



# Five Principles of "Good Service Design"

**White Paper**

by Oliver Gerstheimer

**chilli(mind)**

creating digital value



# 1

## “Service Design is a constructive forethought of alternative futures!”

*When talking about design or designing – it does not matter which pre- or post-fix is added – you always have to keep the following in mind. As a designer or a team designing services, systems, products or business models you always ...*

- 1... create solutions for others in the objective role lawyer of the user.
- 2... design for the future and that requires ingenuity for alternative futures.
- 3... translate user needs into unique new experiences and market potentials.
- 4... stimulate the systematic doubt in all collaborative decision-dialogues.
- 5... know that planners have NO right to be wrong – go for models & user-testing.



Service Design challenges have the typical nature of wicked problems according to Horst Rittel's & Melvin Webber's propositions from 1973. There is "no definite formulation of the problem", the solutions are not "true-or-false, but good-or-bad". All created solutions are one-shot-operations, because there are no additional opportunities to learn by trial-and-error. Every launch and every attempt count significantly.

Therefore, every problem is essentially unique and needs a tailored knowledge-based-approach for being successful in the market (2013: Rittel in Thinking Design, 2013; p. 26-38).

# 2

## “Good Service Design is multifaceted, meaningful and tangible!”

*“In Service Design the creative identification, the right question and the precise formulation of the problem is the problem.”*

Service Design is an open orchestration of solution-bouquets along defined user-journeys instead of single-flower arrangements. The integrated approach is strongly analytic and collaborative; it is diverse in research thinking and holistic in the way of exploring new future needs and ideas that are visual, tangible and invisible. The basis is a co-innovation process joint by emphatical design research and critical thinking, grounded on a trained team with objective visual skills and open mindsets. The methodical participation of users, experts and/or customers in the whole process of service creation is crucial. Acting like a service designer means internalizing the situational soul of services: A brilliant service is just there when you need it. So, a smart service unfolds his tangible power in moments where you do not expect it, but it is incredibly helpful. Therefore, great services are prompt and easy to integrate into our everyday life without complicated extra work or timeconsuming activities.



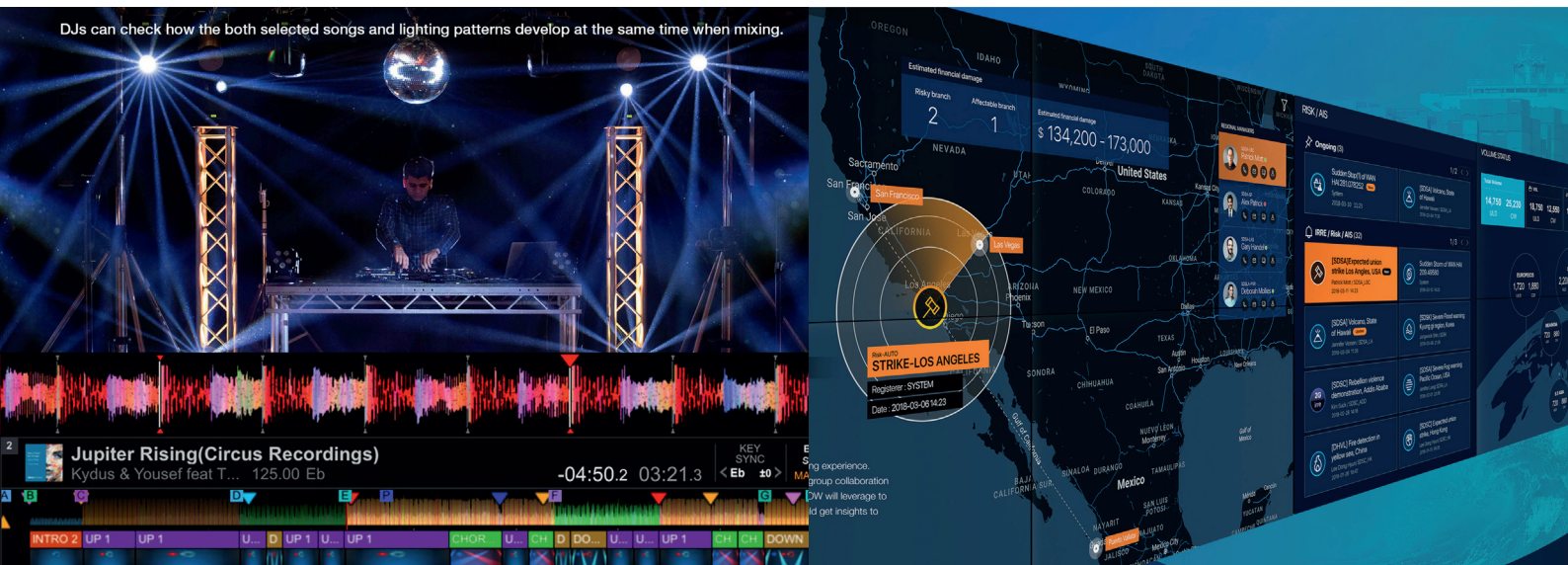
And besides, good service means engaging in true human-centered love and sincerity. A great service that will inspire thousands of people tomorrow, should convey a pleasant feeling, a good experience and a high level of trust. Never forget: „Servus“ in Latin means „I am your servant.“ or „I serve you!“.

# 3

“Good Service Design is the promptness in customer understanding & perception!”

*“A service is like a first date – you will never get a second chance to win a customer’s heart!”*

People expect concrete, fast and stable solutions for their needs and problems. The promptness and momentum (tempi & timing) of a service availability is king. The spontaneous clicking, touching, reading or perception of a service offer is limited to a narrow time window for the first impression. This „5-30 seconds“ determine the motivation of the customer to try it. For example, this service event could be a piece of important advice just in the right moment or a virtual shopping assistant or finding a special tool on the intranet of a company within seconds – or all together. So, you will be a successful service design team if you deal with relevant and frequent life situations & business values.



In addition, there is also a deeper meaning behind the new way of service thinking: e.g. you cut your bread every day with an electrical bread slicer machine or you can offer a change in everyday thinking and behavior? To create a more subtle and pleasant experience of slicing bread you can choose a good breadknife and feel the beauty and archaic feeling of cutting a freshly baked bread with your own hand. Therefore, substituting a complex electrical machine device forever. Got it?

Service design is not the quick, obvious or linear next doors solution! It is about rethinking and creating the rather invisible parameters for the best prompt and tangible results.

**In my time as an iF juror, we honored projects, that had a great impact on the target group lives but did not necessarily ‘look nice’.**



# 4

## “Good Service Design relies on reasonable rules for humans!”

*“The trends will continue: 8 out of 10 Euros / Dollars of today’s sales are services in the western world.”*

You offer a great analog or digital product, process, or system, but this is not enough today! Digital products are in many cases short-lived. If your service is driven by digital devices and interface-products, and not by the people using them, you will lose them in the long run. You have to ask yourself: Did I really design an outstanding service which serves the right thing, at the right time in the right context via the right channel or medium? Here, a very plain example what this means: an American warehouse offers just a great service-promise without spending much on marketing and ads. They provide a life-long product warranty to all their customers! This single benefit & promise is easy to remember and to promote.



So, if you want to offer your customers an outstanding service, it is sufficient to serve an easy to understand easy to understand and reliable set of rules. For example: ‘Every customer gets an answer in less than 3 minutes ...’, ‘All products can be changed into new ones by...’, ‘If your service does not work for more than 30 minutes, we call you up and solve the problem 100% ...’. Your parcel will definitely arrive at 2 p.m. ...; the list goes on. However, this reliable set of service rules needs to be explored and iterated with all the little steps and milestones to offer a great customer/user/human experience!

True services are addressing well-being, relationship, passion, and trust. High service levels are defined when spontaneous feelings of pleasure are caused or when the sustainability of the service makes you happy in every moment of usage.



# 5

## “Service Design has to be tangible, measurable and sustainable!”

*“Only companies with the most honest and accurate service-centered-strategy create long-term customer relationships.”*

In many companies, the dilemma of service design is the fact that service is rather used as a quick and dirty marketing tool, like an add-on, an appendage to something existing. It is like a wound plaster for quick healing – not like a long-lasting user benefit strategy. Please ask yourself: Is my intended service solution a manifested problem for me as a company or my potential customer? – is it a setup of permission marketing services like a digital loyalty club? Can it save future costs for the company or is it getting more complex and expensive in the long run?

This is what is special about Service Design: It incorporates so many components of design and design thinking as well as new business value dimensions and models: solving problems, presenting innovative pleasant solutions, rethinking time and cost of whole relationships, while value-chains must be measurable and tangible.

Service Design often looks like an easy to learn “design-discipline” within a 2-day training course. But it is not like that: service creation is a hard design craftsmanship and intensive crosslinked team-play over years until you can play in the “Champions League”. Eight out of ten launched new service products and releases are dead ducks in the market. And the crazy truth about it: Many of these companies believe that the achieved service results were even successful. This is because they have no long-term experience and can compare what success or failure is in service measurability and market acceptance.

Service Design is a young, sportive and agile discipline: You can book already external Service Design professionals for strategy or solution creation. Or you decide to set-up a sustainable inhouse-team, gaining experience and user-centric-accuracy slowly over years. Service Design as a profession – and not as a buzzword – is a valuable investment in the upcoming future. The investment in external or internal service engagements is worthwhile – it can gain by the factor 10 in your future sales & revenues.



# My tip for a Service Design checkup-dive:

*Imagine a virtual customer who has big eyes and ears and can watch and listen to all the strategic goals, arguments and service ideas discussed in your internal design team from the very first moment of the project. Imagine this customer observes your design journey along the whole path. What do you think? How does he feel – happy or ripped off by the goals and final service solution quality? Does he believe the team are pros or beginners?*

*This little test of the “Categorical Service Imperative” shows off the original and the fake of truly honest Service Design and reveals the strategic truth of whether one lives or just plans customer service centricity.*

## About the Author

Oliver Gerstheimer has been an enthusiastic evangelist and designer for the better “digital products of tomorrow” for more than 20 years. In 2001, he founded chilli mind – a think tank for digital innovation, service design and UX design. Oliver regularly gives talks and publishes on international platforms for innovation and design, and he has taught at German and Swiss universities of design for 15 semesters. He studied system design as well as technology and innovation management at the University of Kassel.

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