in the beginning, thought it was an issue of menu design. As the project progressed, however, this view shifted. The agency used tools like journey mapping and found that there are emotional needs both at the

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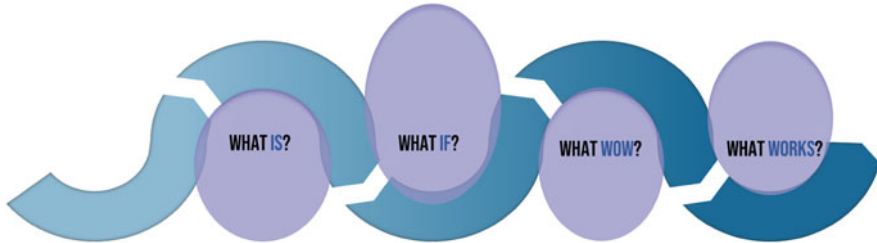e-mail: waldemar@pfoertsch.com

Fig. 3.1 Design thinking process in "The Good Kitchen case" [Adapted from Lieadtka (2013)]

elderly side and the provider side (people who make the food) which made this dilemma. Therefore, they tried to convince the government that the scope was bigger than the question of how could we improve the menu. The result was the design of a wholly new meal service that offered higher quality, more flexibility, and increased choice. This dramatic reframing of the opportunity emerged from the user-centered design approach that Lotte Jepsen from Hatch & Bloom brought to the process at the elderly care facility of The Good Kitchen (Det Gode Køkken).

Solution 1: Design Thinking Approach

In terms of human-to-human mindset, design thinking can be explained as "a human-centered approach to innovation, where people behaviors are examined with deep lens to find their actual needs, finding insights that guide the design of the solutions, prototyping solutions, validating those solution prototypes with actual customers and iterating until finding the best fit."

Therefore, the capabilities or character traits in the context of human-to-human mindset in design thinking process are:

(a) Human centeredness
(b) Agility and being keen on experimentation
(c) Empathetic interest in other perspectives
(d) Collaboration

The design and idea agency implemented a four-stage design thinking process to come to the solution of the problem (Fig. 3.1):

The four stages were the following:

1. *What is*: This step is concerned with *understanding* and *observing* the stakeholder's needs and problems and identifying the obstacles. To do so, the

agency used the *ethnographic approach* and a *journey mapping* design tool to understand the functional and emotional needs of the senior citizens.

The findings were at the beginning very surprising:

(a) A lot of unarticulated needs of the elderly were emotional needs.

(b) Focus on emotional needs, employees, and company preparing food for the elderly was needed too. Working in a public service kitchen was a low-status job, and the employees were demoralized and unmotivated to prepare the same low-cost boring meals repeatedly.

(c) The food-preparing employee wanted to prepare good food, but there were economic and logistic constraints.

(d) Employees preparing food and senior citizens both were experiencing feelings of disconnection and alienation.

(e) Elderly people expected help only from family and friends and any kind of government assistance was embarrassing.

(f) Having the food alone reminded the senior citizens that their family was not around them which contributed directly to the loss of appetites leading to the nutritional problem.

(g) Unavailability of personal food preferences and choices made the condition worse.

(h) The elderly had a good sense of the kitchen and had preferences of food according to the seasonal changes.

2. *What if*: At this stage, the agency tried to *define* the current possibilities and *ideate* possible solutions after analyzing the positives and negatives from the first stage. For this purpose, they used two design tools—*co-creation and brainstorming*. The agency listed a broader group of stakeholders like public officials, volunteers, experts in elderly issues, kitchen workers, and employees of residential care facilities. The design tool brainstorming was then applied with these stakeholders using the ethnographic research and thus developed insights and design criteria to form idea generation. Facilitators used analogies as trigger questions to help shift the participant's mental model of food services.

The *idea* of the stage was the following:

(a) Kitchen = restaurant

(b) Cooks = chefs in restaurant

(c) Delivery and vehicles = waiters

(d) Food description = enticing and mouth-watering like in restaurants

3. *What wows*: They started afterward by taking the possible ideas like menu designs, restaurant concept, etc. and tried to find what could be wowing and valuable. For this purpose, the agency used the design tool *co-creation* again. This workshop was much more hands-on and involved *prototyping*. The participants came with three different versions of the menu. The agency then used the design tool, *visualization*, to make these options more real to the participants. The agency then took steps to test the three different versions of the menu using the design tool visualization with the senior citizens.

4. *What works*: This process involved *testing the prototypes*, i.e., the three different versions of the menu with actual customers. The learning from these sets of

Table 3.1 Human-to-human mindset characteristics in the design thinking process of "The Good Kitchen case"

Characteristics of H2H mindset: design thinking	Relevant measures implemented in "The Good Kitchen" case
1. Human centeredness	The dual focus on employees and the elderly on their emotional needs
2. Experimentation	Public service kitchen as actual restaurant service, three different menus (prototypes), visualization description of the menu through photos rather than only written information, new communication channels and comment cards, newsletters as feedback mechanisms
3. Empathy	Involvement of all stakeholders, focus on emotional needs of kitchen employees and elderly, feedback mechanisms, i.e., comment cards, co-creation, the concept of the restaurant, chefs, and waiter for motivation
4. Collaboration	Workshops and co-creation with all stakeholders to answer what is, what if, what wows, and what works, involving identifying problems, idea generation, prototyping, testing, finding a solution and other packaging ideas

experiments and testing resulted in a secondary project with some quick packaging and design changes that allowed for some more modular meals where different components of the prototypes were separated. The agency provided a name that matched everyone's aspirations—"The Good Kitchen." A new uniform to kitchen employee was also decided upon. To keep the clients and kitchen staff in close touch and to make everyone involved aware of the real people they were serving or being served by, new communication channels and feedback mechanisms were created that involved newsletters and comment cards. Later, guest menus and kitchen specialties were added in "The Good Kitchen."

The application of design thinking and the human-to-human mindset improved the situation at The Good Kitchen and changed the conditions for the various stakeholders for the better. Relevant measures implemented in "The Good Kitchen" are shown in Table 3.1.

Application of the Service-Dominant Logic Approach at The Good Kitchen

The approach of service-dominant logic (S-DL) is innovative conceptual thinking in business and other areas which was and is still relevant at The Good Kitchen activities. S-DL introduces a new way for synthesizing and articulating view of exchange and value creation. It is centered on the service idea—the application of competences for the benefit of another. Since it is considered as the basis of all social and economic exchange and characterizes, it is very suitable for this kind of activities, which exemplifies the purpose and nature of organizations, markets, and

Table 3.2 The axioms of service-dominant logic

Axiom 1	Service is the fundamental basis of exchange
Axiom 2	Value is co-created by multiple actors, always including the beneficiary
Axiom 3	All social and economic actors are resource integrators
Axiom 4	Value is uniquely and phenomenologically defined by the beneficiary
Axiom 5	Value co-creation is coordinated through actor-generated institutions and institutional arrangements

Table 3.3 Using S-DL to define service ecosystem and point of view

Design thinking steps	Service ecosystem	Point of view
Interviews	Service	The Good Kitchen would provide service and food menus to the elderly in government-assisted homes like a restaurant to recover from malnutrition, enjoy the food, and improve their appetite
Observations	Actors	
Journey mapping	Institutions	
Workshops	Networks	
	Beneficiaries	

Adapted from Vargo et al. (2022)

society. It is based on five foundational premises, called axioms which are mentioned in Table 3.2. In The Good Kitchen project, all of them were considered in analysis and implementing process and influence the outcome.

During the project it was visible that the capabilities and character traits in the context of human-to-human mindset required service-dominant logic thinking, which can be characterized as the following:

(a) Service orientation.
(b) Customer-based view (resource-based view + market-based view).
(c) Value is created by the customer; companies only offer the value proposition.
(d) Co-creation of value as a result.

This S-DL model was applied in the design thinking process of "The Good Kitchen." After the design thinking process, a service ecosystem was defined based on the five axioms of the service-dominant logic, which in turn led to the point of view that was based on the view of the customer. Table 3.3 explains the service ecosystem that leads to this point of view.

In the case of "The Good Kitchen," *service* in the service ecosystem refers to the previous low-cost similar meals and new meal services with feedback comment cards and guest menus. *Actors* in the service ecosystem refer to the kitchen employees and delivery vehicles for delivering foods and elderly citizens in government-assisted homes who receive the services. *Networks* refer to the communication and feedback channels through which the different actors keep in touch with for customer-centric service deliveries, in this case, food choices and preferences of

the elderly, i.e., through newsletters and comment cards. *Beneficiaries* refer to the senior citizens who avail of the service. Equally important are *the institutions* that affect the delivery of services, in this case, the public kitchen service and the government. The results from ethnographic research and journey mapping helped the agency to structure a large amount of data and pieces of information (operant resources) to come to a point of view, a new value proposition based on customer view.

Service-Dominant Logic and Human-to-Human Mindset

Other important aspects of the "The Good Kitchen case" were the characteristics of the H2H mindset in the applied S-DL approach and the relevant measures implemented here (see Table 3.4).

Digitization Approach

The Good Kitchen (Det Gode Køkken) applies all measures of Web 2.0 and communicates via email, WhatsApp, etc. Also, transaction via online ordering was implemented. They are using digitization with a mindset that refers to converting data and information into digital form in such a way that the digital information can be used and managed to create new individualized value propositions. It also gives the opportunity to the creation of new business models that provide higher transparency and empower customers. In the context of human-to-human mindset, The Good Kitchen is utilizing the character traits of digitization:

(a) Interconnected thinking
(b) Agility
(c) The priority of human over machine

In "The Good Kitchen" case, digitization was used to collect data and information from the major stakeholders, i.e., government-assisted homes, public service kitchen, etc. These pieces of information were beneficial in all the workshops to

Table 3.4 H2H mindset characteristics in S-DL process of "The Good Kitchen case"

Characteristics of H2H mindset: S-DL approach	Relevant measures implemented in "The Good Kitchen" case
1. Service orientation	Experiences and emotional needs of elderly citizens
2. Customer-based view	Journey mapping, interviews, observations with the elderly in government-assisted homes, i.e., resource integration
3. Value co-created with the customer	Customers benefitting from healthier and tastier food, improving their quality of life
4. Co-creation of the value proposition	Newsletters and feedback comment cards

co-create new value propositions, i.e., solutions to the emotional needs of elderly citizens and employees of the kitchen and circumstances and new food menus. Availability of visual food menus in digital format, online ordering, messages, and feedbacks to the kitchen employees would be more effective in interconnecting the kitchen employees and elderly citizens and also in understanding the changing food preferences of the elderly.

Conclusion

The Key Results There was a shift in the perception of kitchen employees themselves in their work. The relationship between kitchen employees and professionals increased greatly. These factors led to higher satisfaction and more motivation for work in kitchen employees. As a result, elderly citizens were happier with the food.

Other Results Before 60% of elderly in nursing homes or under supervision were getting the wrong diet, and 20% suffered from malnutrition, and after the implementation of "The Good Kitchen," sickness absence in the same elderly citizens went down by 9%, job applications for the kitchen employee more than tripled, subscriptions to "The Good Kitchen" increased tenfold, and the elderly found a new zest for life. The results showed happier seniors with better nutrition and motivated employees with more pride in their work.

DT, S-DL, and digitization enable the empathetic interests of the customer and other stakeholders and provide solutions based on human centeredness. In the age of transcendence, with the changing needs of customers and clients, the experience of the customer has become more important, and agility and experimentation have become more important for businesses. This is possible when beneficiaries of services and goods and all other stakeholders collaborate, integrate resources, and co-create value. The perspectives of the customer form the basis for co-designing and co-producing the new value propositions. These aspects are character traits of human-to-human mindset, and thus, "The Good Kitchen" case also reflects the same character traits in all the three approaches.

Questions for Discussion

1. What role does design thinking play in the new H2H Marketing? What lessons can we draw from this and other examples?
2. Why were the results in this situation so astounding, and why do we often fail to see the design thinking results in other cases?
3. Where would you put the concept to use? Can you provide specific examples?
4. What immediate advantages do you anticipate?
5. How do service-dominant logic and the human-to-human mindset influence The Good Kitchen's results?
6. Is digitalization always required, or are there other technological alternatives?
7. How do you keep the good results going and achieve a positive outcome for people involved?

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