

Strategic design in the digital world

 By [Brett Lindsay](#)

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It's tempting to be dismissive when you first hear about strategic design and think that it has all the hallmark characteristics of being an industry buzzword.



Source © Scott Graham <https://unsplash.com/> [Unsplash](#) Strategic design is an immensely powerful process to cultivate creativity and collaboration for people and businesses no matter where they are on their journey

It's tempting to be dismissive when you first hear about strategic design and think that it has all the hallmark characteristics of being an industry buzzword. That is not what strategic design is.

What makes strategic design more than a buzzword is that it is capable of clear definition, and it can take you on a compelling, sequential journey of exploration that leads to meaningful and quantifiable results.

Strategic design is an immensely powerful process to cultivate creativity and collaboration for people and businesses no matter where they are on their journey. It can solve commercial product and service challenges but is equally capable of solving systemic community focused challenges on a global level.

Turning obstacles into opportunities

Strategic design provides a methodology that can be applied to inspire, ideate, innovate, and implement effective solutions for any problem. Far too often we approach problems from a position of fear. "What will we lose?" and "What's the worst that can happen?" - these kinds of questions focus on the negative aspects of problems because the emphasis is on the unknown.

People aren't afraid of the dark, they're afraid of what they don't know about the dark, and through a journey of information-sharing and collaborative discovery, we can help to create certainty by shining a light on the unknown.

More solutions than problems

"How might we solve this?" and "What would you do if 'no' wasn't an option?" This gives us a springboard from which to uncover solutions. Every solution starts as an idea, and the solutions that come out of the strategic design process must meet the criteria of desirability, feasibility, and viability - there must be human desirability, technological feasibility, and

business viability.

The value and the impact of the resultant solution will be identified at the centre of these core areas of focus. It might not seem like it (because we've been conditioned to believe otherwise) but there are more solutions than there are problems. The difference is that not everyone takes the time to explore these.



Adapt and innovate to keep up with the digital tidal wave

Brett Lindsay 23 Sep 2022



Design makes it real

When people hear the word design, they think art and pretty pictures. This is an incomplete understanding of design. Everything around, us is a result of design.

Without design, there would be no nice or useful things that make an impact or are considered valuable.

Strategic design is simply taking the time upfront to consider multiple factors, validate assumptions and ideate on new possibilities, all of which provide tremendous value to what the final product, service or outcome will be.

This could be anything from creating or improving a piece of furniture or an app, to a new mobile game or even a customer experience at a bank or an airport.

Guiding, not instructing

Strategic design does not tell clients what to do; it is a light to guide clients to a decision informed by their own knowledge. Once clients understand all the information that they hold, that understanding can be used to make practical decisions that lay the foundation for a way forward. As such, strategic design is a journey from inspiration to insight and evolves into ideation and manifests through implementation.

Strategic design provides a holistic view of business by focusing on the point where humans and digital things engage. It can also be used as a point to bring everyone within an organisation together.

I break it down like this:

1. **Dream** – We all have dreams, some of us dream when we're awake and that gives us the ability to act.
2. **Discover** – When we discover something new that inspires or amazes us the natural reaction is to share that revelation. It starts with a simple question that requires an authentic answer – “What would you like to do?”

3. **Discuss** – We guide the journey of curiosity and discussion to illuminate the probative facts about any challenge right at the outset.
4. **Decide** – Ideas, information and discussion alone cannot yield results. A decision needs to be made on a way forward.
5. **Do** – Once we have a clear understanding and plan of approach, we start to implement ideas. It is exciting to see the final solution start to take shape. New discoveries along the path of implementation are iterative, within scope and often where true innovation can be unlocked.
6. **Deliver**
 - The goal and first end point of our process is to achieve a solution that meets the desirability, feasibility and viability criteria of the problem statement identified earlier. This is when the dream becomes real.

Facing the future

Strategic design, as a discipline, provides the lens through which to begin addressing obstacles by reframing them as opportunities. Simply by asking “How might we....?” it becomes possible to use curiosity to create certainty.

This allows us to move from a position of fear to confidence as we consider the future and re-define the way we face the unknown. When we realise that we’re all in this together, we might just be able to challenge convention in every part of our human existence while focusing on finding better ways of living, loving, learning, and earning.

ABOUT BRETT LINDSAY

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