

The Design Thinking method

Objectives and how to use it

One of the best and articulate methods to design for the sustainable development and based on the concept of circular economy is Design Thinking method.

Design Thinking approach focuses on developing an understanding of the people products and services are created for. By asking probing questions about the customer's needs and ideal experiences, Design Thinking aims to develop products that provide lasting solutions to customer problems. Nowadays, the average consumer is more eco-conscious than ever before. Therefore companies are facing-up to their customers' environmental concerns. It's become increasingly difficult to create a product that satisfies emotionally without eliminating the environmental guilt that comes with consuming it.

The Design Thinking approach is the perfect mindset to create new eco-sustainable products, services, and business models.

With sustainability now the world's most pressing problem, the Design Thinking approach can change the relationship with consumer products and help us all realise a greener future.

Description

Taking into consideration the environmental awareness of the customers (as well as the own ethics of the company) many businesses now apply sustainability approach even on the beginning product's development phase, using the Design Thinking method. This process is referred to as eco-design. Eco-design approach carefully measures and reduces the negative environmental effects of a product, lessening its footprint throughout the life-cycle.

This includes reducing:

- Raw materials used during production
- Pollution created during production
- Energy used during production

Emissions generated using the product and simultaneously increasing:

- The product's durability and expected lifespan
- The product's recyclability



As well as protecting the environment, businesses using eco-design enjoy a healthier bottom line, with efficient uses of energy and raw materials reducing production costs and increasing profit margins. With ethical and financial motivations joining forces, and Design Thinking and eco-design combining, there's every reason to believe that industries can move toward more sustainable product development processes.

Resources / Material required

The main phases of the Design Thinking methodologies by Ideo's Human-Centered Design (*) include the following steps:

1. **UNDERSTAND** the entire lifecycle of a circular product, from the raw materials and their transformed into products, technical cycle, introducing into the market: maintenance, reuse, refurbish/remanufacture, recycle.
2. **DEFINE** the goals to create successfully, zero waste product and service requires, based on a circular innovation strategy.
3. **MAKE** decision which concepts of product ideas would be the more strategic and beneficial for your business. Create a prototype an idea and get feedback as soon as possible to test your hypothesis and expectations as a source of learning.
4. **RELEASE**. To design a circular product or service assuring his consistency in its lifecycle, map the product journey to ensure its sustainability throughout the time.

The design thinking approach in the process of creating new eco-sustainable products, services is described in the "Circular Design Guide" developed by the IDEO organisation which involved globally to create positive impact through design thinking in collaboration with the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, which mission is to accelerate the transition to a circular economy.

The "Circular Design Guide" is made as a set of methods and tools that could be used separately. The "circular design thinking" process can start wherever you want, depending on the stage of your project. It is a process of continuous learning, prototyping and getting feedbacks.

The free access to the information about this method you can find here:
<https://www.circulardesignguide.com/>

(*) <https://www.ideo.com>

